



---

PAULA FETHER

# The First Read Gospel

A combined account of the Gospels

---

# **The First Read Gospel**

A combined account of the Gospels.

© Paula Fether

The First-Read Gospel is a loose paraphrase of the four Gospels (and other select passages) in the New Testament in modern English, putting great emphasis on readability for the average person. It combines the four Gospel accounts into one, not to replace the scriptures but to introduce them and give a sense of sequence to the events.

# Table of Contents

Preface .....	5
Beginnings .....	6
Preparations .....	18
The Firsts .....	24
Teachings and Miracles .....	33
Healings, Workers, and Warnings .....	53
Parables .....	62
The Ministry Continues.....	79
Tension Builds .....	100
The Lazarus Effect .....	117
The Week Before the End.....	123
End-Times Prophecies .....	132
Final Teachings and Arrest.....	138
From Trials to Ascension .....	153

# Preface

The New Testament of the Bible begins with four accounts of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. There is great value in having four accounts, since they come from different perspectives to different primary audiences. But to the first-time reader, this can be somewhat confusing. This book is an effort to put the four Gospel accounts together in one, not to replace the scriptures but to introduce them, to show the big picture.

Such a task is not lightly undertaken, however. The exact sequence of events and teachings is often obscure, and though much is known about the context of the writings, disagreements can still pose difficulties. This book makes no claim of infallibility, but rather simply to faithfully present the most influential Person in history.

# Beginnings

## THE WORD OF GOD

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word resided with God, and the Word was God; he was there all along. Everything that exists is because of him, and not one thing exists that he didn't make. He brought life into being, to illuminate people. This light shines into the darkness, and the darkness can't stop it.

We all received limitless favor from him. Though the law was given through Moses, favor and truth came through Jesus the Christ. Though no one has ever seen God, he is now revealed by the Unique God, who is the closest to the Father.

## JESUS' GENEALOGY FROM ABRAHAM

This is the account of the lineage of Jesus the Christ, descendant of David and Abraham:

Abraham fathered Isaac, who fathered Jacob, who fathered Judah and his siblings. Judah fathered Perez and Zara by Tamar, and Perez fathered Hezron, who fathered Aram, who fathered Aminadab, who fathered Nahshon, who fathered Salmon, who fathered Boaz by Rahab. Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, and Obed fathered Jesse, who fathered King David, who fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife.

Solomon fathered Rehoboam, who fathered Abijah, who fathered Asa, who fathered Jehosophat, who fathered Joram, who fathered Uzzaiah, who fathered Jotham, who fathered Ahaz, who fathered Hezekiah, who fathered Manasseh, who fathered Amos, who fathered Josiah, who fathered Jechoniah and his siblings at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, who fathered Zorobabel, who fathered Abiud, who fathered Eliakim, who fathered Azor, who fathered Zadok, who fathered Achim, who fathered Eliud, who fathered Eleazar, who fathered Matthan, who fathered Jacob, who fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

So there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Christ.

### **JESUS' GENEALOGY TO ADAM**

Jesus was presumed to be the son of Joseph, of Heli, of Matthat, of Levi, of Melchi, of Jannai, of Joseph, of Mattathias, of Amos, of Nahum, of Esli, of Naggai, of Maath, of Mattathias, of Semein, of Josech, of Joda, of Joanan, of Rhesa, of Zorobabel, of Salathiel, of Neri, of Melchi, of Addi, of Cosam, of Elmadam, of Er.

Er was the son of Joshua, of Eliezer, of Jorim, of Matthat, of Levi, of Simon, of Judah, of Joseph, of Jonam, of Eliakim, of Melea, of Menna, of Mattatha, of Nathan, of David, of Jesse, of Obed, of Boaz, of Sala, of Nahshon, of Aminadab, of Admin, of Arni, of Hezron, of Phares, of Judah.

Judah was the son of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, of Terah, of Nahor, of Serug, of Reu, of Peleg, of Eber, of Sala, of Cainan, of Arphaxad, of Shem, of Noah, of Lamech, of Methusaleh, of Enoch, of Jared, of Mahalalel, of Cainan, of Enosh, of Seth, of Adam, and finally of God.

### **THE FORERUNNER**

In the days of Herod the king of Judea there was a certain priest by the name of Zacharias, of the Abijah order. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. They were both righteous by God's standards,

flawlessly performing every command and decree the Master gave. But they had no child because Elizabeth was infertile, and they were quite elderly.

One day it came time for Zacharias to perform his priestly duties before God according to his order, and he was chosen by chance to burn incense and enter the Holiest Place in the temple. A large crowd was praying outside at the time the incense was burned. But Zacharias was very disturbed and afraid when he saw an angel of the Master standing to the right of the altar of incense.

“Do not be afraid, Zacharias,” the angel said to him. “Your request has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to name him John. His birth will bring happiness and great joy to you and many others. He will be very important to the Master. He must never drink wine or any other intoxicating beverage, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even as he leaves his mother’s womb. He will also turn many in Israel back to the Master their God, and he will be God’s forerunner in the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and turn the incorrigible into the sensible and righteous, to prepare the people to meet their Master.”

But Zacharias doubted the angel. “What reason do I have to believe this? I’m an old man and my wife is well along in years herself.”

“I am Gabriel, the one who stands before God!” the angel replied. “I was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Now pay attention! You will be unable to hear or speak until the day these things come to pass, because you did not believe what I told you.”

Meanwhile, the people outside were waiting for Zacharias and wondered what was taking so long in the temple. But when he came out making motions with his hands and not speaking, they realized that he had seen a vision. Then when his term of priestly service



was completed, he returned to his home, and not long afterwards his wife Elizabeth conceived. She went into seclusion for five months and said to herself, “This is how the Master has taken away my social shame; in these days he has noticed me!”

## **THE PREDICTION ABOUT JESUS**

In Elizabeth’s sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth. He went to a woman of marriageable age who was engaged to a man named Joseph from the line of David. The woman’s name was Mary, and the angel spoke to her: “Greetings, favored one! The Master is with you!” When she heard this she was concerned and confused, wondering what it was about.

“Don’t be afraid, Mary,” said the angel. “God looks favorably on you. Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest, and God the Master will give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!”

“But how can this be,” asked Mary, “since I haven’t been intimate with a man?”

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will envelope you,” the angel answered. “This is why the holy one being conceived will be called the God-Man. Even your relative Elizabeth is also expecting a son in her old age; she who was considered infertile is in her sixth month! Nothing is impossible for God.”

“I am the Master’s servant,” Mary responded. “May it happen as you have said.” And the angel went away.

## MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

At that time Mary hurried into the hill country to a city in Judea. She entered the home of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb jumped for joy. Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and shouted out, "You are blessed among women, and blessed is the child within you! How is it that the mother of my Master should visit me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby within me jumped for joy! And blessed is she who believed that what she was told by the Master would come to pass!"

Then Mary said, "My soul exalts the Master, and my spirit jumps for joy about God my Savior, for he noticed his humble servant! From now on, every generation will consider me blessed because the Powerful One did great things for me. His name is holy, and his compassion extends from generation to generation for those who fear him.

"He has ruled with power and might; he has scattered those whose minds are filled with contempt; he has pulled rulers from their thrones. But he has lifted up the oppressed; he has satisfied the hungry while sending the rich away empty-handed. At the right time he has remembered to have eternal mercy on his child Israel, just as he said to our ancestors, to Abraham's descendants."

Mary stayed there until Elizabeth gave birth, and then she returned to her own home.

## THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE IMMERSER

The time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she had a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard about how the Master had shown her great mercy, so they celebrated with her. When the eighth day arrived, they came to circumcise the little boy, and they intended to

name him after his father Zacharias. But his mother said “No! He is to be named John.”

“But there is no one among your relatives by that name,” they objected. So they motioned to his father to see what he wanted to name him. He pointed to a writing tablet, and when they gave it to him, to their great surprise he wrote, “His name is John.” Instantly he was able to hear and speak again, and he began to praise God. Fear came upon all the neighbors, and this account spread throughout the whole hill country of Judea. Everyone who heard about it wondered what this little boy would turn out to be, because it was obvious that the Master was with him.

His father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this divine message: “Praise to the Master, the God of Israel, for he chose and redeemed his people! He awakened a powerful deliverance for us from the line of his servant David, just as he said through his holy prophets in ancient times. He brought deliverance from all who hate us, to have compassion on our ancestors; he remembered his holy covenant which he swore on oath to our ancestor Abraham; he granted that we would be rescued from the clutches of our enemies, so we could spend our lives serving him without fear and in devoutness and justice.

“Now as for you, little one, you will be called a prophet of the Highest. You will lead the way before the Master, to prepare his paths. You will give the knowledge of salvation to his people, the pardon of their sins through the deep compassion of our God. The sun will rise high to visit us, to shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to light the way for our feet on the road to peace.”

So the little boy grew and became spiritually powerful, and he lived in the desert until he presented himself to Israel.

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS

This is the account of the birth of Jesus the Christ: His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married it was discovered that Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. But her husband Joseph, being a decent person, didn't want to make a public spectacle of her, so he intended to divorce her quietly.

While he was mulling all these things over, suddenly an angel of the Master appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, don't hesitate to accept Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, since he will save his people from their sins."

This all happened in order to fulfill what the Master said through the prophet: "Look! The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son. They will name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us'." Then Joseph woke up from his sleep and did as the angel told him. (He eventually married her but had no intimacy with her until she gave birth to a son, whom she would name Jesus.)

It was in those days that Caesar Augustus issued a decree to take a census of the whole inhabited world. This mandate to register everyone took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So everyone traveled to their hometown, and Joseph was one of them. He went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee into Judea, to the City of David called Bethlehem, since he was of the house and lineage of David. He registered together with his fiancée Mary, who was pregnant. And it so happened that while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She had her firstborn son and wrapped him in baby clothes, but she had to lay him in a feeding trough because there wasn't even one room available for them in the inn.

There were shepherds camping out in the area to watch over their flocks throughout the night, when suddenly an angel of the Master stood beside them! The majesty of the Master shone around them as well, and they were terrified. “Don’t be afraid,” the angel said to them, “because I’m here to announce good news to you, happy news to all the people! Today the Savior, the Anointed Master, was born to you in the City of David. And here is a sign for you: You will find the infant wrapped in baby clothes and lying in a feeding trough.”

Suddenly the angel was joined by the whole celestial army, all praising God: “The highest honor to God, and peace on earth to the people with whom he is pleased!” While the angels were on their way back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “By all means, let’s go over to Bethlehem to see what the Master told us has happened!”

So they hurried along and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant was lying in the feeding trough. Then they told everyone about the announcement that had been given to them concerning this little one. Everyone who heard it was amazed about what the shepherds told them, but Mary mulled over in her mind what all these things could mean. Then the shepherds went away, honoring and praising God on account of everything they had heard and seen, which was just as they had been told.

When the eighth day arrived for the baby to be circumcised, he was given the name Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived. After the days of cleansing required by the law of Moses were completed, they took him into Jerusalem to present to the Master. (It’s written in the law of the Master that every first-born male is to be consecrated to him by presenting the sacrifice the law requires: a pair of doves or two young pigeons.)

It just so happened that there was someone in Jerusalem by the name of Simon. He was a righteous and conscientious person who was expecting the Comfort of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die without first seeing the Master's Christ. The Spirit prompted him to go into the temple compound, where the parents of little Jesus were admitting him in order to fulfill the custom of the law for him.

Simon picked up Jesus and held him in his arms, then praised God and said, "My Owner, now I can rest in peace because of what you had told me. I have seen the salvation you prepared in the presence of all the people, a light of revelation to the nations and honor to your people Israel." These things spoken about Jesus took his father and mother by surprise. Then Simon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "Be aware that this little one is set to cause the rise and downfall of many in Israel, and to be a controversial sign. But a sword will be thrust through your soul, and the thoughts in many minds will be exposed."

Now there was another prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She was well-advanced in age, having lived with her husband for seven years of their marriage and then being a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple compound; night and day she offered impassioned prayer and divine service. At that very day and hour she came up to them and praised God, and she spoke about Jesus to all those who were expecting the redemption of Jerusalem.

After they had fulfilled everything according to the requirements of the law of the Master, they returned to Galilee, to their home town of Nazareth.

## HEROD AND THE OFFICIALS FROM THE EAST

In the days of King Herod, official advisors came to Jerusalem from the east. They asked, “Where is the one born King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” This disturbed not only King Herod but all of Jerusalem as well. So he summoned all the religious scholars to determine where the Christ was to be born. And they told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea. This is how it’s written through the prophet: ‘You, Bethlehem, are not at all the least significant among the governors of Judah! For out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Afterwards, Herod consulted privately with the official advisors to determine the precise time when the star appeared. Then he sent them into Bethlehem with these instructions: “Go and search carefully for the little one, and if you find him, tell me so that I can come and worship him.” Upon hearing this from the king they went off, when suddenly the star they had seen in the east appeared! They were extremely happy to see the star, which went ahead of them until it came to a stop above the little one’s location.

Now when they arrived at the house they saw the little one with his mother Mary. They dropped down and worshiped him, and they presented him with gifts such as gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they took another route to their homeland.

Later that night an angel of the Master suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Wake up! Take the little one and his mother and run away to Egypt. Stay there until I talk to you again, because Herod intends to kill the child.” So he woke up and took the child and his mother away that very night to Egypt, where he stayed until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Master had said through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

When Herod realized that the official advisors had made him look like a fool, he was extremely furious. So he had all the children in Bethlehem killed if they were two years old or younger, according to the precise time he had learned from the official advisors. Then the writing of the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A sound is heard in Ramah, of wailing and deep grief. Rachel is sobbing for her children, and she cannot be consoled, for they are dead and gone.”

## **JESUS' CHILDHOOD**

After Herod died, an angel of the Master appeared to Joseph in a dream while he was still in Egypt. He told him, “Wake up! Take the little one and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were out to take the child’s life are dead.” So he woke up and took the little one and his mother to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod to rule in Judea, he was afraid to go there. After another divine warning in another dream, he went into the province of Galilee. He settled in the city of Nazareth in fulfillment of the announcement of the prophet, “He will be called a Nazarene.”

Then the little one grew strong and became very wise, and the favor of God was upon him. His parents took him to Jerusalem for the Passover festival each year. When he was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem for the traditional festival as usual. When it was over they returned home, but they were unaware that the boy Jesus had stayed behind in Jerusalem. They presumed he was somewhere among their traveling companions, but after a day’s travel they began to search for him among their friends and relatives. When they couldn’t find him they went back to Jerusalem to keep searching.

It was three days later when they found him. He was sitting among the teachers, listening and asking them questions, and impressing everyone who heard him with his intelligent responses. His parents



were dumbfounded! But his mother demanded, “Child, look at what you’ve done to us! Your father and I have been searching frantically for you!”

“Why were you looking for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know that I had to attend to my Father’s affairs?” But they had no idea what he was talking about. Then he went with them to Nazareth and supported them. His mother carefully noted everything that was said and kept it in mind. Jesus advanced in wisdom and maturity, earning the favor of God and people.

# Preparations

## THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE IMMERSER

In the fifteenth year of the governorship of Tiberias Caesar, Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, Herod was ruler over one-fourth of Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler over one-fourth of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler over one-fourth of Abilene. It was then, during the ruling priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, that an announcement from God came to John, the son of Zacharias.

His assignment was to serve as a witness to the Light so that everyone could believe through his testimony. He was not the Light himself, but only came as a witness to the true Light that illuminates every person coming into the world. But even though the Light came into the world he made, it didn't recognize him; he came to his own, but they didn't accept him. Yet to those who accepted him by putting their trust in him, he granted the privilege of being adopted children— not children born of a woman or the will of the flesh or a husband, but of God. This Light, the Word, became flesh and made his home among us, and we saw his majesty, the majesty of the Unique One who is with the Father and is filled with favor and truth.

As written by the prophet Isaiah, “Look! I am sending my messenger to pave the road in front of you. I hear the sound of someone shouting in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Master! Make the path straight!’ Its ravines will be filled in, every hill will be lowered, every crooked thing will be straightened, and every rocky place will be smoothed. Then everyone will clearly see the deliverance of God.”

John the Immerser was the one mentioned by the prophet Isaiah. He was in the desert proclaiming the Kingdom of God, telling people to turn to God and be immersed in water, so that they could be acquitted of their sins. He dressed himself with cloth made from camel hair, his belt was made of leather, and he lived on locusts and wild honey.

The whole province of Judea and the people of Jerusalem went out to him, and he immersed them all in the Jordan River as they admitted their sins. But when he saw many religious leaders coming to where he was immersing, he said to them, “You hatchlings of poisonous snakes! Who warned you to run away from impending doom? First prove that you’ve turned to God! And don’t think that you’re off the hook because you descended from Abraham, because God could raise up children for Abraham out of these stones! The ax is already poised to strike the root of the tree, and any tree not producing good fruit is to be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”

Now all the people were in anticipation, wondering among themselves whether John was actually the Christ, and these religious leaders had been sent from Jerusalem to interrogate him. So they asked, “Who are you?”

And he told them plainly, “I’m not the Christ.”

So they asked him, “Then who are you, Elijah?”

“No,” he said, “I am not.”

“Are you The Prophet?”

“No.”

Again they asked, “So who are you? Tell us what you say about yourself, so we have something to report to those who sent us.”

He replied, “I am ‘the voice of one shouting in the desert, “Straighten the road of the Master”’, according to what the prophet Isaiah said.”

“Then why are you immersing,” they asked, “if you’re not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

“I immerse people in water to show that they turned to God,” he replied. “But after me will come someone stronger than I am, someone I’m unworthy to even serve, and he will immerse you in the Holy Spirit and fire. He has a broom in his hand, and he’s about to sweep the floor clean! He’ll collect his grain and store it away, but he’ll burn the chaff in a fire that can’t be put out.”

All this happened in Bethany, on the other side of the Jordan River where John was immersing. Then the crowd asked him, “What should we do?”

“If you have extra clothing, share with someone in need,” he replied. “Do the same with food.”

Then some tax collectors came to be immersed, and they asked him, “Teacher, what about us?”

“Don’t take one bit more than you’re supposed to,” he answered.

Next some police asked what they should do, and he told them, “Stop intimidating and extorting people; be content with your pay.”

## **JOHN IMMERSSES JESUS**

In those days Jesus arrived from Nazareth in Galilee. When John saw him coming he exclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away

the sin of the world! This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one coming after me actually existed before me’! Though I didn’t recognize him right away, the whole reason I’ve been immersing people in water is to present him to Israel. The one who sent me to immerse in water told me that the one I would see the Spirit land on would be the one who immerses in the Holy Spirit. I have seen this, so I testify that this is the God-Man.”

(Earlier Jesus had come to be immersed by John in the Jordan. But John objected, “I’m the one who needs to be immersed by you, yet you come to me?”

“It has to be this way for now,” replied Jesus. “We have to do the right thing.”

So he consented to immerse him. And just as Jesus came up out of the water and was praying, suddenly the heavens opened up and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and landing on him. At that moment there was a voice from heaven saying, “This is my dear son; I am quite pleased with him!”)

## **JESUS IS TESTED**

Right away Jesus was led by the Spirit to go into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. After having gone forty days and nights without food, Jesus was hungry. So the devil came to tempt him to sin: “If you’re really the God-Man, tell these stones to become bread.”

“It is written,” Jesus replied, “that no one lives on bread alone but on every word uttered by God.”

Then the devil took him into the holy city. He stood him on the highest point of the temple compound and said, “If you’re really the God-Man, throw yourself down. As it is written, ‘He will command

his angels to lift you up with their hands so you won't strike your foot against a stone.' ”

“It is also written,” Jesus replied, “that you must not provoke the Master your God!”

Next the devil took him up into a very high mountain and instantly showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their splendor. “I will give you complete jurisdiction over all this, and the fame and honor that goes with it,” he said. “I can give it to whomever I wish because it was all handed over to me. It can all be yours, if you fall face-down and worship me!”

“Get away from me, Satan!” Jesus retorted. “For it is written: ‘It is only the Master your God you must worship; serve no one else!’” Then the devil left him until another opportunity might present itself, and right away angels came and attended to Jesus’ needs.

## **JESUS BEGINS TO GATHER DISCIPLES**

Jesus’ activities began when he was about thirty years old. One day when John and two of his disciples were there again they saw Jesus walking around. So John said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this and became followers of Jesus. Now Jesus turned around and saw them following him, so he asked, “What are you looking for?”

But they said to him, “Rabbi” (which is the Hebrew word for Teacher), “where are you staying?”

“Come and you’ll see,” he replied. They came and saw where he was staying, and remained with him for the day. It was about 4 p.m.

Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. The first thing he did was to find his brother and tell him, “We have found the Messiah!” (This Hebrew name

meaning The Christ is “Christ” in Greek.) He led him to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon, son of John; from now on you’ll be called Cephas.” (This Hebrew name meaning Stone is Peter in Greek.)

The next day Jesus decided to go into Galilee, where he found Philip and said, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the same city as Andrew and Peter.

Philip then found Nathaniel and said, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”

And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

“Come and see,” replied Philip.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said, “Now there’s a genuine Israelite; there’s no treachery in him.”

Nathanael asked, “How do you know me?”

Jesus replied, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

“Rabbi, you are the God-Man!” Nathanael exclaimed. “You are the King of Israel!”

And Jesus replied, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree; you’ll be seeing greater things than that!” Then he added, “Very truly I tell you all, you’ll see the sky opened up and the angels of God ascending and descending to and from the Human.”

# The Firsts

## THE FIRST MIRACLE

A few days later there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus, his mother, and his disciples were invited. But at one point Jesus' mother said to him, "They're out of wine."

Jesus asked, "What does that have to do with me, dear woman? My time has not yet come."

But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

There were six stone water jars there. They were used in Jewish cleansing rituals, each with a capacity of twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars to the brim with water, then dip some out and take it to the master of ceremonies," and so they did.

Now when the master of ceremonies tasted the water that had been turned into wine, not knowing its origin (though the servants who had dipped it out knew), he summoned the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone else serves the best wine first and then brings out the cheap wine after the guests don't care anymore, but you've saved the best for last!"

This was the first of the miracles Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. It revealed his majesty, and his disciples put their trust in him. Then he, his mother, siblings, and disciples went down into Capernaum and stayed there for several days.

## THE FIRST TEMPLE CLEANSING

When it was about time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple compound he found brokers and merchants selling oxen, sheep, and doves. Making a whip out of ropes,



he threw everyone out of the temple compound, including the animals. He upended the brokers' tables, scattering their coins, and yelled to those selling doves, "Get these things out of here! Do not turn my Father's house into a merchant's house!" (His disciples remembered that it was written, "Passion for your house will consume me.")

Then the religious leaders came and demanded, "What authority do you have to do these things? Who gave you the right?"

"Let me ask you a question," Jesus replied, "And if you can answer my question, then I'll answer yours. The immersion of John... was it from heaven or from people?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say 'From heaven', he'll say 'Then why didn't you believe?' But if we say 'From people', we fear what they'd do to us since they consider him a prophet." So they finally said, "We don't know."

And Jesus retorted, "Then I'm not telling you where I got this authority."

## **THE FIRST STUDENT**

Now there was a religious leader named Nicodemus who was well-respected by the Jews. He came to Jesus one night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you're a teacher from God, since no one could do the miracles you do unless God were with him."

Jesus replied, "I tell you very truly that if a person isn't born from above, they can't see the kingdom of God."

"But how can an old person be born again?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely no one is able to enter their mother's womb a second time and be born!"

Jesus answered, “I tell you very truly that unless a person is born of water and the Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Flesh comes from flesh, and spirit comes from spirit. This concept that you need to be born from above shouldn’t puzzle you. The wind blows wherever it chooses; you hear the sound but you can’t tell where it comes from and where it goes. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can this happen?” asked Nicodemus.

“How can you be Israel’s teacher and not know these things?” Jesus replied. “I tell you very truly that we speak of what we understand, and we testify of what we have seen, but none of you accepts our testimony. If none of you believe me when I speak of earthly things, how will any of you believe if I speak of heavenly things? And no one has ascended into heaven except The Human, the one who descended from there.

Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so also must the Human be lifted up, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life. Likewise, since God loved the world, he also gave his unique Son so that everyone who would trust in him would not be destroyed but have eternal life. After all, God didn’t send his son into the world to pass judgment on it, but to save it through him. The one putting trust in him is not condemned, but the one not trusting is condemned already for rejecting the name of the only God-Man.”

Now this is the verdict: The Light has come into the world, but people prefer shadows to light because they do evil. Evildoers hate The Light and won’t come toward it since their evil deeds would be exposed. Yet the one with the truth comes toward The Light so their good deeds can be revealed, since they were done to honor God.

## THE FIRST DISPUTE

After this Jesus and his disciples came into the region of Judea, and he stayed with them and immersed people. Now John was also immersing in Aenon near Salim where there was plenty of water. This was before Herod (ruler over one-fourth the country) added to all his other evils by locking John in prison for confronting him about taking the wife of his own brother Philip.

Then there was a dispute between John's disciples and a Jew about cleansing. So they came to John and said, "Teacher, the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one you testified about... Look! He's immersing and everyone is going to him."

John replied, "No one can receive anything without it being given from heaven. You yourselves have testified to me that I said I'm not the Christ but only his forerunner. It's the bridegroom who has the bride, yet the bridegroom's friend has been waiting and is overjoyed to hear his voice. This is the joy I have, and it's now complete. That One must become greater, while I must become lesser.

"The one coming from above is above all. The one of the earth is of the earth and speaks from the earth, but the one coming from heaven is above all. He testifies about what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. But the one accepting it confirms that God is true. The one that God sends out gives God's announcements, because God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has given everything into his hand. The one putting trust in the Son has eternal life, yet the one hostile to the Son shall not see life; only the wrath of God is left to them."

Now since Jesus knew that the religious leaders heard he was confirming and immersing more disciples than John (though it wasn't actually Jesus but his disciples doing the immersing), he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

## THE FIRST EVANGELIST

On his way from Judea to Galilee, Jesus had to pass through Samaria, and he came into one of their cities called Sychar, near the parcel of land Jacob gave his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

Suddenly a woman came out of Samaria to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone into the city to buy food.)

So she replied, "Why would a Jew like you ask a Samaritan woman like me for a drink?" (Jews don't associate with Samaritans.)

"If you only knew of the gift of God and who it is that's asking you for a drink!" Jesus answered. "Then you would ask him and he would give you living water."

"Sir, you don't even have a bucket and the well is deep," she said. "Where would you get this living water? You're no greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well. It refreshed him, his children, and his livestock."

Jesus responded, "Everyone who drinks this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water I will give them is guaranteed to never thirst again, because the water I give will be like a perpetual well filled with eternal life."

The woman then boldly asked, "Sir, give me this kind of water so I won't thirst again and will no longer have to come through here to draw water."

So Jesus said, "Go get your husband and come back here."

"I have no husband," she replied;

“You’re right, you have no husband,” he answered. “ You’ve had five men, and the one you have now isn’t your husband. Your statement is all too true.”

So the woman said, “Sir, I can tell you’re a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that only Jerusalem is the place to worship.”

And Jesus replied, “Trust me, dear woman; the time is coming when people will no longer worship the Father either in this mountain or in Jerusalem. Your people worship in ignorance, but we worship in understanding, because The Rescue comes from the Jews. Yet the time is coming– in fact, it’s already upon us– when real worshipers will worship the Father genuinely and spiritually, since they’re the kind the Father searches for. God is spirit, and those who worship him must do so genuinely and spiritually.”

The woman responded, “I understand that the Christ is coming (we say Messiah, you say Christ). And when he does, he will explain everything completely.”

Jesus told her plainly, “He’s the one talking to you!”

Just then his disciples arrived, and they were surprised he was talking with a woman. But no one asked what he wanted or why he was talking with her. Then the woman left her water jar and went into the city to tell the people, “Come and see someone who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Christ?” So they left the city and went out to him.

In the meantime his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

But he replied, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about.”

The disciples said to each other, “You didn’t bring him anything to eat, did you?”

So Jesus told them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and finish the job. Don’t people say it’s still four months till the harvest comes? But open your eyes and look at the countryside; the fields are ready for harvest. The harvester is already being paid and gathering the produce of eternal life, so that both the planter and the harvester may celebrate together. As the saying goes, ‘One plants and another harvests’. I sent you to harvest what none of you worked for, so you will share in the labor of others.”

Now many of the Samaritans of that city put their trust in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” When the Samaritans came to him they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed for two days. Then many more believed because of what he said. They told the woman, “We no longer believe only because of what you told us, but also because of what we ourselves have heard him say. We can see that this really is the Savior of the world!”

## **THE FIRST REJECTION**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus arrived in Galilee in the power of the Spirit. He proclaimed the good news of God and said, “The time has come and the kingdom of God approaches! Turn to God and believe the good news.” The Galileans accepted him, because they had seen all he did in Jerusalem during the festival. He taught in their synagogues and was well-esteemed by everyone, because he spoke with authority.

Then he went into Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as was his custom he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. He stood up to read and was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, which he unrolled to the spot where this was written: “The Spirit of

the Master is upon me, because he has anointed me to announce good news to the destitute; he has sent me to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind; he has dispatched me to cancel charges against the oppressed and to herald the acceptable time of the Master.” Rolling up the scroll, he handed it to the attendant and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue were watching him intently, and he started speaking to them: “Today, in your hearing, this scripture has been fulfilled.”

But though many people were impressed with him and were intrigued by what he said, others were offended. Because of their lack of faith, he was unable to do any powerful deeds there, except to place his hands on a few chronically ill people and heal them. “Where did this come from?” they asked. “Isn’t this the son of Joseph? How did he get this wisdom, or the power to do such things through his hands? Isn’t he the craftsman, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren’t his sisters here with us?”

And Jesus replied, “Surely you will quote this saying to me: ‘Physician, cure yourself!’, and you’ll say ‘Do here at home what we heard that you did in Capernaum.’ I tell you very truly that a prophet is honored everywhere except in their own hometown and among their own relatives and household. There were in fact many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky gave no rain for three-and-a-half years and caused a severe famine to come over the whole land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them but to a widow in Sarepta in the province of Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the days of the prophet Elisha, yet he didn’t heal one of them but only Naaman the Syrian.”

This enraged the people of the synagogue, so they picked him up and threw him out of the city. They took him to the edge of the

mountain the city had been built upon, to push him over the edge, but he walked right through the crowd and went away.

## **THE FIRST CALLINGS**

Then Jesus moved out of Nazareth and settled in Capernaum by the sea, in the area near Zebulon and Naphtali, in order to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: “Land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, the road to the sea on the other side of the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles: The people sitting in darkness have seen a great light; to those sitting in the shadowy place of death, a light has risen on them.”

As he walked along the seaside in Galilee with his followers, he saw two brothers: Simon (called Peter) and Andrew. They were throwing a fishing net into the sea, because that’s how they made their living. And he said to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” So they immediately dropped their nets and followed him. From there, he saw two other brothers: James and John, sons of Zebedee. They were in the boat with their father, preparing the nets. He called to them and they immediately followed him, leaving the ship and their father.



# Teachings and Miracles

## THE DEMONIAK IN THE SYNAGOGUE

One Sabbath in Galilee, there was someone in the synagogue with a demonic, unclean spirit, and it shouted out, “Aaah! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to wipe us out? I know who you are— you are the Holy One of God!”

“Silence!” Jesus commanded. “Get out of him!” The demon hurled the person down in front of them, caused the person to convulse, shouted out, and then left without doing him any harm. They were all shocked and said to each other, “What kind of speaking is this, that has authority and power to exorcise unclean spirits?” And reports of this spread rapidly to every spot in the surrounding area.

## PETER’S ILL MOTHER-IN-LAW

Jesus went up from the synagogue and entered the home of Simon, whose mother-in-law was gripped with a high fever. They asked him about her, and he bent over above her and rebuked the fever. Instantly the fever left her, and she got up to wait on them. At sunset, people brought to Jesus everyone who was disabled or had various diseases or demon possession; the whole city was at the door! He placed his hands on each of them and healed them. Demons came out of many of them, shouting, “You are the God-Man!” But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. In this way he fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah, “He took away our illnesses and lifted our burdens.”

## FROM CAPERNAUM TO GALILEE

Just before daybreak he left to pray in a secluded place, but Simon and the crowd searched diligently for him. When they found him they said, “Everyone is looking for you!”, and they tried to keep

him from leaving. Then he told them, “Let’s go somewhere else, into the towns. I must take the good news about the kingdom of God to other cities; this is the purpose for which I was sent.” And he continued to proclaim it in the synagogues of Judea.

Then Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and announcing the good news of the kingdom, and he also healed all sorts of diseases and weaknesses the people had. His fame spread throughout Syria, and they brought him all the people afflicted with various serious diseases and torments, including the demonized, those with convulsions, and the paralyzed; he healed them all. A large crowd followed him from Galilee, the Ten Cities, Jerusalem, Judea, and the other side of the Jordan.

## **THE MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH**

On one occasion when the crowd was pressing in around him to hear the word of God, he was standing beside Lake Gennesaret. He saw two ships docked at the edge, and the sailors had disembarked to wash their nets. He got into the ship that belonged to Simon and asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down in the ship and taught the crowd. As he finished speaking he said to Simon, “Go out to deeper waters and lower your nets for a catch.”

“Exalted One,” Simon replied, “We worked the whole night and caught nothing. But just because you said it, I will lower the nets.” And when they did, they caught a huge number of fish, yet the nets didn’t tear. So they motioned to their partners in the other ship to help them. The haul filled both ships to the point that they almost sank! When Simon Peter saw this, he dropped to his knees before Jesus and said, “Please stay away from me, Master, I’m a very sinful man!” He and everyone with him were awestruck about the huge haul of fish they had caught, including his partners James and John, the sons of Zebedee. And Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t worry; from

now on you'll be catching people!" When the ships landed, they left everything and followed him.

## **THE PARALYTIC**

He went back to Capernaum in those days, but they heard he was in a house there, and so many people came that the house was packed (you couldn't even get in the door). So he started teaching them, including religious leaders from every village in Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. The power of the Master was there for healing, when along came some men carrying a paralyzed person on a stretcher. They intended to place him before Jesus, but they couldn't find a way through the crowd. So they went up to the top of the house and lowered him on his stretcher through the roofing tiles, right in front of Jesus.

When he saw their faith he told the paralyzed one, "Cheer up, child, your sins are forgiven!" But some of the religious leaders reacted by thinking to themselves, "How can he say such a thing? He is calling himself God! Who else can forgive sins but the one true God?" But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said, "What evil thought is in your heads? Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up and walk'? But just to show you what authority the Human has here on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed one, "Get up; pick up your cot and go home!" He got up in front of them, picked up the stretcher he had been on, and went home praising God. Everyone was completely amazed and gave honor to God for giving such authority to someone. They were filled with awe and said, "We've seen amazing things today!"

## **JESUS CALLS LEVI (MATTHEW)**

Jesus left again and went to the seaside. The whole crowd came with him, and he taught them. As he passed by he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting in his tax contractor's office. So he said to him,

“Follow me!” and he got up and followed. Levi also threw a big party for him and his disciples in his home. Among the guests reclining at the table were many other tax contractors and riffraff who had been following Jesus. But when the religious leaders saw what kind of people Jesus was eating with, they complained to his disciples: “Why does this teacher of yours eat with tax contractors and riffraff?”

Jesus heard this and said to them, “Sick people are the ones who need a physician, not healthy people. It’s the riffraff I came to call, not the righteous! Now go and learn what this means: ‘I want compassion, not sacrifice’.”

## **A QUESTION OF FASTING**

But they went on: “The disciples of John and of the religious leaders frequently go without food and pray earnestly, but yours eat and drink.”

“You can’t expect the groom’s guests to fast while they’re with him,” Jesus replied. “But the time will come when the groom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

Then he gave this analogy: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and uses it to patch an old one. Otherwise, the new cloth pulls away from the old and creates an even bigger tear than before. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the new wine will burst the old wineskins and spill out, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, they put new wine into new wineskins. And no one who has drunk old wine would choose new; they’d say that the old wine is better.”

## **PICKING GRAIN ON THE SABBATH**

Now it happened on one of the Sabbaths that he was passing alongside some grain fields, and his disciples were picking heads of grain

along the way. But the religious leaders complained, “Look! What they’re doing is forbidden on the Sabbath.”

“Haven’t you ever read what David did when he and his men were hungry, during the time of Abiathar the ruling priest?” Jesus asked. “He went into the temple and ate the bread that was presented as an offering, which only the priests are allowed to eat, and fed it to those with him as well. And haven’t you read that according to the law, the priests violate every Sabbath without being held guilty? But I say to you that there is someone here who is greater than the temple! And if you had known what this means, ‘I want compassion rather than sacrifice’, you would not condemn the innocent. The Sabbath is for the benefit of people, not people for the benefit of the Sabbath. And the Human is Master of the Sabbath.”

### **A MAN’S HAND HEALED ON THE SABBATH**

On yet another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and taught, and there was someone there with a deformed right hand. The religious leaders were watching Jesus like a hawk, to see if he’d heal on the Sabbath so they could have grounds to accuse him. But he said to them, “If you had a sheep that fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, which of you would not grab it and pull it out? And how much more important is a person than a sheep? So then, it is permissible to do good on the Sabbath.”

Jesus looked around at them angrily, irritated by their cold hearts. He knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the withered hand, “Stand up here in front.” When he did, Jesus said to the others, “I ask you: Is it permitted on the Sabbath to do good or to do malice, to save a life or to destroy it?” He looked around at them all and said to the man, “Hold out your hand!” He did so, and it was suddenly restored just like the other hand. But they completely lost their minds and convened a council with the Herodians, to concoct a plot to kill Jesus.

## **MANY HEALED BY THE SEA**

But Jesus and his disciples went to the sea. A huge crowd from Galilee followed, along with people from Judea, Jerusalem, the area of Idumea, from the other side of the Jordan, and from around Tyre and Sidon. They all came to him because of what they'd heard about him, so he told his disciples to keep a boat handy so the crowd wouldn't crush him. In fact, he had healed many, and more were pressing in on him to be healed as well. And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out as they left, "You are the God-Man!" But he sternly warned them not to reveal who he was, in order to fulfill what was written by the prophet Isaiah:

"Look at my chosen child, the one I love and am pleased with! I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim righteousness to the nations. He will not fight or shout; his voice will not be heard in the streets. He will not even step on a reed and break it, nor snuff out a smoldering wick, until his victory brings justice and the nations put confidence in his name."

## **THE TWELVE AND THE WOMEN**

It was in those days that Jesus retreated up into the mountain to pray, and he spent the entire night in prayer to God. The next day he summoned his disciples and chose twelve from among them, designating them Apostles, who would be his inner circle. They would also proclaim the kingdom and have authority to expel demons and heal people. Their names were Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James and John the sons of Zebedee (he called them Boanerges, meaning "Sons of Thunder"), Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew the tax contractor, Thomas, James son of Alpheus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James (also called Thaddaios), and Judas from Kerioth, who would become a traitor.

A short while later he started going through one city or town after another, proclaiming and announcing the good news about the kingdom of God. He was accompanied by the Twelve, as well as some women who were cured from evil spirits and diseases: Mary of Magdala from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna the wife of Chuza (the legal guardian under Herod), Susanna, and many others who supported them from their own means.

## **THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

When Jesus saw the crowd, he went up into the mountain and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them:

“Happy are the poor and lowly, for the heavenly kingdom is theirs.

“Happy are the grieving, for they will be consoled.

“Happy are the even-tempered, for they will inherit the earth.

“Happy are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

“Happy are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

“Happy are those with clean minds, for they will see God.

“Happy are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

“Happy are those who are persecuted for doing right, for the heavenly kingdom is theirs.

“Happy are those who, on my account, are disgraced, persecuted, defamed, and lied about. Yes, be very happy and overjoyed, because you’ll have great reward in the heavens. This is the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

“In contrast, woe to you who are rich, because you’ve already received your comfort. Woe to you who are satisfied for now, because you will hunger. Woe to you who laugh for now, because you will grieve and sob. Woe to you if everyone speaks highly of you, because their ancestors also spoke well of the false prophets.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again? It’s good for nothing but being thrown outside where people will trample it. You are the light of the world. A city on a high hill cannot be hidden; no one lights a lamp and then puts a box over it. Rather, they set it on a lamp stand so it provides light to everyone in the house. Likewise, let your light shine for everyone so they can see the good that you do and give honor to your Father in the heavens.

“Don’t think that I have come to annul the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to annul them but to fulfill them. Let me make this clear: As long as the earth and sky remain, not even the smallest letter or stroke of a pen will be taken away from the Law before everything is accomplished. So if anyone tries to weaken even the smallest part of these commands and teaches others the same, that person will be the smallest in the heavenly kingdom. However, the one who practices them and teaches others the same will be the greatest in the heavenly kingdom.

“I tell you that if your righteousness isn’t any better than that of the religious leaders, you will never enter the heavenly kingdom! You have heard that people a long time ago were told, ‘You must not murder, and whoever murders will be held to account’. But I tell you that whoever is angry with a sister or brother for no reason will be held to account. Whoever says to them, ‘You’re worthless!’, will have to stand before the court, and whoever says to them, ‘Idiot!’, will be thrown into the eternal fire.



“If you’re ever on your way to make an offering and remember that your brother or sister has a reason to be upset with you, leave your gift at the altar and first go back and reconcile with them; then you can make your offering. Reach a quick settlement with the one bringing you to court, while you’re still on the way there. Otherwise your opponent might hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the deputy, who will throw you into prison. And I tell you that you won’t get out of there until you pay every last bit of what you owe!

“You have heard it said, ‘You must not commit adultery’. But I say that whoever lusts after a woman has already committed it in his mind. So if your right eye or hand is a trap for you, get rid of it! It’s better for you to lose a body part than for your whole body to be thrown into the eternal fire.

“It has been said that whoever wants to be rid of his wife only needs to give her a divorce notice. But I say that whoever gets rid of his faithful wife makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries her also commits adultery.

“Another thing you’ve heard that was said long ago: ‘Do not swear an oath you don’t intend to keep; you must fulfill your oaths to the Master.’ But I say not to swear any oath at all— not by heaven (the throne of God), not by earth (the footstool of God), not by Jerusalem (the city of the Great King), and not even by your own head, since you can’t turn one hair white or black. Just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and mean it; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

“You’ve heard the saying, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say not to take an adversarial stance against an aggressor. If they slap you on the right cheek, present the other side as well. If someone takes you to court and wins your shirt, give them your coat as well. And if someone conscripts you to go with them

for a thousand paces, go along for two thousand. Give to the one who asks of you, and lend to the one who wants to borrow from you. Give people what they ask of you, and don't demand that they return what they take from you. In other words, treat people the way you'd like them to treat you; this is what the Law and the Prophets are all about. If you do these things, you will be complete, just as the heavenly Father is complete.

“You've heard the saying, ‘Love your neighbor and despise your enemy.’ But I say to love your enemies and pray for those who insult and persecute you, so that you will be children of your Father in the heavens. After all, the sun rises on good and bad people alike, and rain falls on both the righteous and the unrighteous. If you only love those who love you, do you expect to be rewarded? Even tax contractors do that! And if you only love and welcome your sisters and brothers, what great thing have you done? Even the people of other nations do that! And if you only lend to those who can pay you back, what credit is that to you? After all, scoundrels lend to each other and expect to be repaid.

“So then, love your enemies; be good to others and lend without expecting anything in return. Then you will earn generous wages and you will be called Children of the Highest, because he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. Don't be judgmental, and you won't be treated that way. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you—filled up, packed solid, and spilling over! This is what they will give to you personally, because the level of generosity you show to others will be shown to you in return.

“Be careful that you don't do good deeds just to impress people; if you do, you won't get any reward from your Father in the heavens. So whenever you give to charity, don't advertise it like those show-

offs who go to the synagogues and streets where they can impress people. I can assure you that they've been paid in full! Instead, do your giving discreetly; keep it secret. Then your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, don't be like the show-offs who love to pray standing in the synagogues and city squares so people can see them. I can assure you that they've been paid in full! Instead, whenever you pray, go into a small room and lock the door so you can pray to your Father in secret. Then your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.

“By the way, don't repeat the same prayers endlessly like the other nations do, who think that all their words get them attention. Don't be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask. Pray more like this: ‘Our Father in the heavens, may your name be revered! May your kingdom come to earth, and may your intentions be carried out on earth just as they are in heaven. Give us what we need for the day, and forgive our sins and debts to you, just as we forgive sins done to us and debts owed to us. Please don't put us to the test but get us safely away from the evil one.’ After all, if you forgive other people's blunders, your Father in heaven will forgive your blunders; and if you don't, he won't.

“Whenever you fast, don't be like the show-offs who go around with sad faces so everyone thinks they're pious. I can assure you that they've been paid in full! But when you fast, put on a pleasant fragrance and wash your face so people don't know you're fasting. And your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.

“Your eye is the light of your body. So if your eye is innocent, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be filled with darkness. So if the light in you is really darkness, what deep darkness it is!

“No one can serve two masters; they’d love one and hate the other, or despise one and support the other. You cannot serve both God and Wealth. Don’t store up valuables here on earth, where moth and rust corrode, and where thieves break in and steal. Instead, store them in heaven where that can’t happen. Sell your possessions and donate them to the poor. Make for yourselves money pouches that don’t wear out, a limitless treasure in the heavens, because your mind will be on what you value.

“What I’m telling you is not to worry, whether it’s about where your food and drink will come from, or what clothes you’ll have. Doesn’t your life mean much more than food, and your body much more than clothing? Observe the birds of the sky; they don’t plant seeds, they don’t harvest, and they don’t put food in storage, yet your Father in heaven feeds them. Aren’t you worth far more than birds? And which of you can prolong your life by worrying?

“Why do you also worry about clothing? Study the wild flowers and how they grow; they don’t do any work or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his majesty was as well-dressed as one of those flowers! So if the grass of the field is here one day and thrown into an oven the next, won’t God clothe you all the more, you skeptics? So then, stop worrying about what you’ll eat, what you’ll drink, or what you’ll wear. The people of other nations are always looking for these things, but your Father in heaven knows you need them. If you make the kingdom of God and his righteousness your priority, all these other things will be provided for you. So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself; don’t borrow tomorrow’s problems today.

“Be careful how you judge others, since whatever judgment you make may be used to judge you, and whatever measurement you use will be used to measure you. Why do you obsess over the splinter in your brother’s or sister’s eye, when there’s a whole plank of

wood in your own eye? How can you say to your sister or brother, 'Here, let me get that splinter out of your eye' while there's a plank in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get that plank out of your own eye so you can clearly see how to get the splinter out of your brother or sister's eye.

"Don't throw your pearls to pigs; don't give what is holy to those who will just treat it like garbage and then turn and attack you.

"Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will open. After all, which of you would give your child a rock if they asked for bread? Who would give them a snake if they asked for fish? Now if you evildoers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in the heavens give good things to those who ask him!

"Go in through the narrow gate. There are many who go through the wide gate and travel the smooth road to ruin. But the rocky road to life is through the narrow gate, and few find it.

"Beware of false prophets, who seem to be sheep but are actually ravenous wolves. Here's how to identify them: You don't pick grapes from thorn bushes, and you don't pick figs from thistles. A good tree gives appealing fruit, but a rotten tree gives disgusting fruit, and neither can produce the other's fruit. Trees that don't make good fruit are chopped down and thrown into the fire. So you can identify them by what they do.

"Not everyone who calls me Master will be admitted into the heavenly kingdom, but only those who do what my Father in the heavens wants. In that day, many will say to me, 'Master, Master! Didn't we prophesy in your name, and didn't we throw out demons and perform many powerful deeds in your name?' And I will have to reply, 'I never knew you; get away from me, all you lawless people!'

“So everyone who practices what I preach is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain came down on it, the water rushed toward it, and the wind blew against it, but it stood strong because it was founded on rock. But the one who doesn’t practice what I preach is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came, the water rushed, and the wind blew, pounding against that house. It fell, and what a huge crash it was!”

Now when Jesus had finished saying all these things, everyone in the crowd was awestruck by his teachings. Unlike their religious leaders, he taught with authority.

## **THE LEPER**

As Jesus went down the mountain, he was followed by a large crowd. Suddenly a leper came toward him, dropped to his knees, and said, “Sir, if you choose, you can make me clean!”

“I so choose!” said Jesus, reaching out to touch him. “Be clean!” And immediately his leprosy was completely gone. Then Jesus added, “See to it that you speak to no one, but go straight to show yourself to the priest and confirm your healing by offering the gift commanded by Moses.” But instead he went off and blabbed to everyone, such that Jesus could no longer openly enter a city but instead had to stay outside in desolate places. They kept coming to him from everywhere, and he kept retreating to deserted areas to pray.

## **THE CENTURION’S ASSISTANT**

Then Jesus entered Capernaum, where he was approached by a Roman army captain whose highly-esteemed assistant was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent out Judean elders to ask him to come and heal his assistant. When they approached Jesus they begged him with great emotion, “This person is worthy

of your help, because he loves our nation and built us a synagogue.“ The captain also pleaded, “Sir, my assistant is paralyzed and home-bound, suffering terribly!”

“I will come to heal him,” said Jesus.

So Jesus went along with them. But when he was only a short distance from the house, the Roman army captain sent friends to him to say, “Sir, don’t go to all this trouble, because I am unworthy to have you come under my roof. This is why I didn’t come to you myself. All you need to do is say the word and my assistant will be miraculously healed. After all, I am under someone else’s authority and have soldiers under me as well. I tell one of them to go and he goes; I tell another to come and he comes; I tell my assistant to do something and he does it. So just say the word and he will be healed.”

When Jesus heard this, he was very surprised and said to those following him, “I sure haven’t found anyone in Israel with that much faith! And I tell you this: Many will come from east and west to dine with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens, yet the subjects will be exiled to the darkness outside, where people will wail and grind their teeth.” Then he said to the Roman officer, “Go! You have what you believed.” And his assistant was healed that very hour.

## **JESUS RAISES A WIDOW’S ONLY SON**

The next day he happened to go into a city called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd. As he approached the city gate, there was a funeral procession for the only son of his mother, who was a widow. A large number of people from the city were with her. The sight of her moved the Master to compassion, and he said to her, “Don’t cry.” Then he went up to the coffin and touched it, and the ones carrying it stood still. Then Jesus said, “Young one, I

tell you to awaken!” and the dead one sat up and began to talk! Then Jesus presented him to his mother, and they all were gripped with fear and honored God: “A great prophet has been raised up among us!” and “God has visited his people!” Word about him spread throughout Judea and the surrounding area.

## **A CHALLENGE TO POTENTIAL FOLLOWERS**

When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave the order to go to the other side of the lake. Then a religious leader came up to him and said, “Teacher, I’ll follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have burrows to live in, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Human has no place to sleep tonight.”

Another one of his disciples said to him, “Master, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus replied, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Yet another person said to Jesus, “Master, first let me say goodbye to the people in my household.” But he replied, “No one who puts their hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

## **JESUS CALMS THE STORM AT SEA**

Jesus got into a boat and his disciples followed him. Then they set sail, and Jesus fell asleep. But suddenly there was a tremendous storm at sea, such that the boat was about to be overcome by the waves. Somehow Jesus was sleeping through it, so they went and woke him up and said, “Master, help us! We are about to die!”

“What cowards you are!” he replied. “Such doubters!” So he got up and rebuked the wind and sea, and there was a great calm. They were astounded and said, “Who is this, that the wind and the sea listen to him?!”



## JESUS DRIVES OUT LEGION

When they got to the other side in the area of the Gerasenes, they encountered two demonized people coming out from among the graves. They could no longer be restrained, even with chains and ankle irons. They were able to break them apart, and no one was strong enough to control them. They stayed night and day among the tombs and mountains, screaming and pounding themselves with stones. They were so ferocious that no one was able to pass through there.

Suddenly one of them saw Jesus in the distance, so he ran and bowed before him and screamed, “What do you want with us, God-Man? Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?” (He said this because Jesus had told the unclean spirit to get out of him, since it had taken control of him many times.)

“What is your name?” Jesus asked.

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And they kept begging him not to send them out of the area, or to order them to go into the Abyss.

There was a herd of hogs in the distance, so the demons begged him, “If you’re going to throw us out, send us into that herd of hogs.” He told them to go ahead, and they went into the hogs. Suddenly the whole herd stampeded over the cliff and into the sea, where they all drowned. The herders ran away into the city and told them everything that had happened, especially about the demonized people.

Then the whole city came to Jesus and saw the one who had been possessed by Legion sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. The ones who saw all this told them what had happened to the possessed person and the hogs, so they begged

Jesus to leave their territory. When Jesus stepped into the boat, the one who had been possessed asked to go along. But Jesus didn't allow him: "Go back to your home and your people, and report to them all that the Master has done and how he showed compassion to you." So he went off to the Ten Cities and proclaimed all that Jesus had done, and they were amazed.

## **JESUS RAISES JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AND HEALS A WOMAN**

Jesus then took the boat back to the other side, and a large crowd gathered to him by the sea. One of the synagogue rulers by the name of Jairus fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house. His only daughter, who was twelve years old, was dying. And as Jesus went along, the crowd pressed in all around him.

In the crowd was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhaging for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on physicians, but none of them could cure her; in fact, she only got worse. Now she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his clothing, I will be healed." So she approached Jesus from behind and touched the hem of his garment, and instantly the flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched me?"

Everyone denied it, and Peter said to him, "Exalted One, the crowd is pressing in all around you, and you wonder who touched you?"

But Jesus replied, "Someone touched me, because I know that power went out of me."

When the woman realized that she could not escape notice, she began to shake with fear and fell before him. In front of the whole crowd she told why she had touched him, and that she had been healed instantly. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has restored you; go in peace."

While he was still speaking, someone from Jairus' household came and said, "Your daughter has died; there is no more need to bother the teacher." But Jesus ignored the report and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid, just believe, and she will be restored to you."

Jesus arrived at the house to find all the mourners sobbing and grieving for her, but he said, "Don't cry, because she is not dead but only sleeping." They laughed at him, since they knew very well that she had died. But after he had thrown them all out except Peter, John, James, and the girl's parents, he took her firmly by the hand and said to her, "Talitha, koum!" (which means, "Young girl, I tell you to arise!"). Instantly her spirit returned and she got up, and he told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were beside themselves, but he instructed them not to tell anyone what happened. Even so, the news about this went out all over that whole land.

### **ANOTHER LEPER**

One time when Jesus was in one of the cities, along came a man absolutely covered with leprosy, He dropped to the ground and pleaded, "Sir, if you're willing, you can make me clean!" Jesus, moved with compassion, held out his hand and touched him and said, "I am willing; be clean!" Right away the leprosy left him and he was clean. But Jesus sent him off with a stern warning: "See to it that you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest and offer the cleansing sacrifice commanded by Moses as a testimony." But he went off and blabbed to everyone, such that Jesus could no longer openly enter a city. Even though he had to stay outside in desolate places, they came to him from everywhere, and he kept retreating to deserted areas to pray.

## THE ROYAL OFFICIAL'S SON

Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee, where he had made the water into wine. There was a certain royal official in Capernaum, whose son was sick and dying. Upon hearing that Jesus arrived from Judea into Galilee, the official went to him and asked that he would go down to heal his son.

Jesus said to him, "You people have no faith unless you see amazing miracles."

"But sir, please come before my little one dies!" the official begged.

Then Jesus replied, "On your way! Your son lives."

The official believed what Jesus told him and went. On the way his servants met up with him and said, "Your child is alive!" He asked them what hour it was when he got better, and they told him, "The fever left him yesterday just after noon." Then the father realized that this was when Jesus said "Your son lives." And so he and his entire household believed. This was the second miracle Jesus did when he came out of Judea into Galilee.

# Healings, Workers, and Warnings

## TWO BLIND PEOPLE

Jesus and his disciples went on from there to Jericho, and a large crowd followed. At one point they came to two blind people sitting beside the road, one of whom was named Bar-Timaeus. When the blind ones heard that Jesus was passing by they shouted, “Have pity on us, descendant of David!” The crowd tried to silence them but they shouted all the louder, “Have pity on us, sir, Descendant of David!”

Jesus stopped and called to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?”

“Sir, we want to see!” they replied.

When he entered a house, they came to Jesus and he asked them, “Do you believe I can do this?”

“Yes, sir!” they replied.

So he touched their eyes and said, “Let it be as you believe!” And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly warned them, “See to it that you tell no one!” Then they followed him, and all the people who saw this praised God along with them. But some went out and spread the news all over that land.

## ZACCHAEUS THE TAX CONTRACTOR

As Jesus passed through Jericho there was a man there by the name of Zacchaeus, who was a district tax contractor and quite wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but he couldn’t see over the crowd because he was short. So he ran ahead and climbed up a fig-mulberry tree so he could see him as he passed through. As Jesus

reached that spot he looked up into the tree and said, “Zacchaeus, come down at once, because I will be staying at your house this very day!” So he hurried down and welcomed him gladly.

Those who saw this grumbled about the fact that Jesus entered the home of a scoundrel to spend the night. But Zacchaeus stood up and said, “Look, Master, I’m going to give half of my possessions to the destitute. And if I have extorted anyone, I will pay back four times the amount.”

And Jesus replied, “Today, salvation has come to this house, because after all, he is a descendant of Abraham. For the Human came to seek out and rescue the lost.”

## **THE BLIND AND DEAF DEMONIAK**

After he left, he went into a house, but such a large crowd gathered that he couldn’t even recline to eat a meal. Then people brought him someone whose demon was causing blindness and deafness. When the demon was thrown out, they could see and talk. The crowd was amazed and said, “We’ve never seen anything like this in Israel! Could this be the Descendant of David?” When Jesus’ relatives heard about it they came to take him by force, because they thought he’d lost his mind. But the religious leaders said, “It’s only by the power of Beelzeboul, ruler of the demons, that he is able to throw them out!”

Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will destroy itself; every city or house divided against itself will fall apart. So if Satan is throwing himself out, how can his kingdom stand, since it’s divided? And if I’m throwing out demons by the power of Beelzeboul, then by whose power are your own people throwing them out? So it is they who will judge you! Yet if I throw them out by the Spirit of God, it clearly means that the kingdom of God is here.

“The student is not over the teacher, nor is the slave over their master— though the student may become like their teacher and the slave may become like their master. So if the homeowner is being called Beelzeboul, what will they call the others in the house? How would anyone break into a strong person’s house and steal all their belongings, unless they first tied up the strong person? Only then could they get away with all the loot. So whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me is scattering. What I’m saying in all this is that people will be forgiven for every sin and slander, except slander against the Spirit. You will be forgiven for speaking against the Human, but not for speaking against the Holy Spirit— not now or ever!”

## **WORKERS ARE NEEDED FOR THE HARVEST**

Jesus went around to all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, as well as healing all the diseases and illnesses. But he looked at the crowd with compassion, because they were troubled and lost, like sheep without a shepherd. And he remarked to his disciples, “Indeed, the harvest is abundant but the workers are few. So plead with the harvest foreman to send out more workers to help.”

Then he appointed seventy-two disciples to go out two-by-two as forerunners to every place he intended to visit. He gave them this mission: “Don’t go out to the Gentiles or even the Samaritans, but only to the lost sheep of Israel. And as you go, proclaim to them that the kingdom of the heavens has arrived. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and throw out demons. Give freely, because you have received freely.

“Don’t take along any money, not even pocket change. Don’t pack a bag or bring food or anything else for travel, because the worker deserves to be compensated. When you enter a city, find out who the decent people are and stay with them until you move on. When

you enter the house, be cordial to the people there. If it's a worthy house, bless it with peace; but if not, take your blessing back.

“Now if the people there won't accept you or listen to what you have to say, go out of that house or city and shake the dust from your feet as an insult. I can assure you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the lands of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city! But take note of this: I'm sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as serpents yet as innocent as doves.”

Then they went out and proclaimed that people should turn to God. They also expelled many demons, and put oil on the ill to heal them. Then they returned with a good report: “Master, even the demons defer to us because of your name!”

And he replied, “I watched Satan fall like lightning from the sky. So now I have given you the authority to trample serpents and scorpions, and over all the forces of the enemy, and not one of you will be harmed. But don't be so happy that the spirits defer to you; be happier that your names have been written down in the heavens.”

## **BE FEARLESS**

“Don't be afraid of them though, because nothing is veiled that won't be revealed, and nothing is concealed that won't be made known. What I tell you in the dark, you must tell in the light; what I whisper in your ear, you must proclaim from the housetops. And don't fear those who can kill the body but not the soul; instead, fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in eternal fire!

“Aren't two sparrows sold for pocket change? Yet not one of them can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. Even the hairs on your head are numbered! So don't be afraid; you are worth far more than many sparrows. And whoever acknowledges me in



front of others is the one I will acknowledge in the presence of my Father in the heavens. But whoever renounces me in front of others is the one I will renounce in the presence of my Father in the heavens.

“Don’t think that I came to establish peace on the earth; no, not at all. What I brought was a sword that will cut even between the closest family relationships. A person’s enemies will be under their own roof! So whoever favors their father or mother over me is unworthy of me; whoever favors their son or daughter over me is unworthy of me; whoever will not pick up their cross and follow me is unworthy of me. The one who finds their life will lose it, but the one who loses their life because of me will find it.

“Whoever accepts you is really accepting me, and whoever accepts me is really accepting the one who sent me. Whoever accepts a prophet or righteous person just for who they are will receive the same reward as they will. And if you give one of my followers so much as a cup of cold water to drink, just for being my disciple, I can assure you that you will be rewarded.”

### **JOHN THE IMMERSER ASKS FOR CONFIRMATION**

John was in prison, and when he heard about all the things the Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the Coming One, or should we look for someone else?”

And Jesus’ response was, “Go and tell John what you’ve witnessed: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the destitute are being given good news. Happy are those who aren’t offended by what I’m doing.”

When John’s disciples had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about him: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed being bent by the wind? No? Maybe you went out to see someone

dressed in fancy clothes; but no, such people are found in the palaces of kings. So what is it you went out to see? A prophet? Yes; but I assure you, much more than a prophet! He is the one about whom it is written: 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare the road in front of you.'

"I tell you truly that no one born of women in this generation is greater than John the Immerser! Yet the least significant in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he. From the time of John the Immerser until now, there have been people trying to barge into the kingdom of the heavens when they have no legal right to it, and they interfere with others' rights to it. But this was all prophesied in the Law and Prophets. And if you choose to accept it, John is the Elijah who was to come. If you have ears, listen!

"How can I describe this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplace calling out to each other, 'We played the flute but you didn't dance; we mourned but you didn't grieve.' John didn't go around eating and drinking, and they said he's possessed. But the Human does go around eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at that glutton and drunkard! He hangs around with tax contractors and riffraff!' There is no pleasing such people."

## **CONDEMNATION OR REST**

Then he began a rant against those cities in which he had displayed most of his power, because they refused to turn to him: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the powerful things that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have grieved in great remorse a long time ago. They will fare better at the Judgment than you will! And you, Capernaum, will not be lifted to heaven, you will descend into Hades! For if the power displayed in you had been done in the land of Sodom, it would still be there today. Yet I tell you that those people will be better off on Judgment Day than you! Whoever either accepts or rejects my dis-

ciples is doing the same to me, and whatever they do to me, they do to the One who sent me.

“The people of Nineveh (to whom Jonah was sent) will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. They turned to God in response to Jonah’s warning, but here in front of you is someone more important than Jonah. The Queen of the South will also rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but here in front of you is someone more important than Solomon.

“Whenever an unclean spirit goes out from a person, it passes through arid places looking for rest, but it finds none. So it says to itself, ‘I’ll go back to the house I left.’ Then it goes and finds the place vacated, swept clean, and put in order, so it gets seven other spirits more evil than itself and re-enters the house. That person was much worse off in the end than they were at first. This is what will happen to this evil generation!”

Then some of the religious leaders said to him, “Teacher, we want you to perform a miraculous sign for us.” But he replied, “An evil and unfaithful generation looks for a sign! But none will be given except that of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days and three nights, so also the Human will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.”

While he was still speaking to the crowd, his mother and siblings arrived, and they waited outside to talk to him. Someone let him know, but he said, “Who is my mother, and who are my siblings?” Then he pointed toward his disciples and said, “See, these are my mother and siblings! Whoever does the will of my Father in the heavens is my brother and sister and mother.”

Then he turned to his disciples and said, “Everything has been handed over to me by my Father. No one can really know the Son except the Father, nor can anyone know the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. You’re very privileged to see what you have seen! Prophets and kings wanted to see and hear what you’ve seen and heard. So come to me, all who labor under a heavy load, and I will relieve you. Put my harness on you and learn from me, for I am gentle and considerate. Then your souls will be at rest, because the harness is gentle and the load is light.”

### **A GRATEFUL WOMAN SHAMES THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS**

A certain religious leader, Simon the Leper, invited Jesus to dinner, so he entered the house and reclined at the table. But a very sinful woman who lived in that city found out he was there, and she brought in an alabaster flask of perfumed oil. She poured it on his head and then stood at his feet crying. Her tears fell on his feet, so she wiped them with her hair, massaging and kissing them and rubbing them with the oil.

But Judas of Kerioth, one of Jesus’ disciples (the one about to betray him), complained, “Why wasn’t this oil sold for a year’s wages and the proceeds given to the poor?” (He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was trusted with the donations given to the disciples but would take what he wanted from it.)

When Jesus realized this, he scolded him: “Why are you giving this woman such grief? She is doing an honorable thing to me. You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring the perfumed oil on me she is anointing my body for burial. And I assure you that wherever the good news is proclaimed around the world, what she did will be spoken of to honor her memory.”

Then the religious leader that had invited him said to himself, “Some prophet! He should already know what kind of woman this is who is touching him— a very sinful woman!”

“Simon, I have something to tell you,” Jesus said. And he replied, “Speak, teacher.”

“Two people owed money to a certain creditor. One owed five hundred days’ wages, and the other owed fifty. But since they had no way to repay it, the creditor forgave both debts. Now who do you suppose will love him more?”

“I’d assume it’s the one who had the bigger debt forgiven,” Simon replied.

“Correct,” answered Jesus. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “See this woman? When I came into your home you offered no water for my feet, but she has rained down tears on them and wiped them with her hair. You did not greet me with a kiss, but the whole time I’ve been here she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has rubbed my feet with perfumed oil. For this reason, I tell you that she is acquitted of her many sins, for she loved much. In contrast, the one who is forgiven little, loves little.”

Then he said to her, “All your sins are forgiven!” But the others reclining there began to mutter, “Who is he to forgive sins?” But he told the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

# Parables

## THE REASON FOR PARABLES

Jesus said many things to the crowds in the form of parables; in fact, he never told them anything that wasn't a parable, though he explained them all to his disciples privately. This was to fulfill the prophecy, "I will speak to them using parables; I will express what has been concealed since the world was established."

So when his disciples asked him why he did this, he answered, "The secrets of the kingdom of the heavens have been revealed to you but not to the crowds. For more will be given to those who already have, and they will have plenty. But from those who have little, what they have will be taken away. So I speak to them in parables because no matter how much they see and hear, they don't understand."

"This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah where it says, 'You will hear the report but not understand; you will look but not see. For these people's minds have become thick; they've plugged their ears and shut their eyes. Otherwise, they'd turn to me and I would miraculously heal them.' But be happy that your eyes see and your ears hear what the prophets and righteous people of old could not."

## SCATTERED SEEDS

"One day a farmer went out to scatter seeds. Some of them fell on the edges of the path, and the birds came along and ate them. Others fell on thin, rocky soil. They sprang up quickly but had little depth, so when the sun came up it scorched them, and they withered because they had no root. Still others fell among thorns, which sprang up and choked them out. But some fell on good soil and

produced thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times more than was scattered. If you have ears, listen!”

Then Jesus explained the parable to his disciples: “Some who hear the message of the kingdom don’t understand it, so the evil one snatches away the message from their minds; this relates to the seeds falling along the edges of the path. The seeds that fell on rocky soil relates to those who hear the message and gladly accept it right away. But because they’re shallow and have no root, they don’t last long. When the problems and tests of life come along, the message planted in them is quickly sidetracked. The seeds falling among thorns relates to those who hear the message, but the anxieties of life and the allure of wealth choke it out, so they produce nothing. But the seeds that fell onto good soil relate to those who hear the message and understand it, so they produce a good crop up to thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times more than what was planted.”

### **THE LAMP ANALOGY**

“Nobody lights a lamp and then covers it or puts it under a bed; they put it on a lamp stand to light up the whole room. For there is nothing hidden that won’t be revealed, and nothing concealed that won’t be brought into the open. In the same way, let your light shine before others so they can see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

### **MYSTERIOUS SEEDS, TINY SEEDS, AND YEAST**

The kingdom of God is like this: A farmer plants seeds and goes to bed, then wakes up the next day and the seed has sprouted and grown. The farmer has no idea how this happens; the earth just automatically produces the stalk, then the ear, and then the full head of grain. And when it ripens it is time to get out the sickle, because the harvest is ready.

It's also like a mustard seed that someone planted in their field. Though it's among the smallest of seeds, it grows to become one of the larger plants. In fact, it becomes the size of a tree, big enough for the birds to build nests in its branches.

Or think of it like yeast that a woman adds to three measures of flour; a tiny amount makes all the dough rise.

## **TRUE AND FALSE BELIEVERS**

“The kingdom of the heavens is like someone who scattered good seed in his field, but during the night while everyone was asleep, his enemy came and scattered tares (weeds that look like wheat) all over the place and went away. So when the grain sprouted and grew, so did the tares. Then the workers went to the owner and asked, ‘Sir, didn’t you plant good seed in your field? So where did the tares come from?’

“‘An enemy did this!’ he replied.

“‘Do you want us to go and pull them out?’ asked the workers.

“‘No,’ he answered, ‘In the process of pulling the fake you might accidentally uproot the genuine. Let them all grow up together until the harvest. Then I’ll tell the reapers, “First gather up the tares and tie them into bundles to be burned, and then gather up the wheat and put it into my silo.”’”

Then Jesus’ disciples came to him and asked for the meaning the parable of the tares in the field, and this is what he said: “The one who planted good seed represents the Human, the field represents the world, the good seed represents the citizens of the kingdom, the tares represent the servants of the evil one, and the enemy who planted the tares is the devil. The harvest represents the end of the age, and the reapers represent the angels.



“Just as the tares are gathered and burned, so also will it be at the end of the age. The Human will send out his angels, and they will uproot the wicked from his kingdom. These will be thrown into the blazing furnace, where they will lament and grind their teeth. But the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, listen!”

## **ANALOGIES OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS**

“The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in a field. When someone discovers it, they cover it up again and then gladly go out and sell everything they have in order to buy that field. Or think of it as a merchant looking for beautiful pearls. When they find a superb specimen, they go out and sell everything they have in order to buy it.”

“Yet another way to think of it is like a dragnet thrown into the sea, where it collects all kinds of fish. When it’s full, it’s hauled to shore and they sort the fish, putting the good ones into containers and throwing the bad ones back. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the evil from the righteous, and the evil will be thrown into the blazing furnace where they will lament and grind their teeth.”

## **THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

A lawyer stood up to provoke Jesus: “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the law?” he replied. “How do you understand it?”

And his answer was, “You must love the Master your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

“Correct,” Jesus replied. “If you do this, you will live.”

But he wanted to make himself look clever so he asked, “And exactly who is my neighbor?”

Accepting the challenge, Jesus said, “A certain person was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by muggers. They stripped off his clothes, beat him up, and left him there half dead. By coincidence a certain priest went down that same road, but he passed by on the other side. Likewise, a Levite came to that same spot and saw him, but he too passed by on the other side.

“But when a Samaritan came along and saw him, he was moved with pity. He went over to him and applied ointment and bandages to his wounds. Then he put him on his own animal and took him to an inn to be cared for. As he left the next day he gave two days’ wages to the innkeeper and said to him, ‘Take care of him, and if you incur additional expenses, I will compensate you when I return.’ So which of these three do you suppose was being a neighbor to the one who was mugged?”

“The one who had pity on him,” the lawyer replied.

Then Jesus said, “Now go and do likewise!”

## **THE RICH FOOL**

Then someone from the crowd said, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the estate with me!” But Jesus replied, “You there— who appointed me as the judge or executor of your estate?” And then he said to them, “Watch and be on your guard against all kinds of greed, because your life is not found in the abundance of your possessions.”

Then he gave them this parable: “There was a rich person whose farm produced a bumper crop. And he began to think to himself,

‘What will I do with all this? I have no place to put it. I know... I’ll demolish the existing barns and build bigger ones! Then I will fill them with all my grain and possessions, and say to myself, “Man, you have it made for many years to come. Let the party begin!”’ But God said to him, ‘Dimwit! This very night your life will be demanded back from you, and then who will benefit from all your preparations?’ And so it will also be for those who store up riches only for themselves and care nothing for God.”

### **THE GUESTS AND THE BANQUET**

Then Jesus noticed that the guests at a banquet all selected the best seats possible, so he turned to them and gave them a parable: “Whenever you happen to be invited to weddings, don’t take the most prominent seats for yourselves. What if someone more important than you has been invited, and you are asked to give up your seat for them? Then, in humiliation, you will have to take the worst seat.

“Instead, when you’re invited, take the seat farthest back. Then the one who invited you may say to you, ‘Friend, come and sit farther up’, and you will be honored in front of everyone else. For all who promote themselves will be humiliated, but all who humble themselves will be promoted.”

Then he said to the host, “Whenever you host a luncheon or dinner, don’t invite your friends, siblings, relatives, and rich neighbors, because they may invite you to theirs and pay you back. Instead, invite the destitute, the disabled, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed, because even though they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Upon hearing this, one of the guests said to him, “Blessed is the one who eats at the luncheon in the kingdom of God!”

Then Jesus said this: “A certain person prepared a lavish banquet and invited many guests. So when dinner time came, a servant was sent to all the invited guests to say, ‘Come! The banquet is ready.’ But one after another began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I’m sorry, but I just bought a field and must go to inspect it.’ Another said, ‘I’m sorry, but I just bought five pairs of oxen and must try them out.’ And another said, ‘I just got married and cannot come.’

“So the servant returned and reported this to the master. Then the homeowner became angry and said to the servant, ‘Go out quickly to the city square and into the streets, and invite the destitute, the disabled, the blind, and the crippled to my banquet!’

“Then the slave reported, ‘I’ve done what you said, but there is still room for more’.

“So the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the lanes and outskirts of town and urge them to come in, so my house will be completely filled. I tell you, not one of those original invited guests will get a taste of my dinner!’ ”

## **THE LOST SHEEP, COIN, AND SON**

All the tax contractors and scoundrels were coming to hear him. And the religious leaders grumbled, “This one welcomes scoundrels and even eats with them!” But he replied to them with a parable:

“If you had a hundred sheep but lost one, which of you would not leave the 99 others out in the open and go after the lost one until you found it? And when you did, you would put it on your shoulders and go home happy. Then you’d call together your friends and neighbors and say, ‘Celebrate with me, because I found my lost sheep!’ But I tell you, this is the kind of happiness there will be in heaven whenever one scoundrel turns to God, rather than the 99 who have no such need.

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins. If she loses one, won’t she light a lamp and sweep the house, looking carefully until she finds it? And when she does, she will call together her friends and neighbors and say, ‘Celebrate with me, because I found the silver coin I lost!’ Likewise, I tell you, there is happiness in the presence of the angels of God on account of one scoundrel who turns to him.”

Then he continued: “A certain person had two sons. The younger one said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate’. So he divided the property between them. Shortly thereafter the younger son packed all his belongings and went abroad to a far-away land. He squandered his property in extravagant living, spending everything he had. But then a severe famine came upon the land, and he began to be in need.

“So he got in touch with one of the local citizens, who sent him into his fields to tend hogs. And he longed to be filled with the husks the pigs were fed, but no one gave him anything. He finally came to his senses and said to himself, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands get plenty of food, yet here I am starving to death! I will get up and go to my father and say, “Father, I have failed both heaven and you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, so please make me like one of your hired hands.”’

“So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still some distance away, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran toward him and greeted him fondly. And the son started to say to him, ‘Father, I have failed both heaven and you and am no longer worthy to be called your son...’ But the father said to his workers, ‘Quick! Get the finest robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Get the fattened calf and kill it so we can have a party! For my son was dead but now lives; he was lost but now is found!’ And so the party began.

“Now the older son was in the field, and as he came near the house he heard music and dancing. So he called for one of the household help to find out what all this was about. And they replied, ‘It’s because your brother has returned. Your father had the fattened calf killed, because your brother came back safe and sound.’ But the older brother was angry and refused to enter the house, so his father came out to comfort him.

“But the son said to him, ‘Look, in all the years I slaved for you, I never disobeyed a single order you gave me. Yet you never even gave me a goat for a party for my friends. But when this son of yours comes back after wasting your property on hookers, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

“But the father replied, ‘My child, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we must celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead but now lives; he was lost and now is found!’ ”

## **THE WICKED STEWARD**

Jesus said to his disciples, “A certain rich person had a house manager who was accused of being wasteful with the rich person’s assets. So he called him in and said, ‘What is this I’m hearing about you? Give your final report, because you are no longer my administrator.’

“Then the house manager said to himself, ‘What am I going to do, now that my boss is firing me? I don’t have the strength to dig and I’m too proud to beg. I know what I’ll do! And when I’m let go, people will welcome me into their homes.’ So he summoned each one who owed his master money. And he said to the first one, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

“ ‘A hundred measures of olive oil’, he replied.

“ ‘Quick, get your invoice,’ he said, ‘Sit down and write fifty instead.’

“He then asked another how much they owed, and they said ‘A hundred bags of grain.’

“And he said, ‘Get your invoice and change it to eighty.’

“The master had to commend the crooked house manager for his cleverness, because the people of the world are more savvy in their dealings with each other than are the people of light. They make friends with those who benefitted from cheating, so that when their wealth is gone they will be welcomed into their homes. Plan ahead for eternal homes!”

## **THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT**

“It’s like this in the kingdom of the heavens: A certain king wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And as he began, someone who owed him an enormous sum of money was brought before him. But he couldn’t pay it, so the master ordered that he, his wife and children, and all his possessions were to be sold in order to pay the debt.

“The servant dropped to his knees and begged, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full!’ The master was moved with compassion and forgave the debt. But after he was let go, the servant went out from there to go after a fellow servant who owed him about a year’s wages. Grabbing him by the throat he demanded, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ So that servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me and I will pay you back!’ But he refused and had him thrown into prison until he paid back every bit of his debt.

“But the other servants saw what he did and were very upset. So they went to the master and informed him of what had happened. Then the master called that servant in and said to him, ‘You evil

servant! I forgave all that debt you owed me, just because you asked. So why didn't you have the same pity on your fellow servant?' Then in his rage his master handed him over to the torturers until he had paid every last bit of his debt. And so it will be with my Father in the heavens, if you won't forgive your sisters and brothers from the heart."

## **THE PERSISTENT WIDOW**

Then he gave them another parable, to illustrate the need to always pray and not give up: "There was a judge in a certain city who had no fear of God and no regard for anyone. There was also a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him to plead for justice against her accuser. For a while he ignored her, but eventually he said to himself, 'I have no fear of God and no regard for anyone. But since this widow is wearing me down, I will see that she gets justice— before she gets violent!'"

Then Jesus added, "Notice what the unjust judge is saying. But won't God do even more to vindicate his chosen ones who plead for help day and night? Will he keep them waiting? I tell you that he will vindicate them, and do it quickly. But the question is, will the Human find faith on the earth when he comes?"

## **THE RELIGIOUS LEADER AND THE TAX CONTRACTOR**

Jesus gave yet another parable, this time to those who are self-righteous and think themselves better than others: "Two people went up to the temple to pray; one was a religious leader and the other was a tax contractor. The religious leader stood there and prayed to himself, 'I am grateful to you, God, because I'm not like everyone else: extortioners, cheaters, adulterers... and especially this tax contractor. I fast every Monday and give a tenth of everything I acquire.'



“But the tax contractor stood at a distance, not even lifting his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his chest and said, ‘God, please take away my guilt!’ I tell you, it was this one and not the other who went home cleared of all charges. Those who exalt themselves will be humiliated, but those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

## **EARLY AND LATE WORKERS**

“Let me tell you about the kingdom of the heavens: It’s like a landowner who went out one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He offered the usual amount for a day’s work and they agreed, so he sent them off to his vineyard. About three hours later he went out and saw others loitering in the marketplace, so he said to them, ‘Go out to my vineyard and I’ll pay you a fair wage.’

“They went off to work, and then after about another three hours he repeated this, and again three hours after that. Even a couple hours after that he still found more people standing around, and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing around all day, doing nothing?’

“ ‘No one has hired us,’ they replied.

“ ‘Come to my vineyard,’ he said.

“Now when evening came the owner said to his paymaster, ‘Call in the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last hired and ending with the first.’ Then the last ones hired came and were given a full day’s wages, so the first ones hired expected to be given more. But when they too were given a full day’s wages, they complained to the landowner: ‘These who only worked one hour were given the same pay as we who did the bulk of the work and endured the scorching heat!’

“So the landowner explained to one of the workers, ‘Buddy, I have not cheated you. Didn’t you agree to a day’s wages? Take your pay and go; isn’t it my business if I want to give the last hired the same pay as you? Can’t I do what I want? Are you angry with me because I am kind?’ “And that’s how it will be: The last will be first, and the first will be last.”

## **GOOD AND USELESS SERVANTS**

“It’s also like this: Someone about to travel abroad called his servants together and put them in charge of his possessions. To one he gave five loads of money, to another two, and to another one, each according to their ability. As soon as he was gone, the one with five loads of money put it to work in the markets and earned five more. Likewise, the one with two loads of money earned two more. But the one with one load of money went out, dug a hole in the ground, and hid the money his master had given him.

“After a long time the master returned to settle accounts with his servants. First the one with five loads of money brought that plus the five earned and said, ‘Master, you gave me five loads of money, but as you can see, I’ve earned five more.’

“ ‘Well done, good and trustworthy servant!’ exclaimed the master. ‘And since you were faithful with a little, I will put you in charge of a lot. Come and celebrate with me!’

“Next was the one with two loads of money, who said, ‘Master, you gave me two loads of money, but as you can see, I’ve earned two more.’

“ ‘Well done, good and trustworthy servant!’ the master exclaimed. ‘And since you were faithful with a little, I will put you in charge of a lot. Come and celebrate with me!’

“Then the last one came and said, ‘Master, I knew that you’re a tough guy who gets other people to plant the seed while you reap the harvest, and I was afraid you’d do that to me. So I planted your money in the ground, and here’s your harvest!’

“ ‘You evil, lazy servant!’ snarled the master. ‘So you knew I reaped the benefits of other people’s work, did you? Then you should have put my money on deposit at the bank where it would at least have earned interest! Take the load of money from this one and give it to the one with ten loads of money, for those who have a lot will be given more, and those who have little will have it taken away. Then take this useless servant and throw him out into the darkness, where they wail and grind their teeth!’

## **TWO CHILDREN AND THEIR CHOICES**

“Here’s something for you to think about: Suppose someone had two children, and he told the first one to go out and work in the vineyard that day. But that one said, ‘No, I don’t want to,’ yet later they felt bad about it and went out anyway. The same question was put to the other one, who said, ‘Yes, sir’ but didn’t go. So which one actually did what the father wanted?”

“The first,” the religious leaders answered.

And Jesus replied, “I can assure you that tax contractors and immoral people will enter the kingdom of God before you do! For John came to you walking the path of righteousness and you didn’t believe him. But tax contractors and immoral people believed him, and even when you saw that you still didn’t change your ways!

## **WICKED TENANTS**

“Listen to another parable: A certain landowner planted a vineyard, put up a wall around it, dug a wine press, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went traveling abroad. When it

came time for the harvest, he sent his servants to the tenant farmers to get the produce. But they grabbed the servants and beat up one, killed another, and threw stones at yet another. So he sent more servants than before, and they did the same to them.

“Finally he sent his own son, thinking ‘They will respect my son!’ But when the tenant farmers saw him they said to each other, ‘This is the heir; come on, let’s kill him, and then we will inherit the vineyard!’ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the landowner comes, what do you think he’ll do to those tenant farmers?”

“He will wipe out those criminals!” the religious leaders answered, “And he’ll lease the vineyard to others who will give him his due share of the crop.”

So then Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Master has done this, and it is a wonderful thing to see!’? This is why I’m telling you that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that will give God what belongs to him!” And when they heard this, they realized he was talking about them. So they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd, who considered him a prophet.

## **THE WEDDING FEAST**

“The kingdom of the heavens is like a king arranging a wedding for his son. He sent out servants to tell the invited guests to come to the wedding, but they would not come. So he sent out servants again with the instructions, ‘Tell the invited guests, ‘Look, the meal is ready; the meat is prepared and everything is set. Come to the wedding!’” But again they ignored him; one went out to his fields, another to his business, and the rest grabbed his servants, beat them up, and killed them.

“The king was furious and sent soldiers to wipe out those murderers and set their city on fire. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but the invited guests were unworthy. So go out to the highways and invite anyone you find to the wedding.’ So they went out to the roads and gathered up whoever they found, whether good or bad, and the dining hall was full.

“But when the king came in to greet the guests, he saw someone there who wasn’t wearing proper wedding attire. So he said, ‘Buddy, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ But he was speechless. So the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him up by his hands and feet, and throw him out into the darkness, where people lament and grind their teeth!’ For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

## **WISE AND FOOLISH WOMEN**

“The kingdom of the heavens is also like this: Ten single women carried torches as they went out to wait for the bridegroom. But five were foolish and five were sensible, because the foolish ones didn’t take any extra oil along, as the sensible ones did. And since the bridegroom was delayed a long time, they all dozed off and fell asleep.

“In the middle of the night came the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ So the single women all woke up and prepared their torches. Then the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, ‘Give us some of your oil; our torches have gone out.’ But the sensible ones replied, ‘No, there’s not enough for all of us. You’ll have to go to the market and buy more for yourselves.’ While they were gone the bridegroom arrived, so the sensible ones entered with him to the wedding, and then the door was locked. When the others came back later on, they pleaded, ‘Sir, sir, open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I honestly don’t know who you are.’ So be alert! You don’t know the day or the hour.”

## TREES AND FRUIT

“If you plant a good tree you get good fruit, but if you plant a bad tree you get bad fruit. So a tree is known by the fruit it makes. You pit of poisonous snakes! How can good speech come from evil people? The mouth speaks whatever comes from the mind, so a good person expresses the good stored inside of them, and an evil person expresses the evil stored inside of them. And on Judgment Day, people will have to account for every little remark they made. You will either be acquitted or condemned by your own words.”

At last

“Do you understand this now?” Jesus asked his disciples.

“Yes,” they replied.

Then Jesus added, “So then, every scripture scholar who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of the heavens is like someone who owns a house and furnishes it with both new things and old things from storage.”

# The Ministry Continues

## ANOTHER HEALING AND MORE OPPOSITION

On another Jewish festival, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There was a pool there with five porticoes at the Sheep Gate, which in Hebrew is called Bethzatha. A large number of the disabled— blind, lame, sick — were set down in the porticoes to wait for the stirring of the water. Every now and then, an angel of the Master would come to stir up the water, and the first person to get into the water would be healed of whatever ailment they had.

Now a certain person was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. Jesus saw him lying down and knew he had been there a long time, so he said to him, “I assume you want to be healed.”

The disabled one replied, “Sir, I have no one to help me into the water whenever it’s disturbed. Before I can get in, someone else gets there first.”

Then Jesus said, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!” Immediately he was healed, and he picked up his mat and walked around. But since it was a Sabbath day, the Jews said to the one who was healed, “You are not permitted to carry your mat on a Sabbath!”

But he answered, “The one who healed me is the one who told me to pick up my mat and walk.”

Then they asked him who told him to do that, but the one who was healed didn’t see who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd. Then Jesus found him in the temple compound and said, “Look at you— you’ve been healed. Be sure not to sin any more, or else something worse may happen to you.”

The person went away and informed the Jews that Jesus was the one who healed him, and they hounded Jesus because he did these things on the Sabbath. So he told them, “My Father is at work, and so am I.” This made the Jews all the more determined to kill him, since he not only violated the Sabbath but also called God his father, making himself the same as God.

Then Jesus responded, “Very truly I tell you all, that the Son can do nothing of his own accord but only that which he sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does is what the Son also does. The Father loves the Son and shows him everything he’s doing. And he will show him greater and more amazing things than these! Just as the Father raises the dead back to life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he chooses. The Father is not judging anyone but has instead handed it all over to the Son, so that all might honor the Son just as they honor the Father. On the other hand, those who dishonor the Son dishonor the Father who sent him.

“Very truly I tell you all, that the one who hears what I say and puts their trust in the one sending me has eternal life. Instead of facing judgment they’ve escaped death and attained life. I tell you that an hour is coming— and in fact is upon us— when the dead will hear the voice of the God-Man and come to life. After all, the Father controls life, and so does the Son. The Father gives him authority to judge, even though he’s a human being.

“Don’t be surprised at this, since the hour is coming when all those in their graves will hear his voice. Those who do good things will be raised to eternal life, but those who do bad things will be raised to face judgment. I can do nothing of my own accord; I only judge as I’m told. My judgment is impartial due to the fact that I’m not following my own agenda but that of the one who sent me.



“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. But there is another who vouches for me, and I know that his testimony is true. You sent people to John and he served as a witness to the truth. But I don’t get my testimony from people; I tell you these things so you can be saved. John was a little candle that burned and shined, and for a short time you enjoyed that light. Yet my testimony is greater than his, because the tasks the Father has given me to complete—the very things I’m doing—are evidence that the Father has sent me.

“The Father has testified about me, though you have neither heard nor seen him and don’t keep his word, because you haven’t believed the one he sent. You search the scriptures because you think you’ll find eternal life in them, yet those very scriptures point to me. But you refuse to come to me so you could have life.

“People don’t honor me, but I know you all, and the love of God is not in you. I have come with the authority of my Father and you won’t accept me, but if someone comes by their own authority you’ll accept them. How can you believe, when you only honor each other instead of reaching for the honor that only comes from God? Don’t think that I’m the one who will accuse you before the Father; your accuser will be none other than Moses, the one upon whom you’ve pinned all your hopes. If you had believed Moses you’d believe me, since I’m the one he wrote about. So if you don’t believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?”

## **HEROD EXECUTES JOHN THE IMMERSER**

Sometime during Jesus’ public activities, Herod had arrested John the Immerser, because he called Herod out for marrying the wife of his brother Philip. So his wife, Herodias, was out to get John and wanted to kill him. But she couldn’t because Herod feared John and knew him to be a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. He was intrigued with him and liked to listen to him.

But then came the opportune moment. On his birthday, Herod was hosting a dinner for all his important guests, including legion commanders and leading citizens of Galilee. When Herodias' daughter came in and danced for them, this pleased Herod and his guests. So the king said to the young girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he swore a strong oath to her: "Anything you ask of me, I will give to you— even up to half my kingdom!"

So she went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?"

"The head of John the Immerser!" her mother replied.

So she hurried to the king and said, "I choose that you immediately give me, on a platter, the head of John the Immerser!"

The king was devastated. But because of his oaths and the dinner guests, he didn't want to decline her request. So he immediately dispatched his executioner to behead John in the prison. Then he brought the head on a platter and gave it to the young girl, who gave it to her mother. Upon hearing this, his disciples came and carried away his body and buried it.

Eventually Herod heard about all that Jesus was doing, since his name had become well-known. People were saying that John the Immerser had been raised from the dead, since he had these powers. Others said he was Elijah, and still others that he was a prophet like the prophets of old. But when Herod heard this he said, "It's John, the one I had beheaded! He has come back from the dead!"

## **JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND**

After John's death, Jesus went off alone by boat to a solitary place. But the crowd found out and followed on foot from all the cities. And when Jesus came out of there he saw the large crowd and was moved with compassion for them, so he healed the sick among

them. But eventually his disciples came to him and said, “This is an isolated place and the hour is getting late. Dismiss the crowd so they can go off to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

But Jesus said to them, “There’s no need for them to go; you feed them!”

“How are we supposed to do that?!” they exclaimed. “All we have are five loaves of bread and two fish. It would take 200 days’ wages to buy enough bread for them to eat!”

“Bring them to me,” Jesus replied.

He ordered the crowd to recline on the grass for a meal. He had them all sit down in equally-sized groups on the green grass, and they reclined according to a grid of plots in groups of hundreds and fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to the sky and blessed them, then broke them up and gave them to his disciples. The disciples then passed them out to the crowd, and they all ate until they were full; the leftovers filled twelve wicker baskets. The number of men who had eaten was around five thousand, not counting the women and children.

## **JESUS WALKS ON WATER**

Immediately Jesus had his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake, while he stayed and dismissed the crowd. Then he went up into the mountain alone to pray. It was late when he was there alone, and by that time the boat had already gone far from land. But he saw that they were straining at the oars because the wind was against them, so at about three in the morning he came to them, walking on the sea. And when his disciples saw him they were very disturbed and shouted out in terror, “It’s a ghost!”

But Jesus quickly assured them, “Have courage, it’s me! Don’t be afraid.”

Then Peter said to him, “Master, if it’s really you, command me to come to you on the water.”

“Come on!” replied Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water. He came near Jesus but then got distracted by the strong wind. He became afraid and started to sink, so he called out to him, “Master, save me!”

Immediately Jesus reached out and grabbed Peter and said, “You skeptic! Why did you doubt?” As soon as they got into the boat, the wind died down and they were all suddenly at their destination. So they worshiped him and said, “Truly you are the God-Man!” They were beside themselves with awe, even after seeing the miracle of feeding the five thousand (they were slow to catch on).

The next day the crowd was standing on the other side of the sea. They knew that there had only been one other boat there, and Jesus did not leave with his disciples, who had gone off alone. But boats from Tiberias arrived near the place where they had eaten the bread for which the Master had given thanks. So, realizing that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and set off for Capernaum to look for Jesus.

## **THE BREAD OF LIFE**

Finding him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Jesus replied, “I know very well that you didn’t come looking for me because of the miracles you saw, but because you filled yourselves with bread. Don’t work for food that spoils, but food that gives eter-

nal life. This is what The Human will give you, the one confirmed by the Father.”

Then they asked him, “What can we do, so that we are performing the work God wants from us?”

Jesus answered, “This is what God wants you to do: to put your trust into the one he sent.”

Then they asked, “So then, what miracle will you do, so we can see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness just as it is written, ‘Out of the sky he gave them bread to eat.’ ”

Jesus replied, “I tell you very truly, it wasn’t Moses who gave you bread from the sky, but my Father who has given you true bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is the one descending from heaven and giving eternal life to the world.”

So they said to him, “Sir, keep on giving us this bread!”

But Jesus explained, “I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever puts their trust in me will never go thirsty. But though I told you this and you’ve been watching me, you still don’t believe. Everyone the Father gives me will reach me; I will never reject any that come to me. The reason I came down from heaven was not to do my own will but that of the one who sent me. And this is what he wants: that I would not lose one of them, but raise them up in the last day. My Father’s will is that all who look to the Son and put their trust in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.”

Then the Jews grumbled about him because he said “I am the Bread of Life, the one coming down from heaven.” So they said, “Isn’t this

Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he say that he came down from heaven?”

Jesus replied, “Stop grumbling among yourselves! No one can come to me without being pulled by the Father who sent me, and I will raise them up on the last day. It has been written by the prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes toward me. The Father has been seen by no one except the one from God.

“I tell you very truly, that the one who believes has eternal life. I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and died, but anyone who eats this Bread from heaven will not die. I am the living Bread from heaven; whoever eats this Bread will live forever. Now what I mean by ‘bread’ is my flesh, which I will give up so that the world may live.”

Then the Jews argued with each other and said, “How can he give us his flesh to eat?”

So Jesus responded, “I tell you very truly that if you do not consume the flesh and blood of the Human, you have no life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that one up at the last day, for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. The one who consumes my flesh and blood remains in me, and I remain in that one. Just as the Father who commissioned me lives, I too live because of him. In the same way, the one consuming me will live because of me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven; unlike our ancestors who ate and died, the one consuming this Bread will live forever.”

He said these things while teaching in a meeting place in Capernaum. But upon hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a harsh teaching! Who can listen to it?”

Now Jesus, perceiving that his disciples were grumbling about this, asked them, “Is this tripping you up? What if you were to watch the Human going up to where he was at first? The spirit is what gives life; the flesh is of no advantage. The things I have declared to you are spirit and life. But there are some among you who do not believe.” Now Jesus knew from the beginning who the unbelievers were, as well as who would betray him. So he continued, “Therefore I have stated that no one could come to me without the Father granting it to them.”

At this, many of his disciples turned away and no longer followed him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Please tell me you don’t want to leave too!”

Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom would we turn? You have the message of eternal life! We trust you and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Jesus replied to them all, “Haven’t I chosen you Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He was referring to Judas, son of Simon of Kerioth. Though one of the Twelve, he intended to betray Jesus.)

## **THE HYPOCRISY OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS**

Next Jesus and the disciples crossed over and landed at Gennesaret. The people there recognized him and sent word throughout the whole area and brought him all the sick people. They begged to be allowed to touch the hem of his cloak, and whoever did was restored to health.

Then a religious leader asked Jesus to have lunch with him. So he went and reclined at the table, but the religious leader was surprised to see that Jesus did not perform ritual cleansing before the meal. So he asked, “Why is it that your disciples violate the tradition

of the elders by not ceremonially washing their hands before they eat?”

“And why do you violate the command of God with your traditions?” Jesus retorted. “You religious leaders wash the outside of the cup and plate, but on the inside you’re full of greed and evil. Dimwits! Didn’t the one who made the outside also make the inside? But if you give charitably from within, then you will be clean through and through. For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother; whoever speaks abusively against their father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that someone can get out of helping their father or mother by telling them, ‘Any help you would have received from me is a gift to God’. So you override the word of God by your tradition. Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied about you very well when he said, ‘These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far away from me. They revere me for no reason, and their teachings are the edicts of mere humans.’ ”

He called the crowd to himself and said to them, “Listen and understand: It isn’t what goes into the mouth that makes a person ‘unclean’, it’s what comes out of the mouth.” Then his disciples came to him and said, “Do you realize that the religious leaders were offended by what you said?”

And Jesus replied, “Every plant that my Father in heaven didn’t plant will be uprooted! Leave them; they are blind leaders of the blind. And if one blind person leads another, both will fall into a ditch.”

Then Peter asked him to explain the parable, and Jesus replied, “Are you really that dense? Don’t you understand that everything that goes into the mouth goes through the digestive tract and then is eliminated? But what comes out of the mouth comes from the mind and heart, and that’s what contaminates a person. That’s where evil



thoughts, murder, adultery, promiscuity, theft, false testimony, and slander come from. These are what contaminate a person, not how they wash their hands before eating.”

### **A FOREIGN WOMAN IMPRESSES JESUS**

From there, Jesus went away to the areas of Tyre and Sidon. Suddenly there was a Canaanite woman from around there, and she shouted out, “Have pity on me, sir, Descendant of David! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession.” But he did not respond to her. So his disciples went up to him and said, “Dismiss her, she’s shouting at us!”

Then he said to her, “I was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel.”

But she came and worshiped him and said, “Sir, please help!”

“We shouldn’t take the children’s food and toss it to the puppies,” he replied.

“Yes, sir,” the woman agreed. “But the puppies do get the scraps that fall from their master’s table.”

“Dear lady,” Jesus replied, “You have great faith! What you wanted will happen.” And her daughter was healed that very hour.

### **MORE HEALINGS**

Next Jesus went from there to the edge of the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up the mountain and sat down. Crowds of people came to him, bringing the lame the blind, the crippled, the deaf, and many others. They were placed at Jesus’ feet, and he healed them. It impressed the crowd very much to see the deaf/mute talking, the crippled well, the lame walking around, and the blind seeing. So they honored the God of Israel.

Then they brought him someone who was deaf and speech-impaired, pleading with him to place his hand on them. He took the person away from the crowd, put his fingers into the person's ears, and put saliva on his finger and touched their tongue. Then he looked up to the sky and sighed deeply, saying, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened up!"). Immediately the person could hear and speak normally. Jesus commanded them not to say a thing, but the more he did so, the more they spread the news. They were beyond awestruck and said, "Look at all the wonderful things he does! The deaf hear and the mute talk!"

When they arrived at Bethsaida, people brought a blind person to Jesus and begged him to touch him. Taking him by the hand, he led him outside of the village, where he put saliva on his eyes and placed his hands on him. And he asked, "Do you see anything?"

He looked up and said, "I see people as something like trees walking around." So Jesus put his hands on the blind one's eyes again, and the person could see normally; his vision was restored and he could see everything sharply. So Jesus sent him home with the warning, "Don't go into the village."

## **JESUS FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND**

Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I am moved with compassion for the crowd, because they've already been here with me for three days and have nothing to eat. But if I dismiss them without food, they might faint along the way."

"Where are we supposed to get enough food to satisfy a crowd like this in such a desolate place?" his disciples asked.

"How many loaves do you have?" he asked.

"Seven," they answered, "and a few small fish."

Then Jesus had the crowd sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks for them, broke them up, and handed the pieces to his disciples. Then the disciples passed them out to the crowd, and they all ate till they were full. The leftovers filled seven large baskets, even though the number of men was around four thousand, not counting the women and children. Then he dismissed the crowd and got into the boat, and he went to the area of Magadan.

### **THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS SEEK A SIGN**

The religious leaders came along to test Jesus, so they asked him to show them a miraculous sign from heaven. But instead he said, “If the sky is red in the evening, you say that the weather will be nice the next day. And if it’s red in the morning, you say that the weather will be bad. So why can’t you interpret the signs of the times? An evil and unfaithful generation looks for signs, but none will be given except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days and three nights, so also the Human will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.” Then he left them there and went away.

When his disciples arrived at the other side of the lake, they realized they had forgotten to get bread. And Jesus said to them, “Watch out for the yeast of the religious leaders!” So they talked it over among themselves and decided he was talking about them forgetting the bread.

But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said, “Why are you talking about not having bread, you skeptics? Don’t you understand or remember what happened with the five loaves and the five thousand, and how many baskets full of leftovers you picked up? Or what about the seven loaves and the four thousand, and all the leftovers? So how can you possibly think that I was talking about bread when I said, ‘Watch out for the yeast of the religious leaders’?”

Then it finally dawned on them that he wasn't referring to literal yeast in bread but to the religious leaders' teachings.

## **JESUS AND PETER**

When Jesus reached the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Human is?"

"Some say John the Immerser," they replied. "Others say Elijah, or maybe Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

"But who do you say I am?" Jesus asked.

"You are the Christ, the son of the living God!" declared Peter.

"You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah," Jesus replied. "For this was not revealed to you by ordinary means, but by my Father in the heavens. I hereby declare that you are Peter, and it is upon this rock of revelation that I will build my Congregation, which will withstand all the assaults of Hades. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of the heavens, so whatever you restrain on earth will also be restrained in the heavens, and whatever you let loose on earth will also be let loose in the heavens."

Then he told his disciples not to say a word about his being the Christ. And from then on he began to tell them that he would have to go into Jerusalem to suffer many things at the hands of the religious leaders, then be killed yet arise the third day.

But Peter scolded him and said, "Master, this will never happen to you!"

"Get out of my way, Satan!" Jesus said sternly. "You are trying to trap me, because you're thinking like people instead of God."

## THE CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Then Jesus said to his disciples and the crowd, “If anyone wants to follow me, they must completely renounce themselves, pick up their cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life on my account will find it. After all, what good is it to gain the whole world at the cost of your own life? Or what would anyone give in exchange for their life? The Human is going to come with his angels in the majesty of his Father, and he will reward each one according to what they have done. Anyone who wants to serve me should follow me; where I am is where my servant will also be. And whoever serves me will be honored by the Father. I can assure you that some standing here today will not experience death until they first see the Human coming in his kingdom. But if anyone in this generation of adulterers and scoundrels is ashamed of me and my words, the Human will be ashamed of that person when he comes.”

## THE TRANSFIGURATION

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John up into a high mountain alone. Then he transformed before their eyes; his face shone like the sun and his clothing became as white as the light, such as no launderer on earth could do. Then all of a sudden Moses and Elijah appeared! They were talking with him about his leaving the world, which was about to take place in Jerusalem.

Now Peter and the others had been in a deep sleep, but when they regained consciousness they saw Jesus’ majesty and the two men with him. After those two left, Peter blurted out, “Exalted One, it’s great to be here! We should put up three dwellings: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (he didn’t know what he was saying).

While he was still speaking, suddenly they were enveloped by a luminous cloud, and from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is

my dear son and I'm very pleased with him. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell face-down on the ground and were utterly terrified. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Don't be afraid!" So they looked up, but they saw no one except Jesus.

As they went down the mountain, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Human had risen from the dead. His disciples kept the command, but they couldn't agree among themselves what he had meant by rising from the dead. So they asked him, "What did the scripture scholars mean about Elijah having to come first?"

"Elijah does indeed come first," he assured them, "and he is restoring everything. In fact, Elijah has already come, but they didn't recognize him and treated him as they wished. So also must the Human be treated by them." Then the disciples realized that he was talking about John the Immerser.

## **TROUBLE WITH DEMONS**

When they reached the other disciples they saw a large crowd around them, and they were debating the religious leaders. The crowd recognized Jesus immediately and were thrilled to see him, so they raced toward him and greeted him. Then he asked them what they were arguing about, and one person out of the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought them my son. He has a mute spirit, and whenever it seizes him it takes control and causes him to foam at the mouth and grind his teeth, and he is wasting away. I asked your disciples to throw it out but they couldn't."

Jesus replied, "Faithless generation! How long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you? Bring him to me." So they brought him, and when the spirit saw Jesus it started right away to convulse the boy violently. It made him fall to the ground and roll around,

foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked the father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he replied. “On many occasions it has thrown him into the fire or into water to kill him. But if you can help us, have pity on us!”

“If I can?” asked Jesus. “Everything is possible to those who believe!”

Right away the boy’s father cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

Then Jesus saw the crowd rushing toward him, so rebuked the unclean spirit: “Deaf and mute spirit, I command you to get out of him and never enter him again!” And with much screaming and convulsing it left, making the boy to appear dead; in fact, most of the people believed he was dead. But Jesus grasped him by the hand, and he awakened and stood up.

When Jesus entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we throw it out?”

“This kind cannot be thrown out except with prayer,” he answered. “But mostly because of your lack of faith. I can assure you that if your faith were even as tiny as a mustard seed, you could order this mountain to move over there and it would! Nothing would be impossible for you.”

## **THE GREATEST**

Then he was approached by the mother of Zebedee’s sons, who brought them to him and knelt down to ask him something.

“What is it you want?” asked Jesus.

“Grant that these two sons of mine will sit beside you in your kingdom, one at the right and one at the left,” she said.

“Neither of you realize what you’re asking,” Jesus said to the brothers. “Can you drink from the same cup I must drink from?”

“Yes!” they said.

“Indeed you will!” Jesus responded. “But it isn’t up to me to say who will sit at my right and left. Those places are for the ones predetermined by my Father.”

While they were on their way to Capernaum, the disciples were arguing about something, and when they got to the house Jesus asked them what it was about. But they didn’t answer, because they had been arguing over who was the greatest, since they were angry at the two brothers.

So Jesus sat down and called the Twelve to him and said, “The kings of other nations exercise mastery over them, and those wielding authority are called benefactors. But you must not be like that. The greatest among you must become like the least, and the leader like the assistant. The one who is less esteemed among you is actually more important. Whoever wants to be first will be last of all, and the servant to all.”

Then he had a child stand in front of them, whom he picked up and held in his arms. And he said to them, “Whoever accepts one of these little ones in my name is really accepting me, and whoever accepts me is really accepting the One who sent me. I can assure you that unless you change your attitude and become like one of these little ones, you will absolutely never enter into the kingdom of the heavens! So those who humble themselves to the level of this child are greater in the kingdom of the heavens. And those who accept such a child on my account are really accepting me.



“If anyone sets a trap for the least significant of those who trust me, it would be better if that person had a large millstone hung around their neck and were drowned the sea! And woe to this world full of such traps. Such things must be, but woe to the person who sets them up! So if your hand or foot becomes a trap for you, cut it off and throw it away! Better to enter life crippled or lame than to have both hands or feet but be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye becomes a trap for you, pluck it out and throw it away! Better to enter life with one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into the eternal fire. So see to it that you don’t scorn these lowly ones. For I tell you that their angels in the heavens are always in the presence of my Father.

“What do you think? If someone has a hundred sheep and one wanders off, won’t they leave the other ninety-nine on the hills and go out looking for it? And once they find it, I can assure you that they are happier about that one than the other ninety-nine that didn’t wander off! And so it is with your Father in the heavens; he does not want even one of these lowly ones to be lost.”

## **PAYING TAXES**

Then those who collect the annual temple tax came up to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the tax?” And Peter replied, “Yes, of course.” But when they went inside, Jesus anticipated him and said, “What do you think, Simon? Who is it that the kings of the earth tax: their own people or foreigners?”

“Foreigners,” Simon answered.

“So then, the citizens are exempt,” Jesus replied. “But just so we don’t offend them, go to the sea and cast a line. Take the first fish you catch and open its mouth. Inside you will find a coin; use it to pay for my taxes and yours.”

## FOR AND AGAINST

Then John spoke up: “Teacher, we saw someone throwing out demons in your name and we stopped them, because they’re not one of us.”

But Jesus replied, “Don’t stop them, because no one who does a powerful deed in my name can turn right around and malign me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Whoever gives you a cup of water, just because you belong to the Christ, will certainly be paid their wages.”

## SIN IN THE COMMUNITY

“If your brother or sister sins, go and confront them privately. If they listen to you, you have won them back. But if they don’t listen, take one or two others with you, so that ‘every charge is confirmed by two or three witnesses’. If they still don’t listen, tell it to the community, and if they don’t even listen to them, treat them as you would a foreigner or a tax contractor.

“I can assure you that whatever you restrict on earth will be restricted in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven. I will say it again: If just two or three of you agree on anything in the world you may ask about, it will be granted by my Father in the heavens. For where two or three have gathered on my account, there I am with them.”

## FORGIVENESS

Then Peter came up to him and asked, “Master, how many times can a sister or brother sin against me, and I still have to forgive them? Up to seven times?”

“Not only up to seven times, but seventy-seven times!” Jesus replied. “Be mindful of this: If your brother or sister does you

wrong, rebuke them; and if they're sorry, forgive them. Even if they do you wrong seven times in a day, and seven times they turn around and apologize, forgive them. This is how it will be with my Father in the heavens, so forgive your sisters and brothers from the heart.”

# Tension Builds

## A DISPUTE ABOUT DIVORCE

Jesus went about in Galilee instead of Judea, since the Jews intended to kill him. But then he left Galilee and entered the area of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. A large crowd followed him, and he healed them there. Then the religious leaders came to test him: “Is ‘No-Fault Divorce’ legal?”

“Haven’t you read,” replied Jesus, “that God made them male and female from the very beginning, and that ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So then, what God has joined together, people must not separate.”

“Then why did Moses command that she be given a certificate of divorce and released?” they asked.

“Moses permitted it because of your stubbornness,” Jesus answered. “But it was not originally that way. So it follows that if any man divorces his wife when she hasn’t been unfaithful, and he marries someone else, he is committing adultery.”

Then his disciples remarked, “If that’s how it is between a husband and wife, it would be better not to marry!”

“Not everyone can accept this,” Jesus replied. “But only those to whom it has been given. Some men were born eunuchs, others were castrated, and still others have chosen to be celibate for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens. Those to whom this applies can accept it.”

## **JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN**

Next some people brought their little ones to present to Jesus so he could pray for them, but the disciples rebuked them. So Jesus said, “Leave them alone! Don’t forbid them to come to me, because the kingdom of the heavens is composed of such people.” Then he blessed them and went on from there.

## **THE RICH RULER SEEKS ETERNAL LIFE**

Suddenly someone came up to him and said, “Teacher, what good things must I do in order to have eternal life?”

“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “Only God is truly good. But if you want to enter into eternal life, hold tight to the commandments.”

“Which ones?” asked the young person.

“Don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself,” Jesus answered.

“I’ve kept all those since my youth,” the person replied. “What am I missing?”

“If you want to be complete,” replied Jesus, “go and sell all your possessions and give the proceeds to the destitute, and you will have treasure in the heavens. Then come and follow me.”

Now when the young person heard this, he went away dejected, because he was very wealthy. So Jesus remarked to his disciples, “It is truly difficult for the rich to enter into the kingdom of the heavens! I tell you, it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

This shocked the disciples, so they asked, “Then who can possibly be saved?”

Then Jesus looked at them and said, “This is impossible for people, but God can do anything!”

Then Peter spoke up: “See, we’ve given up everything to follow you. So what will happen to us?”

And Jesus answered, “I can assure you who have followed me, that when everything is made new again and the Human sits on his majestic throne, you Twelve will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Everyone who has given up houses, brothers or sisters, father or mother, children, or land on my account, will be given back a hundred times as much, along with inheriting eternal life. And the prominent will be least important, while the least important will be prominent.”

## **CHALLENGES ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM**

As the time drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he was determined to go to Jerusalem. It was near time for the Jews’ Festival of Tents, so his siblings said to him, “If you want to be famous, you’ll have to go into Judea so your disciples can see what you’re doing. After all, people don’t stay hidden if they want publicity. If you’re going to do these things, show the world!” (His own siblings didn’t believe him.)

But Jesus responded, “My time has not yet come, but for you, any time will do. The world can’t hate you, but it hates me because I am testifying that it does evil. So you go on up to the festival; I’m not going to this one because it isn’t my time.” After he said this, he remained in Galilee. But after his siblings left he decided to go after all, but secretly so no one would know.

Jesus sent messengers ahead to go into a Samaritan village, to prepare for his arrival. But they rejected him because he was on his way to Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Master, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?” But Jesus turned around and rebuked them, and they went on to another village.

As they went along the road, someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go,” and he replied, “Foxes have burrows and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Human has no place to lay his head.”

To another person Jesus said, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Master, first let me go and bury my father.” And Jesus replied, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you should publicize the kingdom of God.”

Yet another person said to Jesus, “Master, first let me say goodbye to the people in my household.” But he replied, “No one who puts their hand to the plow while looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Now it happened that as he continued toward Jerusalem, he passed through the middle of Samaria and Galilee. And when he entered a certain village, he was met by ten men with leprosy. They stood at a distance and called out to Jesus, “Oh exalted one, have pity on us!”

Then he looked at them and said, “Off you go! Show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went on their way, they were suddenly healed.

When one of them realized he was healed, he went back and loudly gave honor to God, even though he was a Samaritan. When he fell to his face next to Jesus to thank him, Jesus remarked, “Weren’t there ten who were healed? So where are the other nine? Did no

one come back to give honor to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Get up! Your faith has healed you.”

## TENSION AT THE FEAST

Now the Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying “Where is he?” And there was disagreement about him in the crowd, with some saying “He is good” and others saying “No, he is misleading people.” Yet no one talked about him openly for fear of the Jews.

It was already midway through the festival when Jesus went up into the temple compound and began to teach. But the Jews were amazed and said, “How did he learn so much without an education?”

Jesus answered, “This teaching is not mine but is from the one who sent me. Whoever chooses to do what he says will know whether my teaching is from God or only from me. Those who only want to honor themselves speak on their own behalf, but those who want to honor the one who sent them are true; there is no injustice in them. Hasn’t Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you obeys it! Why do you intend to kill me?”

But the crowd retorted, “You’re possessed! Who wants to kill you?”

Jesus said, “I do one miracle on a Sabbath and you all lose your minds! Now Moses gave you the rite of circumcision (though it wasn’t actually from Moses but the ancestors), yet you will even circumcise someone on a Sabbath. But though you’ll do this to avoid violating the law of Moses, you’re enraged at me for healing someone on a Sabbath! Don’t judge by appearances; instead, reach the proper verdict.”

Then some of the residents of Jerusalem said, “Isn’t this the one they intend to kill? Yet here he is speaking openly and they say



nothing to him. Have the authorities realized that this really is the Christ? On the other hand, we know where this one is from, but when the Christ comes, no one knows for sure where he comes from.”

So Jesus, who was teaching in the temple compound, shouted out, “Yes, you know me and where I’m from, yet I haven’t come of my own accord. But the one sending me is true. You don’t know him, but I do, because he sent me and so I came. I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will in no way walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Then the religious leaders said, “You’re testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is invalid!”

And Jesus responded, “Even if I am testifying on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I’m going, even though you don’t. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. But even if I judge, my judgment is right, for I am not alone; I’m with the Father who sent me. Now this law of yours says that the testimony of two people is valid. I testify on my own behalf, but the Father who sent me is also testifying about me.”

“So where is your father?” they demanded.

Jesus replied, “You have understood neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you’d know my Father as well.” At this they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his time had not yet come.

Many in the crowd put their trust in him and said, “When the Christ comes, he will do no more miracles than this one!” But when the religious leaders heard what the crowd was saying about him, they sent deputies to arrest him. Then Jesus said, “I’ll only be with you for a short time now, and then I must return to the one who sent

me. You will all look for me but won't find me, because you cannot follow where I'm going."

Then the Jews said to themselves, "Where does he intend to go, that we cannot follow him? Surely he doesn't mean to go out to our people scattered among the Greeks and teach the Greeks! And what does he mean by saying 'You will all look for me but won't find me, because you cannot follow where I'm going'?"

Now on the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and shouted, "Let whoever is thirsty come to me and drink! The one who puts their trust in me will have, as scripture says, 'living waters flowing out of them'." (He was talking about those who would eventually receive the Spirit by putting their trust in him, but that hadn't happened yet because Jesus had not yet been exalted.)

Some in the crowd heard these things and said, "Truly, this is the Prophet!" Others said, "This is the Christ!" But some said, "The Christ doesn't come from Galilee. Don't the scriptures say that the Christ would be of the line of David, and from his city of Bethlehem?" So the crowd was divided because of him. Some even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Then the deputies returned to the religious leaders, who demanded, "Why didn't you bring him here?"

"No one ever spoke like this person!" they answered.

"Don't tell us you're deceived too!" retorted the religious leaders.

"None of us trusts in him, but this ignorant crowd is under a curse!"

Nicodemus, the one who had come to Jesus earlier and was one of the religious leaders, said, "No law of ours judges someone before hearing their testimony and examining the evidence."

“Don’t tell us you’re from Galilee too!” they retorted. “Do your own investigation and you’ll see that no prophet is called out of Galilee.” Everyone went home after that, but Jesus went up into the Mount of Olives.

### **AN ATTEMPT AT ENTRAPMENT**

At dawn the next day he returned to the temple compound. All the people came toward him, so he sat down to teach them. But the religious leaders brought a woman caught in the act of adultery and stood her there. Then they asked Jesus, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. Now the law of Moses orders that such people be put to death by stoning. What do you say?”

Of course they only said this to test him, so they would have something to charge him with. So Jesus stooped down and wrote something in the dirt with his finger. Since they kept on demanding an answer, he stood up and replied, “Let the sinless one among you throw the first stone!”

He stooped down again to write on the ground. But those listening went away one by one, beginning with the elders, until Jesus was left alone with the woman. So he stood up again and asked her, “Dear woman, where are they? Is no one condemning you?”

“Not one, sir,” she replied.

“Neither do I condemn you,” said Jesus. “Go your way, but from now on you must stop sinning.”

### **MORE TENSION**

Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away and you will look for me. Yet you will die in your sin because you cannot come where I’m going.”

So the Jews asked each other, “He won’t kill himself, will he? Is that what he means by ‘You can’t come where I’m going’?”

“You are from below, but I am from above,” Jesus told them. “You are from the world but I am not. That’s what I meant by saying you will die in your sins; if you never trust that I am, you will certainly die in your sins.”

They finally asked him, “Who are you?”

“Exactly what I’ve been saying all along,” Jesus replied. “I have much to say to you and by which to judge you. But the one sending me is true, and what he tells me I pass along to the world.”

They didn’t know that he was talking about the Father. So Jesus said to them again, “When you have lifted up the Human, then you will know who I am. I do nothing of my own accord but only speak as the Father instructs me. And the one who sends me is with me. He does not leave me alone, because I’m always doing what pleases him.”

Many put their trust in him as he spoke. So Jesus said to the Jews who believed, “If you stick to what I say, then you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“We are the progeny of Abraham,” they responded. “Not once were we ever slaves. How can you say we will be set free?”

Jesus replied, “I tell you very truly, that everyone who sins is a slave of sin. It’s not the slave who has permanent status as family, but only the child. So if the Son liberates you, you will truly be free. I know you’re the progeny of Abraham. But you want to kill me because you can’t stand what I’m saying, which is what I learned from my Father. And you, too, do what you hear from your father.”

“Our father is Abraham!” they objected.

“If you were children of Abraham, you would act like Abraham!”, Jesus retorted. “I have told you the truth that I heard from God. Yet you want to kill me, and that’s something Abraham wouldn’t do. But you act like your father!”

“We’re not illegitimate children! We have one father, God!” they shot back.

Then Jesus countered, “If God were your father, you would have loved me. I came here from God, not of my own accord but of the one who sent me. The reason you reject what I’m saying is because you’re children of your father the devil, and you want to carry out his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and rejects the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks lies he speaks his native language, for he is the father of all liars. Yet though I speak the truth, you don’t believe me. So who among you can call me out for sinning? If I’m telling the truth, on what grounds do you not believe me? The one from God hears what God says. So it follows that since you don’t hear, you don’t belong to God.”

The Jews retorted, “Weren’t we right to call you a half-breed? You’re possessed!”

“I am not possessed,” Jesus replied, “but I am honoring my Father though you dishonor me. Not that I seek my own honor; he is the one who seeks it and judges. Very truly I tell you, that if anyone does what I say, under no circumstances will they ever face death.”

Then the Jews said, “Now we’re sure you’re possessed! Abraham and all the prophets have died, yet you say, ‘If anyone does what I say, under no circumstances will they ever face death.’ You’re not greater than our father Abraham or the prophets who have all died. Who do you think you are?”

Jesus answered, “If I were to honor myself, my honor would be nothing. It is my Father who honors me, the one you say is your God. Yet you don’t know him, but I do. And if I were to say that I didn’t know him I’d be a liar like you! Yet I do know him and do what he says. Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day coming; he saw it and was happy.”

“You haven’t yet reached the age of fifty, and you’ve seen Abraham!” scoffed the Jews.

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!” At this they picked up stones to kill him, but Jesus hid and escaped from the temple compound.

## **MARY AND MARTHA**

After they left, Jesus entered into a village where a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Master’s feet and listened to what he was saying (as any rabbinical student would do). But Martha was distracted by all the meal preparations, so she said, “Master, don’t you care that my sister has left me to serve all alone? Tell her to get busy and help me!”

“Martha, Martha,” the Master replied, “You’re stressed out about many things, but only one thing really matters. Mary has chosen the good part, and it will not be taken from her.”

## **THE BRAVE BLIND MAN**

As he walked along he noticed someone who had been blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, was it his own or his parents’ fault that this person was born blind?”

“Neither,” answered Jesus. “It was so the actions of God can be revealed in him. We must keep performing the actions of the one

sending me while it is daytime; the night is coming, when no one can work. But as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Having said this, he spat on the ground and made mud out of the saliva. He smeared the mud on the person’s eyes and said to him, “Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (which means “Commissioned”). He went and washed, and came back seeing.

Then the neighbors and those who had seen him before asked, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”

Some said, “Yes, that’s him,” while others said, “It can’t be! It’s only someone who looks like him.” But he said, “It’s me.”

Then they asked, “How did you received your sight?”

He answered, “The one called Jesus made mud and smeared it on my eyes, then told me to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and when I did I received my sight.”

So they asked, “Where is he?” but he didn’t know, so they took him to see the religious leaders. Now it was on a Sabbath day that Jesus made the mud and opened up his eyes, and when they asked him how he received his sight, he said, “He smeared mud on my eyes, I washed, and I see.”

Then some of the religious leaders said, “This person is not from God since he dishonors the Sabbath.” Yet others said, “How can a sinner do such miracles?” So a rift developed among them.

Once again they asked the blind one, “What do you have to say about him, since he restored your sight?”

“He is a prophet,” the man replied. Yet the Jews still didn’t believe he was blind and then received sight till they summoned his par-

ents. And they asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? So how is it that he can see now?”

“We know this is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents answered. “But we don’t know how he can see now, or who opened up his eyes. Ask him yourself, since he is of age and can speak for himself.” (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, who had already agreed that anyone confirming Jesus as the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That’s why they said, “He is of age, ask him.”) So they summoned the person born blind a second time and demanded, “Swear to tell the truth! We know that this person is a scoundrel.”

“If he’s a scoundrel, I certainly don’t know,” he replied. “But one thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.”

But again they asked, “What did he do to you? How did he give you sight?”

He answered, “I already told you but you don’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don’t want to become his disciples too, do you?”

Then they verbally assaulted him and said, “You’re a disciple of his, but we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but this one— we don’t know where he comes from.”

“How shocking,” the person answered, “that you don’t know where he comes from even though he gave me sight! We know that God doesn’t listen to scoundrels; but only to those who honor him and do as he wills. No one has ever heard of anyone giving sight to the blind, so unless this one was from God he couldn’t do anything.”

“You were born steeped in sin, and you dare to lecture us!” they retorted. And they threw him out.



Jesus heard that they threw him out, so he found him and asked, “Do you trust in the Human?”

“Who is he, sir, so I can put my trust in him?” the man asked.

“You’re looking at him; he’s talking to you!” Jesus replied.

Then the man declared, “I believe, sir!” And he worshiped him.

Then Jesus said, “I have come into the world in judgment, so that those who cannot see may see, and those who see may become blind.” The religious leaders who were with him heard this, and they demanded, “Are you calling us blind?”

“If you were blind,” Jesus replied, “you couldn’t be charged with sin. But now, since you claim to see, your guilt remains.”

## **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

“Very truly I tell you, that anyone who does not come into the sheep pen through the gate but by some other means is a thief and a robber. But the one entering through the gate is the shepherd. The gatekeeper opens the gate for this one and the sheep listen to the shepherd’s voice. Whenever the shepherd leads them out, the sheep follow because they know their own shepherd’s voice. An outsider, on the other hand, they would not follow under any circumstances; they will run away from anyone whose voice they don’t recognize.”

Jesus gave them this illustration, but they still didn’t know what he was talking about. So he told them again, “I tell you very truly that I am the gateway for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gateway; if anyone enters through me they will be saved; they will come and go freely and find pasture. The thief only comes to steal and execute

and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it to the fullest.

“I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. But the hired hand, who isn’t the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, abandons them and runs away, leaving the wolf to snatch them up and scatter them. The hired hand runs away because it’s only a job so they have no concern for the sheep. But I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and they know me, just as the Father knows me and I know him. So I lay down my life for the sheep.

“Also, I have other sheep that are not of this pen. I must lead them as well, and they will recognize my voice. Then there will be one flock with one shepherd. So the Father loves me because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own accord. I have the right to lay it down and the right to take it back. This is the ruling I got from my Father.”

Once again a rift developed among the Jews because of these sayings. Now many of them said, “He’s possessed and out of his mind! Why do you listen to him?” But others said, “What he says isn’t what we’d expect from the demon-possessed. No demon can give sight the blind.”

## **SIN AND DISASTER**

Now there were some in attendance at that time who told him about the Galileans Pilate had killed and whose blood he mingled with their own sacrifices. And Jesus asked, “Do you think that this happened to those Galileans because they were worse sinners than everyone else? Not at all, I tell you! But unless you turn to God, you too will be destroyed. Or how about the eighteen who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell on them; do you think they were more guilty than everyone else in Jerusalem? Not at all, I tell you! But unless you turn to God, you too will be destroyed.”

Then he gave them this parable: “Someone had a fig tree planted in their vineyard, but when he went to check on its fruit there was none. So he said to the gardener, ‘Enough! I waited three years for this tree to produce figs and found nothing. Chop it down, because it’s wasting good soil.’ But the gardener replied, ‘Master, give it one more year. I’ll dig around it and fertilize it, and if there’s still no fruit, then cut it down’ .”

### **COMPASSION ON THE SABBATH**

One Sabbath when Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, there was a woman who had suffered from a crippling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not stand up straight at all. When Jesus saw her he said to her, “Dear woman, you are fully released from your infirmities!” He put his hands on her and instantly she straightened up and gave honor to God.

But the synagogue ruler reacted with indignation to Jesus healing on the Sabbath. So he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which people can work, so come for healing on those days rather than the Sabbath Day.” Yet the Master responded, “Hypocrites! Any of you would, on the Sabbath, untie your ox or donkey from the feeding trough and lead it away to get a drink of water. Yet this daughter of Abraham, who was imprisoned by Satan for eighteen years, was not to be set free from her prison on the Sabbath Day?!” These words shamed all who were opposing him. The whole crowd, though, was delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

### **A QUESTION OF DIVINITY**

In winter it was time for the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. As Jesus walked in Solomon’s Portico inside the temple compound, the Jews surrounded him and demanded, “How long will you keep us guessing? If you are the Christ, say so boldly in public!”

“I told you but you don’t believe me,” Jesus replied. “The things I do on behalf of my Father serve as my witnesses. But you don’t believe me because you’re not my sheep— just as I told you. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never die; no one will be able to snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is the greatest of all, and no one can snatch them out of his hand. I and the Father are one!”

Once again the Jews picked up stones with which to kill him, but Jesus asked, “I have shown you many good deeds from my Father. For which one of them are you threatening to kill me?”

“We’re not killing you for any good deed,” they answered, “but for maligning the name of God, because you, a mere human, equate yourself with God!”

But Jesus countered [with an ingenious legal loophole]. “Isn’t it written in your law, ‘I said you are gods’? If he told those to whom the word of God came that they are gods— and the scripture cannot be undone— then how can you say to the one the Father set apart on a mission, ‘You are maligning the name of God’, just because I said ‘I am the God-Man’? If I’m not doing what my Father told me to do, then don’t believe me. Yet if I am doing so and you still don’t believe me, then at least believe what I do, so that you will know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

Then once again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped.

# The Lazarus Effect

## THE NARROW WAY

Jesus went teaching through cities and villages along his way to Jerusalem. And someone asked him, “Master, are only a few to be saved?”

“Compete to enter through the narrow door,” he replied. “For I tell you that many who try to enter will not be strong enough. Once the homeowner gets up and locks the doors, you will stand outside knocking on the doors and saying, ‘Master, open up the door for us!’ But he will reply to you, ‘I don’t know you or where you’re from’.

“Then you’ll start to say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our city squares!’ But he will retort, ‘I’ve never seen you before. Where did you come from? Get out of here, you outlaws!’ There will be much crying and teeth grinding when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God while you’re left outside. People will come from east and west, from north and south, and be seated at the table in the kingdom of God. But take note of this! The last will be first, and the first will be last.”

At that time some religious leaders approached him and said, “Get away from here and go someplace else, because Herod intends to kill you!”

Jesus replied. “You go and tell that fox, ‘Watch this: I am driving out demons and performing healings today and tomorrow, and the third day I’m done’. After all, I must go on today, tomorrow, and the day after, because it just isn’t right for a prophet to be done away with outside of Jerusalem!”

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

“There was a certain rich person who dressed in expensive clothes and lived each day in happiness and luxury. But there was also a destitute man named Lazarus who was put at the rich man’s door. He was covered with ulcers and longed to fill himself with crumbs from the rich man’s table, and the dogs came and licked his sores. Eventually the destitute man died, and he was carried away by the angels to the place of honor with Abraham. Then the rich man also died and was buried.

“The rich man, in torment in Hades, looked up and saw Abraham with Lazarus at the place of honor a great distance away. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip his fingertip in water and cool my tongue, because I’m in agony in this inferno.’

“But Abraham replied, ‘Child, remember that you had a good life but Lazarus had a lousy life. Now the tables are turned; he is comforted while you suffer. And besides, there’s a wide chasm set between us, so that no one can cross over from one side to the other.’

“‘Then I beg you, Father’, he replied, ‘that you would send him to my father’s house. I have five brothers, and he could warn them not to come to this place of torment.’

“But Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them.’

“‘Oh no, Father Abraham!’ he begged. ‘But if someone were to come to them from the dead, they would turn to God.’

“‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets’, said Abraham, ‘they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

## JESUS RAISES A DIFFERENT LAZARUS

Now there was a certain ill person named Lazarus from Bethany, the same village as Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary was the one who rubbed the Master's feet with perfumed oil and wiped them with her hair; Lazarus was her brother.) So the sisters sent a message to him: "Master, your good friend is very ill!" But when Jesus heard this, he said, "This illness will not end in death but in honor to God and to the Human."

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. But when he heard he was ill, he actually stayed where he was for two more days. Only then did he say to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

"But the Jews intend to execute you now, and you want to go back there?!" exclaimed the disciples.

"Aren't there twelve hours of daylight?" Jesus asked. "If anyone walks around in the daytime they don't stumble, because they see the light of this world. But if they walk around during the night they stumble, because there is no light in them." Then he added, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up."

"Master," replied his disciples, "If he has fallen asleep he will recover."

Now Jesus was actually talking about Lazarus' death, but they had taken him literally. So he told them plainly, "Lazarus died. But I am happy for you, that you might believe since I wasn't there. But let's get going to him."

Then Thomas, nicknamed The Twin, said to the other disciples, "Let's all go too, so we can die with him!"

Upon his arrival in Bethany, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem,

about two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. But Martha heard that Jesus was there and went to meet him, while Mary remained in the house. Then Martha said to Jesus, “Master, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you anything you ask.”

Jesus told her, “Your brother will arise.”

“I understand,” replied Martha, “that he will rise in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus told her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever puts their trust in me will live again even if they die, and many having trust in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Master,” she answered. “I believe that you are the Christ, the God-Man, who is coming into the world.”

And with that, she went to speak privately to her sister Mary, telling her that the Master was there and wanted to see her. As soon as she heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. (Now Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still at the spot where Martha met up with him.) Then the people who were in the house consoling her saw her get up quickly and leave, so they followed her because they presumed she was going to the tomb to mourn.

Mary arrived at the place where Jesus was, and when she saw him she fell at his feet and said, “Master, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died!” At the sight of her and everyone else sobbing, Jesus was deeply moved in spirit and very distraught. And he asked, “Where have you all placed him?”

“Come and see, Master” they replied, and Jesus wept. So they said, “See how fond he was of him!”



But some scoffed, “Couldn’t the one who gave sight to the blind have been able to keep this person from dying?”

Then Jesus, still very distraught, came to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone laid in front of the opening. Then he said, “Take away the stone!”

Martha, the deceased’s sister, objected, “But Master! By this time there is an awful smell, because it’s the fourth day.”

But Jesus replied, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see the majesty of God?” So they took the stone away. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I am grateful that you hear me. I always knew you did, but I said this for the sake of the crowd around me, so they could believe that you sent me.”

After this he shouted, “Lazarus! Come here! Come out!” And the one who had died came out. His feet and hands had been wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and his face had had a cloth wrapped around it. So Jesus said, “Unbind him and let him go!” Then many of those who came to Mary saw what Jesus did and put their trust in him. But some went off to the religious leaders and told them what Jesus was doing.

## **NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED**

So the religious leaders convened an official meeting and said, “What are we going to do about this person performing many miracles? If we let him go on like this, everyone will put their trust in him, and then the Romans will come and do away with our place and nation.”

Now one of them in particular, the ruling priest that year by the name of Caiaphas, said, “You understand nothing! And you haven’t figured out that one person should die for the people instead of let-

ting the whole nation be destroyed.” (Now he didn’t realize it, but he had just predicted that Jesus was about to die for the sake of the nation— and not just the nation, but also to gather all the scattered children of God into one.) So from that day on they plotted to kill him. As a result, Jesus could no longer walk openly among the Jews. He went away from there into the area near the desert, to a city called Ephraim, and remained there with his disciples.

### **ANOTHER VISIT TO BETHANY**

Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the countryside so they could purify themselves before it started. Then they looked for Jesus, and as they stood together in the temple compound they said to each other, “Do you think there’s any chance he’ll come to the festival?” (The religious leaders had issued orders that if anyone knew where he was, they were to report it so he could be arrested.)

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the place where he had raised Lazarus from the dead. Most of the Jews knew Jesus was there, and they came not only to see Jesus but also Lazarus. But the religious leaders planned to kill Lazarus too, because on account of him many of the Jews had put their trust in Jesus.

# The Week Before the End

(The day numbers pertain to the first month of the year for Israel, and each day begins at sundown.)

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

### **(10th day of the month, when the lambs were selected)**

When they got near Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus sent out two disciples with these instructions: “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey and her colt hitched, a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie the colt and bring it to me. If anyone asks you, just tell them ‘The Master needs it and will return it shortly’ and they’ll let it go without question. This has to happen in order to fulfill what the prophet declared: ‘Do not fear, daughter of Zion! Look, your king is coming to you gently, riding on a donkey, on a colt, the offspring of a beast of burden.’”

The disciples went off and did as Jesus told them, and they found the colt hitched near the gates by the outer street. When they untied it, some of the people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” So they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them take it. They brought the colt to Jesus and put their outer garments on it so he could sit on it. His disciples didn’t know it at the time, but when Jesus was exalted they remembered that these things the people did were written about him.

Then as he came closer and saw the city, he began to sob over it: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you! So many times I’ve wanted to gather your children the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing! And now look; your temple is to be taken away from you.

But I say to you, you will not recognize me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one coming in the name of the Master'. If only you realized that in this day you could have had peace, yet now it's hidden from your eyes! The day will come when your enemies will throw siege ramps all around you and press in on you from all sides. They will destroy you and your children, and they won't leave one stone on top of another, all because you were oblivious to the time you were to be set free!"

Then many in the crowd spread out their cloaks on the road in front of him, while others used tree branches that they had cut off. And both those in front of him and those behind went along saying, "Celebrate the Descendant of David! Blessed is the one bearing the name of the Master! And blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Celebrate in the presence of God!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the entire city was shaken. Some asked, "Who is this?" and the crowd answered, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee!"

The blind and lame came to him in the temple compound, and he healed them. But when the religious leaders saw the wonderful things he was doing, and when they heard the children there shouting "Celebrate the Descendant of David," they were indignant. So they said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying? Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"Haven't you ever read that 'You have prepared praise to come of the mouths of toddlers and infants?'" Jesus asked. "I say to you, that if these people were silent, the stones themselves would shout!"

The crowd that had been there when he called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from the dead was giving their testimony. It was on their account of this miracle he did that the huge crowd went to meet him. So the religious leaders said to themselves, "It's

obvious that we're not getting anywhere. Look, the whole world has gone after him!" Then Jesus looked around, but because it was getting late he went into Bethany with the Twelve.

## **THE CURSED FIG TREE**

### **(11th day of the month)**

In the morning Jesus headed back to the city. He was hungry, and along the way he saw a fig tree. But when he got close to it he couldn't find a single fig on it; there were only leaves. So he said to it, "You will never produce figs again!" The disciples heard him say it.

### **(12th day of the month)**

When evening came, they went outside of the city. In the morning when they came back, they saw that the fig tree was shriveled down to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said, "Rabbi, look! The tree you cursed has dried up."

"Let me assure you of this," Jesus answered, "If you have Godly faith and don't doubt, you will be able to do more than I did to this fig tree. You will be able to say to this mountain, 'Get up and throw yourself into the sea!', and it will happen. Everything you ask for in prayer, you will have."

After this they went through Galilee, but Jesus didn't want anyone to know because of what he was teaching his disciples. Then he went up toward Jerusalem, and along the way he took the Twelve aside and spoke to them privately: "As you know, the Passover is in two days. That's when the Human will be handed over to the religious leaders. They will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Romans, who will jeer at him and flog him and crucify him.

But he will arise on the third day. Then I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

## **THE SECOND TEMPLE CLEANSING**

### **(13th day of the month)**

Now Jesus went into Jerusalem to the temple compound, and he started throwing out the merchants and their customers there, as well as overturning the tables of the brokers and the benches of those selling doves. He prevented anyone from carrying merchandise through the temple, and he gave them all a lecture: “Is it not written that ‘my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have turned it into a hideout for robbers!” The religious leaders heard about this, so they started looking for a way to kill him. But they feared the masses, who were captivated by his teaching.

Then the Jews demanded, “What is the meaning of this?”

Jesus responded, “You will destroy this temple, but in three days I will put it up again.”

The Jews retorted, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you think you’ll put it up in three days!?” But he was talking about the temple of his body. When he was raised from the dead his disciples remembered he said this, and they believed the scripture and what Jesus said. And while he was in Jerusalem for the Passover festival, many accepted him because of the miracles they saw him do. But Jesus didn’t put much confidence in them himself, knowing how people are.

## **JESUS SPEAKS OF HIS SACRIFICE**

Then some of the Greeks among the festival-goers came up to Philip (of Bethsaida in Galilee) and made a request. “Sir,” they said, “we

would like to see Jesus.” Philip told Andrew, and the two of them told Jesus.

Jesus said to them, “The hour has come for the Human to be exalted. I tell you very truly, that unless a kernel of grain falls to the ground and dies it remains a single seed, whereas if it dies it will be loaded with produce.

“Anyone who is too attached to their life will lose it, but anyone who thinks nothing of their life in this world will preserve it for eternity. Anyone who wants to serve me should follow me; where I am is where my servant will also be. And whoever serves me will be honored by the Father.

“Now I am deeply disturbed, but what will I say? ‘Father, rescue me from this hour’? But this hour is precisely why I came! Father, exalt your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have, and I will exalt it again!”

The crowd standing there heard it and some said, “That was thunder,” while others said “An angel has spoken to him.”

Jesus told them, “This voice was not for my benefit but yours. Now the judgment of the world begins; now the ruler of this world will be thrown out! If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” (He said this to indicate the manner of his impending death.)

Then the crowd asked, “We heard from the law that the Christ would remain forever, so how can you say that the Human must be lifted up? Who is this ‘Human’?”

So Jesus replied, “The light will remain among you for a little while. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness won’t overtake

you; the one walking in darkness has no idea where they're going. Trust in the light while you have it, so you can be people of the light." With that, Jesus went away and concealed himself from them.

In spite of having done so many miracles in front of them, they still did not put their trust in him. This fulfilled the saying of the prophet Isaiah: "Master, who believed our report? To whom was the Master's strength revealed?" They weren't able to believe, seeing once again that Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, to prevent them from seeing with their eyes or understanding with their hearts, such that I would turn around and heal them." Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus' majesty and spoke about him. Even so, many of the rulers put their trust in him. But because of the religious leaders they did not admit it, or they would be excommunicated. They loved praise from people more than even praise from God.

Now Jesus shouted out, "Whoever puts their trust in me is really putting their trust in the one who sent me; whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that all who put their trust in me would not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears what I say but doesn't do it, I am not judging them, because I did not come to judge the world but to save it. Yet the one rejecting me and not holding to what I say will be judged by my words at the last day, since I don't speak of my own accord but of the Father who sent me. He has given me the official ruling on what to say and what to talk about. And I know that his ruling is eternal life. So whatever I say is exactly as the Father has directed me to speak."

## **ANOTHER ENTRAPMENT ATTEMPT**

Then the Pharisees went off and met together to plot how to trick Jesus into saying something incriminating. So they put Jesus under surveillance and sent out spies posing as honest people, so that they



could arrest him over something he might say and hand him over to the jurisdiction of the governor. So they sent their disciples, along with the Herodians, to say, “Teacher, we know that you are honest and show people the true way to God, and that you aren’t intimidated by anyone because you don’t care who they are but just teach the true way of God. So tell us what you think: Is it permissible to pay the poll tax to Caesar or not?”

But Jesus knew their evil intent and said to them, “Why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me the currency you use to pay the poll tax.” So they handed him a denarius and he said, “Whose image is this, and whose name is inscribed?”

“Caesar’s,” they answered.

“Then give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give God what belongs to God,” he retorted.

They were unable to get him to say anything worthy of arrest in front of everyone, and his ingenious response silenced them.

Later that day the Sadducees, who don’t believe in the resurrection, came to him and said, “Teacher, Moses said that if someone died childless, his brother was obligated to marry the widow and produce offspring for him. Now there were seven brothers, and the first married but died childless. So his brother married his widow, but the same thing happened. Likewise for the third and all seven of the brothers. Finally the woman died. So in the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since she had been married to them all?”

This was Jesus’ response: “You are misled, because you understand neither that scripture nor the power of God. Though in this world people marry, in the resurrection people don’t marry but are like the angels in heaven who can’t die anymore. And as for the rising of

the dead: Have you not read what God declared to you when he said, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living!" And when the crowd heard this, they were awestruck by his teaching. Then a lawyer remarked, "Well said!"

Now when the religious leaders heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they had a meeting about it. And one of them, a lawyer, tested him: "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law?"

"You must love the Master your God with all your heart, life, and thoughts," Jesus answered. "This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as yourself. The entirety of the Law and Prophets hinges on these two commandments."

"You are correct in saying that there is one God and no other," he replied. "To love him with one's whole heart, understanding, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is far better than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw how astutely he had answered, he said commended him: "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Since the Pharisees were gathered there, Jesus asked them, "What is your opinion about the Christ? Whose descendant is he?"

"David's," they replied.

"But how could David, prompted by the Spirit, call him 'Master'?" asked Jesus. "He said, 'The Master said to my Master, "Sit down at my right until I put your enemies beneath your feet."' How can David call him 'Master' if he's his descendant?" No one could refute

what Jesus said, so from then on nobody dared to ask him anything else. But the common people loved to listen to him.

### **FAILING AT ENTRAPMENT, BETRAYAL IS PLOTTED**

Then the religious leaders got together at the palace of the ruling priest Caiaphas, where they recommended the use of treachery to have Jesus arrested and killed. “But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people might riot.” Then Judas of Kerioth, one of the Twelve, went to them and said, “What will you give me if I hand Jesus over to you?” So they offered him thirty pieces of silver, and from then on he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

### **THE POOR WIDOW’S EXAMPLE**

Then Jesus sat down facing the treasury, and he watched how the crowd threw money into it. Many rich people threw in a lot, but one destitute widow threw in two tiny coins worth only a fraction of a day’s wages. He called his disciples to himself and said, “I tell you truly that this destitute widow has thrown a greater sum into the treasury than all the others. For they gave out of their excess, but she gave out of what she needed— everything she had to live on.”

# End-Times Prophecies

## THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH PANGS

As Jesus was leaving the temple compound, his disciples came and began to remark about how the temple was built. But Jesus replied, “See all these things? I can assure you that not one stone will be left on top of another!” Then a while later, after he had sat down on the Mount of Olives, Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to him privately and said, “Tell us when these things will happen, and what sign to look for that will signal your official arrival and the end of the age.”

And he replied, “Watch out so that you are not deceived! For many will claim to come from me, or even say, ‘I am the Christ! The end is near!’, and they will deceive many. You will see wars and hear reports of wars far away, but don’t be alarmed; such things must happen— but it will not yet be the end. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there will be famines and earthquakes and other terrible things in various places, including extraordinary signs in the heavens, but these are only the beginning of birth pangs.

“So be on your guard, because even before this they will persecute you and hand you over to be executed, and you will be despised in all nations because of me. They will bring you before councils, and you’ll be beaten in synagogues and prisons. On account of me they’ll also make you stand before kings and governors to give your testimony. And when they do these things, don’t worry about what you will say, because the words will be given to you at that moment; the Holy Spirit will speak through you. I will give you wise words that your opponents will not be able to refute.

“Many will be ensnared; they will betray and hate each other. Siblings will hand each other over to be executed; fathers will hand over their own children to die, and children will do the same to their own parents. Everyone will despise you on my account, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. Many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people, and due to all the lawlessness the love of many will grow cold. The good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

### **THE ABOMINATION AND GREAT OPPRESSION**

“As declared through the prophet Daniel, when you see the disgusting thing that defiles the temple standing in the Holy Place (reader, make sure this is clear!), and when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, its demise is imminent. Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains. Those in the city must evacuate, and those in the country must not go back to the city. Those on the housetops must not go inside to get belongings, and those out in the fields must not go back to get their coats. This will be the fulfillment of what was written about the days of retribution. Woe to women who are pregnant or nursing at that time! And pray that your escape will not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

“Then there will be great oppression on the land and its people, the likes of which has never happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever happen again! Jerusalem will be trampled on by other nations until their time is up. In fact, so many will be killed in battle and taken captive to all the other nations that if those days had not been cut short, all flesh would have been wiped out. But they will be shortened for the sake of the chosen people.

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’, don’t believe it. For false Anointed Ones and false prophets will rise up and perform impressive miracles and signs, to the point

where even the chosen ones would be misled— if that were possible. That’s why I’ve warned you in advance. So if they say ‘Look, here in the desert!’, don’t go; if they say ‘Look, in this hidden place!’, don’t believe it. For the official arrival of the Human will be as the lightning that flashes across the whole sky. And where the carcass is, there you will find the birds of prey.”

## **THE END OF THE JUDGMENTS**

“Immediately after the oppression of those days there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky. And on the earth, the nations will be filled with anguish and perplexity due to the roaring and turbulence of the sea. People will be deathly afraid and apprehensive of what is coming upon the whole world, for the forces of the heavens will be shaken.

“But when you see this all coming to pass, stand up and look up, because you’re about to be rescued! The sign of the Human will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the world will be filled with self-loathing as they see the Human coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and majesty. With the blast of a trumpet he will send out his angels to gather his chosen people from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

“Now learn a lesson from the fig tree: When you see that the branches have become tender and the leaves have sprouted, you know that summer is about to begin. Likewise, when you see all these things, you will know that the kingdom of God is right at the door. I can assure you that the generation that sees all this will not pass away until all of it has happened. The earth and sky will pass away, but not my words!”

## THE DAY AND HOUR UNKNOWN

Another time, Jesus was asked by the religious leaders when the kingdom of God would come, and he explained, “The kingdom of God is not coming in a way you can watch for it. No one will be able to say ‘Look, over here!’ or ‘Look, over there!’, for the kingdom of God is all around you.” Then he said to his disciples, “The days will come when you will wish you could see just one of the days of the Human, but you won’t see it.

“No one knows the day or hour when this will happen; not the angels of heaven nor even the Son, but only the Father. The official arrival of the Human will be just like the days of Noah: In the days just before the Flood, people were eating, drinking, and marrying as usual, right up to the very day that Noah entered the ark. They had no idea what was about to happen until the Flood took them all away. And so will it be with the official arrival of the Human. Two will be in the field: one is accepted and the other rejected. Two will be grinding with a millstone: one is accepted and the other rejected. So stay alert, because you don’t know what day your Master will show up.

“Take care that your hearts are not weighed down with drunkenness and hangovers and the anxieties of daily life, so this Day doesn’t spring like a trap on you, as it will on everyone else on the earth. Always be alert, praying that you will prevail and escape all that is about to happen, so you will be able to stand before the Human. Understand that if the homeowner knew exactly when the thief would arrive, he would stay alert and not let his house be broken into. So be prepared, because the Human will come when you least expect him.

“So who is a trustworthy and thoughtful servant? It’s the one the master put in charge of the household staff and sees to it that they get their meals at the right times. That servant will be happy when

their master arrives and finds them doing their duty. I can assure you that such a person will be put in charge of all their master's possessions.

“But what if the servant is shiftless and says to himself, ‘My master isn't coming back anytime soon’, so they begin to beat the other servants, eat all the food, and go out drinking with the drunkards? Their master will come on an unexpected day and time. He will rip them to pieces and sentence them to the fate of the hypocrites, where they wail and grind their teeth. So stay sharp! You don't know when the owner of the house will come; it may be in the evening, or maybe midnight, or at dawn, or in the morning. Don't let him come unexpectedly and find you sleeping! What I say to you, I say to all: Be alert!”

## **THE JUDGMENT OF SHEEP AND GOATS**

“When the Human comes in his majesty, accompanied by all the angels, he will sit on his majestic throne. All the nations will be gathered in front of him, and he will separate them as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. He'll put the sheep at his right and the goats at his left. And then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come here, you who are blessed by my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from when the world was established! For when I was hungry you gave me food; when I was thirsty you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me in; when I needed clothes you gave them to me; when I was ill you looked after me; when I was in prison you came to see me.’

“Then the righteous will ask, ‘Master, when did we feed you when you were hungry, or give you a drink when you were thirsty, or take you in as a stranger, or give you clothes you needed, or look after you when you were ill, or come to see you in prison?’ And the King will answer, ‘I assure you that whenever you did these things for one of my lowly brothers or sisters, you did them for me.’



“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Get away from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his fallen angels! For I was hungry but you gave me no food; I was thirsty but you gave me no drink; I was a stranger but you wouldn’t take me in; I needed clothes but you wouldn’t give me any; I was ill and in prison but you wouldn’t visit me.’

“And they will ask, ‘Master, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or in need of clothes or sick or in prison, and didn’t help you?’ And he will reply, ‘I assure you that whenever you failed to do these things for one of my lowly ones, you failed to do them for me!’ Then these will go into eternal punishment, while the righteous will go into eternal life.”

# Final Teachings and Arrest

## THE LAST SUPPER

### **(14th day of the month, the Passover and the preparation day for the 15th)**

On the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread (when the Passover lamb was to be killed), the disciples asked Jesus, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

He sent out two of his disciples and told them, “Go into the city, where you will see someone carrying a pitcher of water. Follow them, and when they enter a house tell the owner, ‘The Teacher wants to know where the reception room is so that he may eat the Passover meal with his disciples’. You will be shown a large, furnished, upper-story room; prepare it for us there.” And when the disciples went into the city, they found everything just as he said it would be, so they prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table having the meal with the Twelve. And he said to them, “I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before my time of suffering.” While they were eating, Jesus picked up the bread and blessed it, then handed it out to his disciples and said, “Take this and eat it; this is my body.” Then he picked up the cup, gave thanks, and handed it to his disciples and said, “Drink from this, all of you, because this is my blood. With this I am signing the new covenant, and it is being poured out for many to dismiss the charges against them. With absolute certainty I tell you that from now on, I will not drink the fruit of the vine until the day comes when I drink it fresh in the kingdom of my Father.”

Then he exclaimed, “I tell you truly that one of you will betray me!”

They all became distraught and said, “I’m not the one, am I, Master?”

Now one of them, the one Jesus loved, was reclining near to him. Then Simon Peter motioned to him to ask what this was all about. So he leaned very close to Jesus and asked, “Master, who is it?”

“It’s the one to whom I will give the morsel of bread after dipping it,” answered Jesus. Then he dipped the morsel and gave it to the traitor Judas, son of Simon of Kerioth. Immediately Satan entered into him and he asked Jesus, “I’m not the one, am I, Rabbi?”

“You said it yourself!” Jesus replied. “What you’re about to do, do it faster!”

None of those at the table realized why Jesus said this to Judas. Some presumed that since Judas was responsible for the group’s funds, Jesus was telling him to buy what they would need for the festival, or to give something to the poor. So as soon as he had the morsel of bread, Judas went out. It was nighttime. Then Jesus continued, “What has been written about the Human being taken away will surely happen to him. But woe to the person who is responsible for having him arrested! It would be better if they had never been born.”

Before the Passover Festival, Jesus had already been keenly aware that the hour had come for him to move from this world to the Father. He was filled with love for his own in this world, and he loved them to the very end. Now, knowing that the Father had given everything into his hands, and that he had gone out from God and would soon return, he rose up from dinner, removed his outer garments and wrapped himself in a towel, then filled a basin with water and began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. [This was the job of the lowest household servant.]

When he came to Simon Peter he objected, “Master, you’re washing my feet!”

Jesus answered, “Right now you don’t realize what I’m doing, but you will see it eventually.”

Peter still objected, “You should absolutely never wash my feet!”

“But if I don’t,” Jesus replied, “you are not in with me.”

“Master,” exclaimed Simon Peter, “Then not just my feet but also my hands and head!”

Then Jesus explained, “The one who has bathed only needs their feet washed since they are completely clean. And you all are ‘clean’... well, not all.” (He said this because he knew who was betraying him.)

When he finished washing their feet, he put on his outer garments again and reclined at the table. “Do you realize what I’ve done to you?” Jesus asked them. “Who is greater, the one reclining at the table or the one waiting tables? Is it not the one reclining? Yet here I am among you as the one waiting tables. You address me as Teacher and Master, and rightly so. But if I, your Master and Teacher, stoop to the lowest place of service, you all must do the same. I have given you an example to follow; you must do as I did. I tell you very truly that a slave is not greater than their master, nor is the one sent greater than the one sending. If you see what I’m saying and put it into practice, you will be happy.

“You have all stood with me during my trials. I now bequeath the kingdom to you, just as my Father bequeathed it to me, so that you will eat and drink at my table in the kingdom, and you will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But Simon, Simon! Satan has demanded that you be brought to trial to see what

you're made of. But I have pled on your behalf that your faith will not fail. And when you turn back, encourage your siblings."

"Master," objected Peter, "I am willing to go to jail or even be put to death with you!" And they all said the same.

But Jesus replied, "I tell you, Peter, that before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times! In fact, all of you will fall into a trap tonight on my account. As it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd and the whole flock of sheep will scatter.'"

### **JESUS' FINAL WORDS BEFORE HIS SUFFERING**

"Don't let disturbing thoughts fill your minds; trust in God, and trust in me. There are many residences in my Father's home. If there weren't, I would not have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you. So if I go and prepare a place, then I will return to you and accept you as my own, so that you can be where I am. And you know the way to where I'm going."

But Thomas said, "Master, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way?"

"I am the way," said Jesus, "and the truth and the life; no one can come to the Father except through me. If all of you have known me you will also know my Father. And from now on you know him and have seen him."

Then Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father and we will be content."

"Philip," Jesus replied, "I've been with you all this time, and you still don't know me! Whoever has seen me has seen the Father, so how can you say, 'show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and he is in me? The things I've been telling you are not of

my own accord; rather, the Father who remains in me does his work.

“Trust me when I tell you that I am in the Father and he is in me. But if that isn’t enough, then believe me because of what I do. I tell you very truly, that those who put their trust in me will do the same things I do— and even greater things, because I’m going to the Father. And whatever you ask as my representative, I will do it, so that the Father is honored in the Son. Yes, anything you ever ask as my representative, I will do.

“If you love me, protect my precepts. And I will implore the Father to give you another advocate to console you and be with you forever: the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot accept, whom it can neither see nor know. But you all know this Spirit, for it remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

“Soon the world will no longer see me, but you see me. And since I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my precepts and practices them is the one who loves me, and the one who loves me will be loved by my Father; I will love that one and reveal myself to them.”

Then Judas (not the one from Kerioth) asked him, “Master, why is it that you intend to reveal yourself to us but not to the world?”

Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will protect my sayings, and my Father will love them; we will come to them and take up residence with them. But anyone who doesn’t love me doesn’t protect my sayings. This saying you are hearing is not my own but is from the Father who sends me. I have spoken all this to you while remaining with you. But now the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the

Father will send on my behalf, will teach you everything and remind you of everything I said to you.

“My peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you, and I don’t give as the world does. Don’t let your minds be disturbed or timid. You heard me say ‘I am going away and coming back’, and ‘If you loved me you would be happy I’m going to the Father, for he is greater than I’. And now I have declared this ahead of time, so that when it does happen, you will believe.

“I will not be speaking with you much longer, because the ruler of the world approaches, and he has nothing to do with me. But I do as the Father directs me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

“I am the true vine and my Father is the cultivator. He discards every branch that produces no fruit, but prunes the ones that produce some, so they can make even more. You all are pruned already by means of the things I’ve said to you. Remain in me as I remain in you. Just as the branch cannot produce fruit if it’s detached from the vine, neither can you if you don’t remain in me.

“I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in them produces a lot of fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not remain in me is like a branch that is tossed aside and dried up. Such branches are then collected and thrown into the fire to be burned. But if you always remain in me and my teachings remain in you, ask for anything you want and it will be granted to you.

“If you produce a lot of fruit and become my disciples, it brings honor to my Father. Just as the Father loves me, so also do I love you; remain in my love. If you protect my precepts you will remain in my love, just as I have protected my Father’s precepts and remain

in his love. I have spoken these things to you so that my happiness will remain in you and fill you up.

“My precept is that you love each other as I have loved you. And there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. You are my friends if you do what I direct you to do. I no longer call you servants, because servants are not included in their master’s activities. But now I call you friends, since I have shared with you everything I heard from my Father. You didn’t choose me, I chose you, and I appointed you to go out and produce a lot of fruit. If your fruit endures, ask the Father for anything you want as my representatives and he will grant it. I am giving you these directions so that you may love each other.

“If the world hates you, understand that it hated me first. If you had belonged to the world it would have considered you its friends. But the world despises you because you’re no longer part of it, since I chose you out of it. Remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me they will also persecute you, but if they protected my sayings, they will protect yours too. They will do all these things to you because of my name, since they have failed to acknowledge the one sending me.

“If I had not come and spoken to them they would not be at fault, but now they have no excuse; whoever despises me despises my Father as well. If I hadn’t done things among them that no one else had done, they would not be at fault. But now they have seen, and they have despised both me and my Father. Yet this fulfills what has been written in the law about them: ‘They hated me for no reason’.

“When the Advocate I’m sending from the Father arrives– the Spirit of Truth departing from him– he will testify about me. And you will testify as well, since you have been with me from the beginning. I have told you these things so that you will not walk into a trap when



they expel you from fellowship. Yet the time is coming when whoever kills you will think they're serving God, and they will do these things to you because they knew neither me nor my Father. But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told you, though I didn't say them at first. Yet now I am going back to the one who sent me, and none of you is asking me where I'm going [since you know now].

“I see that what I've said to you has filled you with sorrow. But I tell you honestly that my leaving is for your benefit; if I don't go away, the Advocate will not come to you. His arrival will convict the world about sin, justice, and judgment: about sin, because they don't put their trust in me; about justice, because I am returning to my Father and you will no longer see me; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

“I still have a lot to say to you, but you can't stand it right now. Yet whenever the Spirit of Truth comes, it will guide you in all truth. It will not be speaking of its own accord, but only what it hears, and it will tell you about things to come. It will honor me by telling you what I tell it. Everything the Father has is mine; that's why I told you it will tell you what it gets from me. Soon you will no longer see me, but a short time after that you will see me again.”

Then some of his disciples said to each other, “What does he mean, ‘Soon you will no longer see me, but a short time after that you will see me again’, and, ‘I am returning to the Father’? What is this ‘short’ time he's talking about? We don't understand what he's saying.”

Jesus knew what they wanted to ask him, so he said, “You're wondering what I meant when I said you wouldn't see me but then a short time later you would see me. I tell you very truly that you will

cry and mourn while the world celebrates; you will be upset but your sadness will turn into happiness.

“When a woman goes into labor she dreads the time that has come upon her. But when the little one is born she forgets the suffering for the joy that she has brought someone into the world. Likewise, you will certainly be sad, yet I will see you again and you will be filled with happiness— a happiness no one can take away. And in that day you will not ask me for anything; I tell you very truly that whatever you ask the Father as my representatives, he will grant it to you. Up to this point you have not asked anything as my representatives; now ask, and you will receive, so you may be filled with happiness.

“I have told you these things in illustrations, but the time is coming when I will not speak this way but will clearly tell you about the Father. In that day you will ask as my representatives, but I’m not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf, because the Father himself is fond of you for being fond of me and believing that I came out from God. I left my dwelling with the Father and have come into the world; now I’m leaving the world and returning to the Father.”

Then his disciples said, “See? Now you’re speaking directly instead of using illustrations. Now we see that you know everything, and you have no need for anyone to ask you. For this, we believe that you came out from God.”

“You believe at last!” Jesus exclaimed. “Look! The time is coming—in fact it has arrived—for you all to be scattered, each one going your own way, leaving me alone. Of course, I’m not really alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you these things so that in me you will have peace. You will have oppression in the world, but take courage! I have conquered the world!”

Having said all these things, Jesus then looked up toward heaven and said, “Father, the time has come for you to honor the Son so the Son may in turn honor you. Just as you gave him authority over everyone, so also he will give eternal life to all those you gave him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the one true God, and the one you commissioned, Jesus the Christ. I honored you on the earth, completing the tasks you gave me to do. And now, Father, honor me along with yourself, with the honor I had along with you before the world was made.

“I revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have stayed true to your word. Now they have understood that all you have given me is from you, because I passed on to them what you told me. They accepted it and know for a fact that I came from you and was sent by you. These are the ones I’m asking about. Now I’m not asking about the world, but about those you’ve given me, since they are yours; after all, what’s mine is yours, and yours is mine. And I have been honored in them.

“I am not remaining in the world, but these people are, and I am returning to you. Holy Father, protect those who represent you and who you have given to me, so that they may be one just as we are. When I was with them in the world I protected those you gave me as your representatives. I watched over them and not one of them was lost except for the doomed one, in fulfillment of the scriptures. Yet now I am returning to you, and I’m saying these things in the world so that they may be filled with my happiness.

“I have given them your word, and the world hated them because neither they nor I belong to the world. I’m not asking you to take them up out of the world, but that you would protect them from the evil one. Consecrate them by your truth; your word is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, so also I send them into the world. And

for their sakes I consecrated myself, so that they too would be consecrated in truth.

“Now I’m not only asking about these, but also about the ones who will put their trust in me through their word. Then they may all be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, and they too may be in us. Through this the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the honor you gave me, so that they may be one just as we are— I in them and you in me— that they may be a complete unity, and that the world may know that you sent me and loved them as you have loved me.

“Father, I would also prefer that those you have given me would be where I am, so they can see the honor you have given me, because you loved me before the world was established. Also, Impartial Father, the world did not know you, but I did, and these disciples know that you sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known that your love for me may be in them, and I in them.”

Then he said to them, “When I sent you out without wallet or luggage or an extra pair of sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Not a thing,” they replied.

“But now,” he said, “whoever has a wallet or luggage should use it. And if you need a sword, sell some clothing and buy it. For I tell you that what is written must be fulfilled in me: ‘He was considered to be among the lawless’. Yes, that which refers to me has reached its end. Get up! We have to leave.”

So they said, “Look, Master, we have two swords here!”

“That will do,” he replied. “But when I am raised up, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” And after they sang a festive song, they went out to the Mount of Olives, where they had gone many times before.

## ARREST AND NIGHT TRIALS

Jesus took them to a place called Gethsemane, on the other side of the brook in Kedron (It was a place the traitor Judas was familiar with, since Jesus took his disciples there often.) He said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there to pray.” Then he took along Peter and Zebedee’s two sons. He became extremely sad and depressed and said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” He went a short distance away and fell face-down to the ground, praying, “My Father, if there is any other way, please let this cup of suffering pass me by! But what matters is what you want, not what I want.” Then he returned to his disciples only to find them sleeping, so he said to Peter, “Couldn’t you keep watch with me for one hour? Pray that you will not be put to the test! The spirit is eager but the flesh is weak.”

He went off to pray a second time and said, “My Father, if there is no other way except that I go through this, then let your decision stand!” And again he found the disciples sleeping, because their eyes were heavy, and they didn’t know what to say to him. So he gave up on them and went off to pray a third time, repeating what he said before. Then he returned to the disciples and said, “Are you going to sleep and rest forever? Look! The hour has come and the Human is betrayed into the hands of scoundrels. Wake up, let’s go! See, here comes my betrayer!”

While he was still speaking, suddenly Judas, one of the Twelve, came along with a large number of deputies from the religious leaders, all carrying torches and weapons. The traitor had prearranged this sign: “Whoever I greet affectionately is the one; arrest him!” So

he went up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” while kissing him fondly.

Then Jesus, knowing all that was about to happen to him, asked, “What are you doing here, friend? Who are you all looking for?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.

He responded, “I am.” The traitor Judas was standing with them, and as Jesus said “I am,” they all drew back and fell to the ground. So he repeated the question, “Who are you looking for?”

And again they replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Once again Jesus responded, “I told you that I am. And if I am the one you want, let these others go.” He said this to fulfill what he had said before: “I will not lose one of those you have given me.”

Suddenly Peter reached for his sword, drew it out, and slashed Malchos, the deputy of the ruling priest, cutting off his right ear.

“Sheath your sword!” said Jesus. “Those who live by swords will die by swords. Don’t you realize that I could say the word and my Father would put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But then, how would the scriptures be fulfilled? This has to happen! I must drink from the cup the Father has given me.”

Then at that time Jesus turned to the crowd and said, “You came with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I’m some kind of robber. But every day I sat in the temple compound and taught, and you didn’t arrest me then. Yet all of this happened in order to fulfill what the prophets wrote.” At that point, all his disciples took off and ran away. There was also a youth among them, and he was wearing nothing but fancy pajamas. They seized him but he slipped out of his pajamas and ran away naked.

Then the garrison and commander, with the Jewish deputies, seized Jesus and tied him up. They took him first to Annas because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the ruling priest that year. (This was the Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be to their advantage to let one person die for the people.) The rulers and elders had already gathered with Annas.

Now Peter and another disciple known to the ruling priest had been following at a distance, right up to the courtyard. Peter waited outside the gate, but then the one who knew the ruling priest spoke to the gatekeeper to let Peter in. He went inside and sat with the deputies to wait for a verdict. Meanwhile, all the religious leaders tried to produce false witnesses against Jesus, so they could have him executed. But though many false witnesses came forward, they couldn't find anything, because their testimonies conflicted.

Finally two of them came forward and said, "We heard him claim that he was going to demolish the temple of God and then rebuild it in three days!" Then the ruling priest stood up and said, "Have you nothing to say to the accusation brought by these two?" But Jesus said nothing. So the ruling priest said, "I am putting you under oath before the living God! Tell us if you are the Christ, the God-Man, the Son of the Blessed One."

"You said it yourself!" Jesus answered. "Furthermore, I assure you that someday you will see the Human sitting down to the right of The Power, and coming in the clouds of the sky!"

At that, the ruling priest tore his tunic and exclaimed, "He has defamed God! Why do we need any further testimony? You heard it yourselves; what is your verdict?"

"He deserves the death penalty!" they all replied. Then they spat in his face, and while they were beating and slapping him they mocked, "Prophesy, Christ! Who hit you?"

Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard with the deputies and servants, standing around a charcoal fire because it was a cold night. Suddenly the gatekeeper, a servant girl, came up to him and said, “You were with Jesus the Galilean. You’re not one of his disciples, are you?”

But he denied it in front of them all: “I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

He went out the gate, but another one saw him and said to the others there, “This one was with Jesus the Nazarene!”

Again he denied it: “I swear, I don’t know who that is!”

A short time later, others standing there came up to Peter and said, “You have to be one of them; your accent gives you away!”

Then Peter began to curse and swear: “I don’t know the guy!”, and at that moment a rooster crowed. Then he remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!” So he went away, sobbing bitterly.



# From Trials to Ascension

## TRIALS BY THE JEWISH COUNCIL AND THE ROMANS

At dawn, a council convened with all the religious leaders to decide how to have Jesus executed. Then they tied him up and handed him over to the governor, Pilate. When the traitor Judas saw this, he was filled with remorse and tried to return the thirty pieces of silver to the religious leaders: “I have betrayed innocent blood!”

“What is that to us?” they retorted. “That’s your problem.” So Judas flung the silver into the temple, then went off and hanged himself.

The religious leaders picked up the silver but said, “We can’t use this as a gift offering, because it’s blood money.” So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field, which would then serve as a graveyard for foreigners. So it was known from then on as The Field of Blood. This fulfilled what was said by the prophet Jeremiah:

“They took the thirty pieces of silver– the price agreed upon by the people of Israel– and bought the potter’s field, as my Master instructed.”

By the time they took Jesus to the governor it was morning, but they didn’t enter into the compound because it would make them ritually unclean, and they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came outside to them and demanded, “What is the charge against this person?”

They replied, “If he weren’t a criminal we wouldn’t have brought him here!”

“Then take him and judge him by your own law,” Pilate retorted.

“But we’re not allowed to execute anyone,” they objected. This fulfilled what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was about to

die. Then they added, “He agitates the people with his teachings all over Judea, from here to Galilee!”

When Pilate heard this, he wanted to know whether Jesus was a Galilean. Once he found out that he was under the jurisdiction of Herod, he sent him to him, since he was in Jerusalem at the time. Now when Herod found out about this he was very pleased, because for a long time he had wanted to meet him, since he had heard so much about him. He especially wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. But though he asked him many questions, Jesus did not respond. Then the religious leaders who were standing there began to accuse him vigorously. Even Herod and his troops joined in the jeering, and then they dressed him up in fancy clothes and sent him back to Pilate. On that very day, Herod and Pilate became friends, though before this they were bitter enemies.

Then Pilate returned to the compound and called for Jesus. “So you are the king of the Jews,” he said.

Jesus asked, “Do you say this of your own accord, or is this what others have told you?”

“I’m not a Jew, am I?” Pilate retorted. “Your own people and religious leaders handed you over to me. So what did you do?”

Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world; if it had been, my subjects would have fought to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. No, my kingdom is not from here.”

“So, you are a king then, right?” Pilate asked.

“You say I’m a king,” Jesus replied. “In fact, I was born for this and have come into the world to testify to the truth, and everyone who is of the truth listens to me.”

“What is truth?” Pilate retorted. Then he went out again to the Jews and told them, “I can’t find a single thing to charge him with. In fact, neither did Herod, since he sent him back to me. So my finding is that he has done nothing worthy of the death penalty. I will have him punished and then released.” Now the ruing priests and elders were hurling many accusations, but Jesus made no responses. So Pilate asked, “Don’t you hear all the charges they’re making?” Yet to the governor’s astonishment, he still said nothing.

Now the governor had a custom of releasing one prisoner of the crowd’s choosing during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There happened to be a notorious prisoner called Jesus Bar-Abbas, who had been jailed along with some rebels who had committed murder during the revolts. So when everyone was assembled Pilate said to them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Bar-Abbas or Jesus who is called the Christ?” He knew very well that it was out of envy that Jesus had been handed over. But the religious leaders had incited the crowd to ask for Bar-Abbas to be released to them and have Jesus put to death. And while Pilate was holding court, his wife sent a message to him: “Have nothing to do with that righteous person, because I have had a terrible nightmare about him!”

So when the governor asked them, “Which of the two do you choose to be released to you?” they said, “Bar-Abbas!”

“So what should I do with Jesus who is called the Christ, the King of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

“Crucify him!” they replied.

“But why?” asked Pilate. “What crime has he committed?”

Yet they only shouted louder, “Crucify him!”

So Pilate sent Jesus to the soldiers to be flogged. They got the whole garrison together, stripped him, dressed him in a crimson cloak, and put a braided wreath of thorns on his head. Then they put a stick in his right hand and dropped to their knees and mocked, “Hail, King of the Judeans!” They spat on him and took the stick and hit him in the head with it.

Pilate came out again and said to them, “Look, I’m taking him outside to you so you may know for sure that I have found no grounds for a charge against him.” Then Jesus came outside, wearing the thorny crown and the purple cloak, and Pilate said, “Look at him!”

When the religious leaders and their deputies saw him they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

But Pilate said, “You crucify him! I have found no reason to do so.”

The Jews replied, “We have a law, and according to that law he must be executed, because he equated himself with God.”

When Pilate heard this he was afraid, so he returned to the compound and asked Jesus, “Where do you come from?” But Jesus didn't answer. So Pilate said, “You won't talk to me? Don't you realize that I have the authority to either release you or have you crucified?”

But Jesus replied, “You'd have no authority at all unless it had been given to you from above. But it's the one turning me over to you who has the greater sin.”

From then on Pilate looked for a way to release him. But the Jews shouted, “If you ever release him you will no longer be a Friend of Caesar, because anyone claiming to be a king is challenging Caesar's throne!” When Pilate heard this he led Jesus outside and then sat down on the seat called the Stone Pavement (known locally as Gab-

batha). It was still the Preparation (the Passover), almost noon, and he said to the Jews, “Look at your king!”

But they shouted, “Lift him up! Lift him up! Crucify him!”

Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your king?”

But they responded, “We have no king but Caesar!”

When Pilate saw that it was pointless and that the people were on the verge of rioting, he took some water and washed his hands in front of them all and said, “I hereby declare to you that I am not guilty of this person’s blood!”

And all the people said, “May his blood be on our hands, and on the hands of our children!”

## **EXECUTION AND BURIAL**

Then Pilate released Bar-Abbas to them and handed Jesus over to be scourged and crucified. So the soldiers took Jesus from the governor and led him away to be crucified. On their way out they conscripted a Cyrenian named Simon to carry Jesus’ cross. There was a large crowd of people following Jesus, including women who grieved and mourned for him. But Jesus turned around to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t weep for me but for yourselves and your children. For the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the women who never gave birth or nursed a baby!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’, and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will they do when it dries up?”

Two criminals were also taken away with him. When they got to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”) they crucified him, putting one criminal to his left and the other to his right. Above his head they posted the charge against him: “This is

Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Many Jews read this notice, because the location where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Then the religious leaders went to Pilate and complained about the notice. “You should not write ‘The king of the Jews’, but ‘He said he was the king of the Jews.’” But Pilate retorted, “What I have written, I have written!”

It was about noon when the soldiers crucified Jesus. They took his clothes and divided them into four shares, one for each soldier. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to each other, “Let’s not split this but gamble to see who gets it.” This was in fulfillment of the scripture, “They divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my tunic.” The soldiers literally did these things when they sat down to guard Jesus.

After this, having seen that everything was paid in full, Jesus said, “I’m thirsty”, to fulfill what was written. Now there was a jar nearby that was filled with the soldiers’ cheap wine mixed with pain-killer. They soaked a sponge in it and attached it to a hyssop branch, then lifted it to his mouth. But after tasting it he wouldn’t drink it, and he said, “Father, forgive them; they don’t realize what they’re doing.”

Standing beside Jesus’ cross were his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdela. Seeing his mother there, along with the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, this is your son”, and to him, “This is your mother.” From that time on, the disciple took her into his own home.

Those who passed by mocked him, shaking their heads and saying, “So you were going to demolish the temple and then rebuild it in three days? Then save yourself, if you’re the God-Man! Come down off the cross!” The religious leaders jeered at him as well: “He saved others, but he can’t save himself! If he’s the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross right now and we’ll put our trust in him!

Let God get him out of this if he wants. After all, he said, ‘I am the God-Man!’”

Even one of the criminals hanging there slandered him and said, “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us too!”

But the other one rebuked him and said, “Even now, do you not fear God, since you’re under the same judgment? We’re only getting what we deserved for our deeds, but this one has done nothing wrong.” And he said to Jesus, “Remember me when you acquire your kingdom!”

“I tell you truly,” Jesus replied, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

The sun had gone dark, so the whole land was dark from about noon until three in the afternoon. Then Jesus shouted out, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?”). Some standing there said, “Hey, he’s calling for Elijah!” So one of them ran quickly and soaked a sponge with wine-vinegar and put it on the end of a stick, then lifted it to him to drink. And they said, “Now leave him alone; let’s see if Elijah comes to save him!”

Then Jesus shouted once more, “It has been paid in full! Father, into your hands I present my spirit!” And with that, he bowed his head and breathed his last. Suddenly the curtain in the temple (which conceals the Holiest Place) split in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook and the rocks split apart. Then the graves opened up and the bodies of many righteous people woke from the dead. (After Jesus’ resurrection, they left their graves and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.) When the Roman army captain and those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and everything else, they were terrified and honored God by saying, “Surely this was the

righteous God-Man!” The crowd that had gathered to watch saw this too, and they turned away in shame.

There were many women watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee and provided for his needs. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the Small and Joseph, and Salome, the mother of Zebedee’s sons. There were many others who had accompanied him to Jerusalem as well.

Since it was nearing evening at the end of Preparation and a special sabbath was about to start, the Jews didn’t want the bodies to remain on the crosses. So they asked Pilate for permission to break the victims’ legs so they could be taken away. The soldiers broke the legs of one of the victims crucified with Jesus, and then the other. But when they came to Jesus they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. Just to make sure, one of the soldiers punctured him in the ribs with a spear, and immediately out came blood and water. (The one giving this testimony is an eyewitness and affirms that this is the truth. He’s telling you this so that you all can believe. These things happened in order to fulfill the scripture, “Not one of his bones will be crushed,” and in a different scripture, “They will see the one they pierced.”)

There was a rich person from Arimathea by the name of Joseph. He was a member of the Council with a reputation as a fair civic benefactor, and he had not consented to the Council’s intentions and deeds. He had been expecting the kingdom of God, but because he was afraid of the Jews he had kept it secret that he was a disciple of Jesus. Yet now he boldly approached Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. But Pilate was surprised that Jesus had already died, so he called for the Roman army captain to see how long ago it had happened. And when he found out, he released the body to Joseph. So Joseph and Nicodemus (the one who had interviewed Jesus one night early on), who brought along a mixture of myrrh and aloe



weighing about seventy-five pounds, wrapped Jesus' body in bandages with the aromatic spices, according to Jewish burial custom.

In the place of crucifixion was a garden cemetery with a new tomb that Joseph of Arimathea had quarried out of rock. Since it was the Jews' Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they placed Jesus there. Finally, they rolled a very large stone in front of the tomb's opening and went away. Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joseph, who had come together from Galilee with Jesus, had been following along, and they made note of the tomb and how his body was placed in it. Then they went to prepare aromatic spices and perfumed oils to anoint Jesus' body, but of course they had to rest on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

### **THE TOMB IS SEALED**

**(15th day of the month, the Great Annual Sabbath which begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread.)**

Meanwhile, on the day following the Preparation, the religious leaders went to Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that while he was still alive, that deceiver claimed that after three days he would arise. So give the order to secure the grave until the three days are past. Then his disciples can't steal his body and tell people he rose from the dead. The second deception would be worse than the first!"

"You have guards," replied Pilate. "Secure it to your satisfaction." So they went off and secured the grave by sealing it, and the guard was posted.

### **JESUS APPEARS TO MARY OF MAGDALA**

**(17th day of the month)**

Having risen early on First Sabbath, Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdala, from whom he had thrown out seven demons. As the night was just turning to dawn, she went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been moved from the entrance. She stood outside near the grave, sobbing, and then she bent over to look into the grave. But there were two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one near the head and the other near the feet! And they said to her, “Dear woman, why are you sobbing?”

So she told them, “They took my Master and I don’t know where they put him.” She turned back around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t recognize him.

Jesus asked her, “Dear woman, why are you sobbing? Who is it you’re looking for?”

Presuming he was the caretaker, she replied, “Sir, if you took him away, tell me where you’ve put him and I’ll take him.”

Then Jesus said, “Mary!”

She turned toward him and exclaimed, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

“Stop hanging on to me!” Jesus said. “I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my siblings and tell them that I am ascending now to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

## **JESUS APPEARS TO THE REST OF THE WOMEN**

At earliest light after the Sabbaths, just as the sun was just beginning to rise, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and the other women brought the spices to the tomb. Along the way they had been wondering who would roll the very large stone away from the entrance for them, but they looked up to see that it had already been done! Suddenly there was a tremendous earthquake because an angel of

the Master came down from heaven and sat on the stone. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear and passed out, but the terrified women bowed with their faces to the ground.

Then the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen! Remember how he told you this while you were all still in Galilee? ‘The Human must be handed over to scoundrels and crucified, but on the third day he will arise.’ Come and see the spot where his body was placed.”

And then they remembered what he had said. Upon entering the tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe, sitting to the right. Then the angel told them, “Quick, go tell his disciples and Peter that he has risen from the dead! He will go ahead of you into Galilee, and you will see him there, just as he told you. You have your assignment!”

So they hurried away from the tomb, shaking yet filled with amazement and great joy. But they were afraid and said nothing to anyone as they ran to announce this to his disciples. Along the way, suddenly there was Jesus! “Greetings!” he said. They went over to him and worshiped while holding on to his feet. Then he said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go and tell my brothers and sisters to leave for Galilee; I will meet them there.”

While they continued on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the religious leaders every detail of what had happened. So they called a meeting with the elders, who gave a sum of money to the soldiers and told them, “You are to say that his disciples came during the night and stole the body while you were sleeping. And if word of this reaches the governor, don’t worry; we will keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the payoff and did as

they were told. This story was spread around throughout Judea and continues to this day.

### **THE DISCIPLES DON'T BELIEVE THE WOMEN**

The women met with those who had been with him and were grieving and sobbing, but when they heard that the women had seen him alive, they didn't believe them. Even so, Peter and the other disciple that Jesus was fond of got up and ran to the tomb. They ran together but the other disciple outran Peter and got there first. He bent over and saw the bandages lying there, but he didn't go inside. Then Simon Peter came along and went right in. He saw the bandages lying there, and the sweat cloth that had been on Jesus' head was folded up in a separate spot. Then the other disciple went in, and he saw and believed. (Up until then, they had not understood that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

### **JESUS APPEARS TO THE TWO WALKING TO EMMAUS**

Now on that very same day, two of them left for a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about all that had happened. And while they were talking and arguing, Jesus himself came near and went along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him.

Then he said to them, "What is all this conversation about as you walk along?"

They stood still and looked down in deep disappointment. One of them, named Cleopas, replied, "You must have just arrived in Jerusalem to not know what has been going on here in the last few days."

"What happened?" Jesus asked.

“It’s all about Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and everyone. But our religious leaders handed him over to the Romans, who crucified him. We had hoped he would be the one to redeem Israel, and it’s now the third day since all this happened. But this morning some of our women told us something amazing. They went to the tomb at dawn but found no body there, and they had seen a vision of angels who said he is alive! So some of us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, though they didn’t see him.”

And Jesus said to them, “Don’t you get it? You’re slow to believe all that the prophets said. Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer all these things and then to enter into his majesty?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted all the scriptures that wrote about him.

When they were about to enter the village, Jesus acted as though he would continue on his way. But they twisted his arm and said, “We insist that you stay with us! It’s getting dark and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. But as he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, and handed it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they exclaimed to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he spoke with us along the way and shed light on the scriptures?” So they got up at that very hour and returned to Jerusalem.

### **THE DISCIPLES DON’T BELIEVE THE TWO FROM EMMAUS EITHER**

That evening the Eleven convened a meeting with the others. The doors where they were staying were locked for fear of the Jews. Then the two told them, “The Master has indeed arisen and appeared to Simon Peter!” They told what happened to them along

the way, and how he revealed himself to them as he broke the bread. But they didn't believe them either.

While they were still saying these things, there was Jesus standing among them! "Greetings!" he said. But in their fear and terror they presumed they were seeing a ghost. So he said to them, "Why are you so shaken up? And why do you jump to such conclusions? Observe my hands and feet; it's me! Touch and examine me; a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can clearly see that I have." But they still couldn't believe it because it seemed too good to be true. So he asked, "Do you have anything here to eat?" And they handed him some grilled fish, which he took and ate in front of them. Then he said to them, "This is what I was talking about when I was still with you; everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."

Then they finally worshiped him, but he scolded them for their skepticism and stubbornness, because they didn't believe those who had seen him after he arose. Then he said to them, "Just as the Father sent me, now I am also sending you." Having said this he exhaled on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you dismiss someone's sins they are dismissed, and if you retain them they are retained."

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "It is written that the Christ must suffer and then rise up from the dead the third day. Now proclamation is to be made on his behalf, starting in Jerusalem, for people of all nations to turn to God so they can be cleared of all charges against them. You are witnesses of these things. I will send you what my Father promised, but you must stay in the city until you're filled with power from above. Then, since all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, go and make disciples throughout the nations. Immerse them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Spirit, and teach them to hold tightly to everything I've commanded you. Rest assured I will be with you always, until the very end of the age."

## **THOMAS DOESN'T BELIEVE ANYONE**

Now Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the other disciples told him they had seen the Master he said, "Unless I see his hands and press my finger into the exact spot where the nails were, and put my hand on the exact spot in his ribs, I will refuse to believe it!"

About a week later the disciples were inside the room again, but this time Thomas was with them. As before, the doors were locked when Jesus suddenly stood among them and greeted them. Then he said to Thomas, "Examine my hands, feet, and side. Don't be faithless, believe!"

"My Master and my God!" exclaimed Thomas.

Jesus responded, "You have seen and believed; happy are those who believe without seeing!"

## **FINAL EVENTS**

Then the Eleven went into Galilee, to the mountain Jesus had told them to go. Jesus revealed himself to his disciples again at the Sea of Tiberias, and this is how it went. Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other of Jesus' disciples were together. Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We're coming with you" they replied, so they boarded the ship. But that night they caught nothing at all. In the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't recognize him. He called out to them, "Haven't you guys caught any fish big enough to eat?"

“Not a thing,” they replied.

“Throw the net over the right side of the ship and you will!” said Jesus. They did so, and the catch was so large they were unable to haul it in. Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Master!” When Peter heard this he wrapped a garment around himself (for he had stripped for work) and dove into the sea.

Now the other disciples came in the other boat, dragging the net full of fish, because they weren’t far off-shore (about 100 yards). As they disembarked they saw fish and bread cooking over a charcoal fire. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught!” So Peter pulled the net up onto shore, and it was stuffed with 153 large fish, yet somehow the net didn’t tear. Jesus said to them, “Come and have dinner!” But none of the disciples dared to ask him who he was, since they knew it was the Master. Then Jesus took the bread and fish and passed them around. This was already the third time Jesus revealed himself to his disciples after he rose from the dead.

After dinner Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others?” And Peter replied, “Yes Master, you know I’m fond of you.” And Jesus said, “Pasture my lambs.”

Jesus asked him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” And Peter replied, “Yes Master, you know I’m fond of you.” And Jesus said, “Shepherd my sheep.”

Jesus asked him a third time, “Simon, son of John, are you fond of me?” Peter was distressed because Jesus said ‘Are you fond of me’ the third time, and he replied, “Yes Master, you know everything and you know I’m fond of you.” And Jesus said, “Pasture my sheep. Now I tell you very truly, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went wherever you chose, but when you’re old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind



of death by which he would honor God.) Then he added, “Follow me.”

Turning around, Peter saw the disciple Jesus loved following Jesus (the one who leaned back at dinner near Jesus’ chest and asked who would betray him). Peter asked Jesus, “What about this one?”

“If I want him to remain until I return, what concern is that of yours?” Jesus replied. “You follow me.” Then the rumor spread among the others that this disciple would never die. But Jesus didn’t say that; he only said “What concern is it of yours if he remains till I return?”

This is the disciple testifying about these things and writing about them, and we know that his testimony is valid. Of course, there’s a lot more Jesus did, and if it all had been written down it would certainly be too much for the whole world to contain! But the part that was written was done in order for you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the God-Man, and that by putting your trust in him you can have eternal life.

## ASCENSION

Jesus gave final instructions to the Apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit. These are the ones to whom he presented himself alive after his suffering, with much indisputable evidence. They saw him at various times over a period of forty days, during which he told them things about the kingdom of God. Then he brought them together and reminded them, “Don’t leave Jerusalem until you receive what I told you the Father promised. Though John immersed people in water, before long you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit.”

Then they asked him, “Master, is now the time for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?” But he replied, “It is not for you to know the

times or exact conditions the Father has set up by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Then you will be my witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but also throughout Judea and Samaria— to the very ends of the earth.”

When he had led them out as far as Bethany, he raised his hands and blessed them, and then he went some distance away. They watched as he was lifted up into heaven and seated to the right of God, until a cloud hid him from their sight. As they stared intently at the sky, suddenly two men in white clothing appeared beside them and said, “You Galileans there! Why are you just standing here gazing into the sky? This very same Jesus who was lifted up from you into heaven will return the very same way you watched him go.” They worshiped Jesus and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They were praising God every day in the temple compound, and they went out proclaiming it everywhere. The Master helped and confirmed the Word by the signs that accompanied them.