

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE STORYING

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Church Planting Track (24 Stories)
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EVANGELISM TRACK

46 Stories
(Genesis 1-Acts 1)

1. The Creation of the Spirit World

(Gen. 1:1; Job 38:4-7; Ps. 8; Is. 14:12-15; Ez. 28:11-19; Lk. 10:18; Rev. 12:1-9)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. When God created the heavens and the earth, the angels were already there. When they saw his power and glory they sang together and shouted for joy, giving glory to God.

But there was one who was not so happy to see God praised in this way. His name was Lucifer, which means "bright morning star." He was the leader of the angels. When he saw the honor they gave to God he became jealous and said in his heart, "I will raise my throne above the throne of God, and I will be like God." Lucifer went about to deceive the other angels and to get them to worship him. One third of the angels began to follow him instead of God.

But God knew what Lucifer was thinking and doing. So God judged Lucifer and the angels that had been deceived by him, and he cast them out of heaven and said that one day he would punish Lucifer and the fallen angels. God changed Lucifer's name to Satan and the fallen angels are now called demons.

To this day, Satan continues to lead his demons in a rebellion against God. He and his demons roam about the earth, trying to deceive people so that they follow Satan instead of God. But God's angels continue to serve Him, always striving to bring Him glory.

2. The Creation of the World

(Genesis 1:1-2:3)

When God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without shape and empty. There was only water and darkness, and the Spirit of God hovered over the water.

God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. God separated the light from the darkness. He called the light "day" and the darkness "night." This was the first day.

Then God said, "Let there be a separation in the water." He called the separation "sky." This was the second day.

Then God said, "Let water under the sky be gathered together and let dry ground appear." He called the waters "seas" and the dry ground "land." Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation with plants and trees that bear fruit with seed in it." This was the third day.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky." And God made the sun and moon and stars to watch over the day and the night. This was the fourth day.

Then God said, "Let there be fish in the sea and birds in the air." And it was so. And God blessed them and told them to increase and fill the earth. This was the fifth day.

Then God said, "Let there be animals of many different kinds." And it was so. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image and let him rule over all creatures." So God made man and woman. He blessed them and told them to increase and fill the earth and rule over it. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. This was the sixth day.

By the seventh day, God had finished all the work he had been doing and so he rested. He blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he rested from his work.

3. The Creation of Man

(Genesis 1:26-2:25)

When God created man, he made him from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him. God had made a garden named Eden, and he put the man in the garden. There were many trees in the garden, and in the middle were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Lord God put the man in the garden to take care of it, but he told him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or he would die.

God brought all of the animals to the man, and the man named them. But there was no helper for the man, so God put him in a deep sleep and took one of his ribs. He then made a woman from the rib and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." The man and woman were both naked, and they felt no shame.

4. The First Sin and Judgment

(Genesis 3:1-24)

One day the snake came to the woman, who was named Eve, and said to her, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" Eve answered him, "No, we can eat from any tree in the garden, but we are not to eat from or touch the tree in the middle of the garden, or we will die!" The

snake said, "You will not die. God knows that when you eat of it you will be like God, knowing good and evil!"

When Eve saw how good the fruit looked, and that it would make her wise, she took some of it and ate. She also gave some to the man, who was called Adam, and he ate of it. Instantly they realized they were naked and they sewed together leaves to cover themselves.

In the cool of the day Adam and Eve heard the Lord God walking in the garden, so they hid themselves. God called out to the man, "Where are you?" Adam answered, "I heard you coming and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." God answered, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you disobey my command and eat of the tree I told you not to eat from?" Adam blamed Eve, saying, "It was the woman. She gave me some fruit and I ate." Then God said to Eve, "What is this you have done?" Eve blamed the snake, saying, "The snake deceived me, and I ate."

So God said to the snake, "Because you have done this, you are cursed above all wild animals. You will forever crawl on your stomach and eat dust. I will put hatred between your offspring and the offspring of the woman. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head."

Then God said to Eve, "Because you have done this, you will have pain in childbirth. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Then God said to Adam, "Because you have listened to your wife, the ground is cursed because of you. It will produce thorns and weeds. You will eat of it only by the sweat of your brow. You will die and return to the ground, for dust you are and to the dust you will return."

Then God made clothing for them out of animal skins. God said, "The man has become like us, knowing good and evil. He must not be permitted to take also from the tree of life and live forever." So God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden. He put angels in front of the garden with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life.

5. Cain and Abel

(Genesis 4)

Adam lay with his wife, Eve and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son and named him Cain. Eve said "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. When they grew up, Abel kept flocks while Cain worked the soil. Cain brought an offering to the LORD of some

of the fruits of the soil but Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. God was pleased with Abel's offering but not with Cain's, so Cain became angry and downcast. God asked Cain, "Why are you angry? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do right, sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master it."

Later, Cain asked Abel to go to the field with him. When they were there, Cain attacked and killed his brother Abel. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother, Abel?" Cain replied, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence, I will be a restless wanderer on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me." But the LORD promised him that no one would kill him and placed a mark on him so that no one who found him would kill him. Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

6. Noah and the Flood

(Genesis 6:9-9:17)

Cain took a wife and had children and his parents, Adam and Eve also had other children, and those children had children. Over time, they multiplied and there were many people on earth. However, they became very wicked. They did not live in a way that was pleasing to God. God saw how wicked the works of man were and he said, "I will destroy everything I have created." But there was one man who followed God and God decided to save him. His name was Noah.

Noah had three sons. Their names were Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Noah followed God, but the other people on earth were wicked, so God said, "Noah, I will destroy all that has been created because the people are evil. Only you and your wife, your three sons, and their wives will live. I want you to build a big boat, because I will cause a flood to destroy the earth. You should also take with you from every group of animals and birds, male and female. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it as food for you and for them."

God told Noah exactly how to build the boat and Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Then one day God told Noah that he and his family should take all of the animals and birds and go into the boat. He promised to send rain that would last for forty days and nights. When Noah and his family and all of the animals that came to them went into the boat, and God shut the door. Then it began to rain and everything was covered with water, even the highest mountain. There was no way for people or animals to escape, so they all drowned.

After many months, the flood subsided and the boat came to rest on top of a mountain. God told Noah to come out of the boat with his family, and the animals. Noah built an altar and made an offering, worshiping God. God was pleased with his offering. He told Noah and his family to have many children and fill the earth. God placed a rainbow in the sky as a sign to them that he would never again destroy the earth by flood.

7. Tower of Babel

(Genesis 11)

Now Noah's children had many children and they became many nations. The whole world spoke the same language and men moved toward the east and found a plain called Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

The LORD came down to see the city and the tower that they were building and said, "If as one people speaking the same language, they have begun to do this, then nothing will be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so they won't understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

8. God's Call and Promises to Abram and the Cutting of Covenant

(Genesis 12-15)

Some years after the LORD scattered people over the face of the whole earth, in a place called Ur, there was a man named Abram. God promised Abram that he would bless him and his descendants would be many. He also promised

Abram that his descendants would inherit a large country called Canaan and that all peoples of the world would be blessed through him.

God told Abram to leave his home country and go to a place that He would show him. So, Abram left. He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and many servants. After many days of traveling they came to the land of Canaan. God told Abram this was the land he had promised to him and his descendants.

Abram and Sarai had no children. God took Abram outside and said "Look up at the heavens and count the stars if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Even though he had no children, Abram believed God and God considered him righteous.

The LORD reminded Abram that he had brought him out of Ur to the land of Canaan to possess it. When the LORD told Abram that he would take possession of the land, he asked God how he could know that this would take place. The LORD said to Abram, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

Abram brought these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in half. When birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD told Abram that his descendants would go to a foreign land and be slaves there for 400 years, but that God would bring them out with great possessions so they could return to the land of Canaan. He also promised him that he would die at a good old age.

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. That day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates."

When God promised Abram he would have many descendants, like the stars in the sky, Abram was 75 years old and Sarai was 65 years old and they had no children.

9. Covenant of Circumcision

(Genesis 17)

When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to him and promised to confirm his covenant between them and increase his numbers. Abram fell on his face and God said to him, "This is my covenant with you. You will be the

father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many."

The LORD promised him that the covenant would last forever, and he would be the God of all of his descendants after him. He reminded them they had to keep this covenant.

The LORD told him that the sign of the covenant would be that every male among them was to be circumcised and from that time forward all male children were to be circumcised on the eighth day. Anyone not circumcised would be cut off from his people because they had not kept the covenant.

God also told Abraham to change his wife Sarai's name to Sarah because she would be blessed and bear him a son and be the mother of many nations. Abraham fell facedown and laughed because he was now 99 years old and Sarah was 90. God told him to give this son she would bear at this time the next year the name Isaac which means laughter. God promised to establish the covenant with him and with his descendants after him.

Then Abraham was circumcised along with all the males in his household as a sign of the covenant.

10. The Three Visitors

(Genesis 18)

Soon after Abraham and the males of his household were circumcised, the LORD appeared to Abraham again near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried to meet them and bowed to the ground.

He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say." So Abraham hurried into his tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set them before them. While they ate he stood near them under a tree.

"Where is your wife, Sarah?" they asked him.

"There in the tent," he said.

Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

When Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. They named him Isaac which means laughter.

11. God Provides a Substitute Sacrifice

(Genesis 22: 1-19)

One day years later God told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, whom he loved very much, and sacrifice him to God on the mountain.

Early the next morning Abraham gathered the things needed for making a sacrifice and they began their journey. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the mountain in the distance. He told the servants to stay where they were. He told them that he and Isaac would go to worship God and then they would return.

As they went up the mountain, Isaac carried the wood and Abraham carried the knife and the fire. As they walked, Isaac said, "Father, we have the wood and the fire for the sacrifice, but where is the lamb?" Abraham replied, "My son, the Lord himself will provide the lamb."

When they came to the place, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he took his son Isaac and he tied him and put him on the altar. He raised the knife to kill him, but just then the angel of the Lord spoke to Abraham and told him not to kill Isaac.

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the bushes. Abraham took the ram and sacrificed it instead of his son. Abraham called that place Jehovah Jireh, which means "the Lord will provide."

12. Jacob and Esau

(Genesis 25:20-34; 27-28)

Sarah died in the land of Canaan at the age of 127, but Abraham lived to be 175 years old. When he died he left everything to Isaac. Isaac grew up and married Rebekah and prayed to the LORD for her because she was barren. Twenty years later, the LORD answered his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant with twins, who wrestled inside her. When she asked God why this was happening he told her that two nations were in her womb and that the older would serve the younger. When she gave birth, the first to come out was red and hairy and he was named Esau. After this his brother came out grasping Esau's heel and he was named Jacob.

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter and Isaac loved him. Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents and Rebekah loved him.

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in hungry and asked him for something to eat. Jacob told him he would give him some stew if he gave him his inheritance. Esau said he was about to die of hunger so he swore his inheritance to Jacob and Jacob gave him some stew. Esau ate and drank and got up and left, but he had not cared for his inheritance and it was given to Jacob.

When Isaac was old and could no longer see, he called for Esau and asked him to go and hunt and then prepare some tasty wild game for him so that he would give him his blessing before he died. Rebekah heard what he said and sent Jacob to bring her two young goats from the flock, which he did. She prepared food for Isaac just the way he liked it and Jacob took it to his father, Isaac in order to receive his blessing before he died. Jacob knew that his father would recognize him because he was not hairy like his brother and he would be cursed, so Rebekah told him to do as she said and that the curse could be on her. She then dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes and covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins.

Jacob went to his father, Isaac and lied and said he was Esau. His father called him closer to touch him and felt the goatskin and believed it was his son Esau, whom he loved. When he touched him, he believed it was Esau, although he had the voice of Jacob. He asked him again if it was Esau, and Jacob lied and said he was.

When Isaac had eaten, he called his son to him to kiss him and he blessed him. Just after Jacob left his father, Esau came in and brought the game and asked for his father's blessing. When they realized that Jacob had already received his blessing, Esau wept aloud. Esau held a grudge against his brother Jacob and

wanted to kill him so when Rebekah heard this, she sent Jacob away to live in the house of Laban until his brother's anger subsided.

13. Jacob in Laban's House

(Genesis 29-33)

When Jacob arrived in Laban's homeland, Paddan Aram, he saw a beautiful shepherdess named Rachel. When he asked about her, he found out she was Laban's daughter. She sent word to her father and he hurried to meet Jacob and embraced him and brought him to his home. When Jacob began to work, Laban wanted to pay him for his work, so Jacob said "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."

Laban agreed and Jacob worked for seven years for Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. At the end of the seven years Jacob asked for his wife Rachel, but Laban tricked him by calling a feast and giving him his older daughter Leah after dark and Jacob lay with her. The next morning when Jacob realized what he'd done, he asked Laban, "Why have you deceived me?" Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one." He then agreed to give Rachel to Jacob in return for another seven years' work. After seven more years' work, Jacob also married Rachel.

Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and when the LORD saw this, he opened Leah's womb and she bore Jacob a son whom they named Reuben. Rachel was barren, but Leah bore him three more sons. Rachel became jealous of her sister and gave her maidservant to Jacob, and her maidservant bore him two sons. Then Leah gave her maidservant to Jacob and she bore him two sons. Leah then bore Jacob two more sons and a daughter. Then God remembered Rachel, he listened to her and opened her womb and she gave birth to a son and named him Joseph.

God blessed Laban while Jacob tended his livestock, but Jacob's herds grew stronger than Laban's herds. Laban's sons became jealous of Jacob and Laban's attitude changed toward Jacob, so God told him to return to the land of his father and said, "I will be with you."

So Jacob put Rachel and Leah and his children on camels and drove all his livestock in front of him along with all he had accumulated in Paddan Aram. Jacob was not sure what type of greeting he might receive from Esau, so he sent messengers ahead to tell his brother of his coming. When he heard that Esau was coming out to meet him with four hundred men he was afraid and prayed to God. He remembered that God had promised, "I will surely make you

prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted."

That night, Jacob was alone and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that it was put out of joint. At daybreak the man asked Jacob to let him go, but Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man then changed Jacob's name to Israel because he had struggled with God and with men and had overcome. Then the man blessed him there.

When Jacob looked up, his brother Esau ran to meet him and embraced him; he kissed him and they wept. Jacob gave him a gift and said "to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably." Jacob then set up an altar and called it *Mighty is the God of Israel*.

14. The Story of Joseph (part 1)

(Genesis 37, 39-40, 41-46:6, 50:20)

Jacob's wife Rachel became pregnant again, but when she began to give birth she had great difficulty. Before her last breath, a son was born to them and Jacob named him Benjamin. Now Jacob had twelve sons. Then Rachel died. He came home to see his father, Isaac before his death, and when Isaac had breathed his last, Jacob and Esau buried him.

Jacob then lived in the land that had been promised to his father Isaac and to him, the land of Canaan. When his son Joseph was seventeen, he was tending the flocks with his brothers and he brought their father a bad report about them. Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a special robe for him with many colors. His brothers were all jealous and hated Joseph.

Joseph had a dream in which his sheaf of wheat stood upright and the sheaves of his brothers all bowed down to his. When he told his brothers, they hated him even more. In another dream, he saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. When he told his father and his brothers, his father rebuked him asking if this meant that he and Rachel and his brothers would bow down to him. His brothers were very jealous of him.

When his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks, Jacob, also known as Israel, sent Joseph to check on them and bring back word to him. When his brothers saw him coming, they plotted to kill him, saying "Here comes that dreamer! Let's kill him and throw him into a pit and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." Reuben disagreed

and told them not to take his life, so when Joseph came to them, they stripped him of his robe and threw him into an empty well.

When a caravan of merchants on their way to Egypt passed by, his brother Judah suggested that they sell Joseph to the Midianite merchants. When Reuben saw what his brothers had done, he was upset, so they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood and took it to their father Jacob to examine it. When he saw it, he thought a ferocious animal had devoured his son and he mourned for many days over the death of his son, Joseph.

Meanwhile, in Egypt Joseph was sold by the Midianites to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in Potiphar's house. When he saw that the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in everything, he found favor in his eyes and was put in charge of his household. After a while, Potiphar's wife noticed how handsome young Joseph was and said, "Come to bed with me." But Joseph refused, though she tempted him day after day. One day when he was fulfilling his duties in the house and none of the servants was inside, she caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. She then called her servants and lied saying Joseph had tried to sleep with her. When Potiphar came home, she told him the story and showed him Joseph's cloak.

Joseph was put into prison but the LORD was with him.

15. The Story of Joseph (part 2)

(Genesis 37, 39-40, 41-46:6, 50:20)

When Joseph was in prison, the LORD showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. When the king's chief cupbearer and chief baker were also put into prison, Joseph attended them. One night both of them had a dream and God helped Joseph interpret the meaning of their dreams. The chief cupbearer was later restored to his position, but the chief baker was hanged, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretations. The chief cupbearer forgot about Joseph, even though Joseph had asked him to remember him when all went well with him, but God was with Joseph.

After Joseph was in prison for two more years, Pharaoh had a dream that he was standing by the Nile and seven sleek and fat cows came up out of the water to graze. Then seven ugly and thin cows came up and ate the seven sleek and fat cows. No one knew what the dream meant, but the chief cupbearer remembered how Joseph had interpreted his dream when they were in prison

together, so Pharaoh called for Joseph. When he had heard Pharaoh's dream, Joseph interpreted the dream and said that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, and that God would shortly bring it about. Then he recommended that Pharaoh make plans to be ready for these years of famine.

Pharaoh was pleased with Joseph and put him in charge of his entire house because he saw that Joseph had the Spirit of God and was full of wisdom and discernment. While Joseph served Pharaoh, there were seven years of plenty and he stored up grain in abundance. Joseph also had two sons during the time of plenty. At the end of the seven years of plenty, there came seven years of famine in every country, but throughout Egypt there was bread, so people from all over the world came to buy grain from Joseph in Egypt.

Now the famine reached the land of Canaan, and Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt so he sent his sons to Egypt to buy some grain so they wouldn't die. Joseph was governor of Egypt, and when his brothers came to him, they bowed down before him. Joseph recognized them but they did not recognize him. He sent them all to prison for three days, then he released all of them but one to take grain back to the land of Canaan and return with their youngest brother to prove their truthfulness. They said to each other that surely they were paying for what they had done to their brother Joseph, but they still did not recognize him.

16. The Story of Joseph (part 3)

(Genesis 37, 39-40, 41-46:6, 50:20)

When Joseph's brothers returned to their father Jacob in Canaan with the grain they told him what had happened. He was very upset that they would have to take Benjamin, his youngest son, back to Egypt and he would not allow it, but when the grain ran out, he sent them back to Egypt to buy more and he sent Benjamin with them. Jacob said, "May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man."

When they came to him, Joseph brought them into the house, slaughtered an animal and had dinner prepared for them. When they came in, they bowed down before Joseph. When they were eating, he asked about the welfare of their father, but they still did not recognize him. When he saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said "God be gracious to you," and he went outside and wept because he was overcome with affection for his brother.

Finally, Joseph could not control himself any longer and he asked all of his servants to leave, then he wept loudly and said, "I am Joseph! Is my father still

living?" His brothers were terrified and kept silent. He called them to him and told them not to be afraid because God had sent him ahead of them to preserve a remnant and save their lives by a great deliverance. Joseph told them that God had sent him, not them, and recounted God's faithfulness to him. Then he told them to bring his father to him quickly and he embraced Benjamin and all of his brothers and they wept. When Pharaoh heard about Joseph's brothers, he told them to send for their father, Jacob and his household and that when they came to Egypt, they would have the best of the land.

As Jacob went to Egypt, God told him, "I will make you into a great nation there. I will go with you there and bring you back and Joseph will close your eyes." So they all went to Egypt together, and God blessed them there.

When Israel was about to die, he called all of his sons to him and blessed each one of them and told them to bury him with his fathers and he died. When their father died, Joseph's brothers were afraid he might hold a grudge against them, but Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

17. Moses' Birth and Flight

(Exodus 1-2)

After many years, Joseph and his brothers and all their generation died in Egypt, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became numerous in the land. When a new king who did not know Joseph came to power, he saw how numerous they were and made them slaves so they would not overpower the Egyptians. They were oppressed with forced labor to build the Egyptian cities, and they continued to multiply and spread. The Egyptians despised them and made them work very hard.

Then the king of Egypt told the midwives to kill all of the male children born to the Israelites, also known as the Hebrews, but to let the girls live, but the midwives feared God and didn't do as they were told. God blessed the midwives with families of their own because they feared Him. Then Pharaoh gave the order to throw every male born of the Israelites into the Nile, but to let the girls live.

When one of the Hebrew women gave birth to a son, she hid him for three months. Then she got a basket and covered it with tar and pitch. She placed the child in it and put it among the reeds on the bank of the Nile, while his sister was watching from a distance.

When Pharaoh's daughter came to the Nile to bathe, she saw the basket and sent her servants to get it. When she saw that it was one of the Hebrew babies and he was crying she felt sorry for him. Then his sister asked if she could go get one of the Hebrew women to nurse him and she agreed so the girl went and got his mother and Pharaoh's daughter agreed to pay her to nurse him and take care of him. So she did, but when the child grew older she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son and she named him Moses.

When Moses had grown up, he saw how the Egyptians treated his people the Hebrews. Once, when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he killed the Egyptian because he thought no one was looking. When someone told him they had seen him, he fled because Pharaoh tried to kill him and he went to live in the land of Midian and married a Midianite woman named Zipporah.

18. The Call of Moses: The Burning Bush

(Exodus 3-4)

When Moses was tending his father-in-law's flocks, he led them to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up, so he went over to see it. When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" and Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then God said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God. The LORD said, "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them and bring them up out of Egypt into a good and spacious land flowing with milk and honey, the land of Canaan. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God said, "I will be with you, and this will be the sign that I have sent you: When you have brought them out, you will worship God on this mountain."

Then God told Moses to tell the Israelites that his name is "I AM WHO I AM" and that "I AM" had sent him to them. He was to assemble the elders of Israel and tell them what God had told him, and they would believe him. Then, they were to go to Pharaoh together and say, "The LORD, the God of the Hebrews has met with us and we are to go into the desert for three days to offer sacrifices." God said he would not agree, so He would stretch out his hand with

all of the wonders he would perform among them. After that, he would let them go. He also promised that they would not leave empty-handed from the Egyptians.

Moses still questioned God, so God told him to throw his staff on the ground and it became a snake. Then he told Moses to pick it up by the tail and when he did, it turned back into a staff. He said this was so that the Israelites would believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers had appeared to him. Then he had Moses stick his hand in his cloak and when he pulled it out, it was leprous. Then when he put it back in his cloak, it was restored. He then said that if they did not believe these two signs, he was to take water from the Nile and pour it on dry ground and it would turn to blood.

Moses then said he wasn't a good speaker, so the LORD asked him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." When Moses said, "Please send someone else to do it," the LORD was angry and said his brother Aaron would help him speak and Moses would use his staff to perform miraculous signs.

When Moses and Aaron brought the elders of the Israelites together and told them what God had said to them and performed the signs, the people believed. When they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

19. The Nine Plagues (part 1)

(Exodus 5, 7:14-10:29)

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may worship me in the desert." But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go?" And he refused to let them go, but instead he told the slave drivers to make the work harder for the Israelites, and they did.

The Israelites complained to Moses and Aaron, so Moses asked the LORD why he brought this trouble on the people. God said, "You will see what I will do to Pharaoh. Because of my mighty hand, he will let them go." Then God said, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob and established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan. I have heard the groaning of the Israelites and I have remembered my covenant. Tell the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from being slaves to the Egyptians and redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as

my people and I will be your God.'" Moses told the Israelites but they did not listen because they were discouraged.

When Moses and Aaron went to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh's heart was hard, though they performed the miracle with his staff. So the LORD told Moses to go to Pharaoh when he went to the Nile in the morning and tell him, "The God of the Hebrews has sent me to you to say: 'Let my people go. Because you have not listened, this is so that you will know that I am the LORD. I will strike the water with the staff in my hand and all of the water in Egypt will be turned to blood and the fish will all die and the river will stink.'" So Moses did this and God changed all of the water in Egypt into blood and there was no water for the Egyptians to drink, but Pharaoh's heart became hard.

Seven days later, God told them to go back to Pharaoh with the same message, but this time God would send a plague of frogs that would come out of the Nile and fill their homes, and their beds and everything they owned. When Aaron stretched out his staff over the waters, frogs came up and covered the land. Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron to pray to God for the frogs to go away and he'd let them go. When Moses prayed, God answered and took the frogs away, and all of the frogs died and the land smelled terrible, but Pharaoh hardened his heart.

Then God caused the dust of Egypt to turn into gnats and they covered men and animals, but Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen.

20. The Nine Plagues (part 2)

(Exodus 5, 7:14-10:29)

Then God told Moses to confront Pharaoh in the morning when he went to get water and tell him, "This is what the LORD says, 'Let my people go so that they may worship me.'" Then God said if Pharaoh did not, he would send swarms of flies on him and his people but the Israelites would not have any flies. The LORD did this and the flies poured into the palace and the land was ruined by the flies. Pharaoh asked for Moses' prayers again and promised to let them go and worship God, but when Moses' prayers were answered and all of the flies left, Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the Israelites go.

God told Moses to return to Pharaoh with the same message and promised a plague on Pharaoh's livestock if he did not let them go. So Moses went and the next day all of the livestock of the Egyptians died, but none of the animals of the Israelites died. Still Pharaoh's heart was hard.

Then God told Moses to take handfuls of soot from a furnace and toss it into the air in Pharaoh's presence. It became fine dust over the whole land of Egypt and festering boils broke out on men and animals throughout the land. When they did this, the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he still would not listen.

Then God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and give him God's message: "Let my people go so they may worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and your people so you may know there is no one like me in the earth." He told him that tomorrow he would send the worst hailstorm Egypt had ever seen so he must tell the people to bring all of their livestock into the shelter because all who were in the field would surely die. Some listened to the word of the LORD, but when the LORD sent thunder and hail it struck everyone in the field and beat down all that was growing there and stripped every tree. The only place where it did not hail was where the Israelites were. So Pharaoh called for Moses and confessed his sin and asked him to pray for it to stop and he would let the people go, but when Moses prayed and the hail stopped, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not let the people go.

Then God sent Moses back to Pharaoh with the same message and promised to send locusts into Egypt to devour what little was left. When Moses left, Pharaoh's officials urged him to let the people go, so Pharaoh agreed to let only the men go. So Moses stretched out his staff and God sent the locusts and they covered the ground until it was black and devoured all that was left until nothing that was green remained. Pharaoh called for Moses and asked him to pray for God to take away the plague and he did, but Pharaoh's heart was hard.

Then God told Moses to stretch out his hand so that darkness would fall over Egypt, a darkness that could be felt. So he did, and total darkness covered Egypt for three days so that no one could see anyone else or leave his place, but the Israelites had light where they lived. Pharaoh called for Moses and said they could go and worship the LORD but they could not take their flocks and herds. Moses refused because they would need them for the sacrifices and burnt offerings, so Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he sent Moses away. Moses said, "I will never appear before you again."

21. The Passover: The Blood and the Lamb

(Exodus 12)

God told Moses that the final plague would be the worst. It would involve the death of all of the firstborn of humans and animals in every household. There would be loud crying and wailing throughout the land. Then, the leader of Egypt would let the Israelites go.

But God told Moses how the Israelites should avoid the plague. Each family was to take a lamb from their flock. It was to be a year old male lamb, one that was perfect. They were to take the lamb, and on the night of the plague they were to kill the lamb and put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the door to their house. They were to stay inside their house, eat the meat, and be fully clothed and prepared to travel. They were to eat it quickly because it was the Lord's Passover. God instructed the Israelites that they should celebrate this day as a festival to the Lord so that generations to come would remember what God had done for them.

God said that on that night he would pass through the land. He would kill every firstborn where he did not see the blood. But when he saw the blood of the lamb, he would pass over that house and the firstborn would be spared. So the Israelites did as God told them.

At midnight, the death angel of the Lord God came through the land. Everywhere he saw the blood of the lamb on the door, he passed over that house and spared the firstborn. But where there was no blood, he entered the house and killed the firstborn. There was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was no Egyptian home in which someone did not die. Even Pharaoh's firstborn son died. Then, the Egyptian people urged the Israelites to leave quickly. Pharaoh also summoned Moses and told him to take the Israelites and leave his land.

As they left, the Israelites took many possessions from the Egyptians. The people had stayed in Egypt about 400 years.

22. From the Red Sea to Sinai

(Exodus 13-17)

When Pharaoh let the people go, God told the Israelites to remember what He did for them with a feast every year. Then God led the Israelites toward the Red Sea. The LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Israel's sons had sworn to take his bones when they left the land of Egypt. God told Moses that Pharaoh would pursue them but he would gain glory for Himself through them and the Egyptians would know that He is the LORD.

Pharaoh took all of his army and pursued the Israelites, and when they saw them, the Israelites were afraid and complained to Moses, but Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today." God told Moses to raise his staff over the Red Sea and divide the water so that the Israelites could pass through on dry ground. Then the angel of

God who had traveled in front of them went behind them in the pillar of cloud so that during the night Pharaoh's army was in the dark and the Israelites were in the light. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the LORD drove back the waters with a strong wind and turned it into dry land, and the Israelites passed through with a wall of water on their right and on their left. When the Egyptians fled toward the Sea, the LORD told Moses to stretch out his hand again and the water came down over the Egyptians and not one of them survived.

When the Israelites saw the great power of the LORD displayed, they feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. Then Moses and the Israelites worshiped the LORD with singing and dancing.

Moses led the Israelites from the Red Sea into the Desert of Shur. They could find no water for three days, but when they found some it was bitter, so Moses prayed to God and God showed him a piece of wood. When he threw it into the water the water became sweet and they drank.

After several months of travel the people were hungry and complained saying they should have stayed in Egypt, so God told Moses he would rain down bread from heaven for them each day but the people were only to gather enough for that day. On the sixth day they were to gather twice as much. The glory of the LORD appeared in the desert in the cloud and he told Moses to tell them they would have meat in the evening and bread in the morning and they would know that He was the LORD their God.

That evening, quail came and covered the camp and in the morning, a layer of dew was around the camp. When it was gone, there were thin flakes like frost that could be made into bread, so they gathered enough for each one in their tent. When they followed the LORD's instructions, they had what they needed, but if they kept it overnight it was filled with maggots, except on the sixth day. That day they could save it for two days for the Sabbath. God also told Moses to take some and put it in a jar and place it before the LORD for the people to remember what God had done.

Moses father-in-law Jethro heard what God had done through Moses and told him to take honest men who feared God and appoint them as leaders to help him take care of the people. God blessed Moses and led them on until they reached the mountain of Sinai.

23. God Gives His Holy Law: The Ten Commandments

(Exodus 19:1-20:21)

When they reached the mountain of Sinai, Moses went up the mountain to talk with God, and God reviewed with Moses how God had saved the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. God told Moses that if the Israelites would obey God, God would make them a great nation. Moses returned and told this to the Israelites, and they said that whatever God commanded they would do.

Then God told Moses to prepare the people. On the third day God would come down on Mount Sinai and speak to the people. The people were not to touch the mountain, or they would die. Then Moses told everything to the people and they became prepared. On the third day there was a thick cloud, thunder, lightning and the sound of a trumpet so loud that the people in the camp trembled with fear.

Then Moses led the people to meet the Lord and they stood at the bottom edge of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke from the fire of the Lord. The mountain shook and the trumpet sounded louder and louder. Then Moses again went up to meet with God. God told him to return down the mountain and warn the people not to touch it. Moses told God that he had already told the people that, but God told him to tell them again. If they touched the mountain, they would die.

So Moses went down and warned the people a second time. When he returned up the mountain, he stayed forty days and forty nights. God told Moses many things, including the Ten Commandments.

God said, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt."

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. You shall have no gods except me. | 5. Honor your father and mother. |
| 2. You shall make no idols. | 6. Do not murder. |
| 3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God. | 7. Do not commit adultery. |
| 4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. | 8. Do not steal. |
| | 9. Do not lie. |
| | 10. Do not covet. |

24. The Tabernacle and Sacrifice System (part 1)

(Exodus 25-40; Leviticus 1-7)

While Moses was on Mt. Sinai he gave instructions to Moses to build a tent called the tabernacle. This would be the place where God would meet with Moses and dwell among the people.

This tent had two rooms in it. The larger room was called the Holy Place. Inside it was a stand that held seven oil lamps, a table on which they put twelve loaves of bread, and a small altar on which they burned incense to the LORD. The priests could go into that room every day to maintain those items.

The second room was called The Holy of Holies. A very thick curtain that ran from the floor all the way to the roof separated the two rooms. The second room contained the Ark of the Covenant. This was a box overlaid with gold. On top were two cherubim standing opposite each other with their wings spread upward overshadowing the cover. Between those wings was a place where God would dwell temporarily. Only the high priest could go into this room and only once a year.

A fence surrounded the tabernacle. Inside the compound, near the gate, was a very large altar for offering burnt offerings to the LORD and a laver for washing. These were both in front of the tabernacle itself.

25. The Tabernacle and Sacrifice System (part 2)

(Exodus 25-40; Leviticus 1-7)

The day the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies was called The Day of Atonement. This day happened once a year in the seventh month, and was the day when the high priest would make payment for the sins of the people.

This is how the payment for sin was done. A young bull and a ram would be chosen. The bull was a sin offering for the high priest and the ram was a burnt offering for all the people. The high priest would enter the Tabernacle compound with these two animals. Then two male goats would be chosen. He would present them before the LORD and cast lots for them. One would be chosen to be the sin offering for the people. The other would be chosen to be the scapegoat to carry away the sins of the people.

The high priest would then bathe himself and put on special linen garments. The bull would then be killed and he would take some of the blood of that bull and go into the Holy of Holies. But he must also take a censor of coals and

some incense. He must put the incense on the coals to create a smoke that would cover the Ark of the Covenant so that he would not die in the presence of God. Then he would sprinkle some of the blood of the bull on the cover of the Ark to pay for his own sin. Then he would sprinkle more of the blood before the Ark seven times. In this way his own sin would be paid for so that he might come into the presence of the LORD on behalf of the people.

After this the high priest would go back outside and slaughter the goat chosen as the sin offering for the people. He would do the same thing with the blood of that goat as he did with the blood of the bull for his own sin. He would go behind the curtain and sprinkle the blood on the cover and before the Ark seven times. This was to pay for the sin of the Israelites in that past year.

After this, he would take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it on the altar outside the tent to cleanse it because of the sins of the people.

Once all of this was finished, the high priest would then take the scapegoat and lay his hands on its head and confess over it all the sins and rebellion of the people. Then the goat was led away from the camp of the Israelites out into the desert, and in this way the sins of the people were symbolically carried away. The man who led the goat away could not return to the Israelites until he had bathed both himself and his clothes.

The high priest would then go into the Holy Place and take off the linen garments and bathe himself. Then he would go out to the altar outside the Tabernacle and there he would offer the ram as a burnt offering to the LORD. He would also burn the fat of the bull. In this way the sin of the people and the high priest would be paid for. This day was called the Day of Atonement.

26. The Prophets and Promise of a Redeemer

(Isaiah 53)

Over the course of time, the people of Israel sinned greatly against God. God sent many prophets to the people. God told these men to warn the Israelites that he would punish the people because of their sin. Many of the Israelites were worshiping other gods. The prophets told the Israelites to repent or God would judge them. God did not want the people to worship idols and evil spirits.

God told the people of Israel, through the prophets, more about the coming of the promised descendant who would defeat Satan. These prophets told of a future time, when a king would come who would establish the kingdom of God. They told that he would be a descendant of David, who was a great king of

Israel. They told that he would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. They told that he would live in Galilee in the north of Israel. They told that his mother would be a virgin. They predicted that he would be killed, but that he would also one day establish a kingdom that would be like no other Israel had ever known, a kingdom that would fulfill every promise God had made to Adam and Abraham and David.

The last prophet of the LORD in that time was called Malachi. He was sent to people still living in sin and rebellion against God. Malachi told of a great day of judgment that was coming called the Day of the LORD. But before it came he said that God would send a prophet who would turn the people back to God, and prepare the way for the coming King.

After Malachi there was no other prophet for 400 years. For 400 years God said nothing to his people.

27. The Announcement of John

(Luke 1:5-25)

After 400 years of silence, God spoke to a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. They were faithful to God and obeyed him, but they had no children and they were very old. When it was Zechariah's time to burn incense in the temple of the LORD an angel of the LORD appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense and Zechariah was afraid. The angel told him, "Do not be afraid. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy to you and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great in the sight of the LORD. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth and will turn many of the people of Israel back to the LORD. He will go on before the LORD to make ready a people prepared for the LORD."

Zechariah asked, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and have been sent to bring you this good news, but because you did not believe my words, you will be silent and not able to speak until this happens."

When Zechariah came out of the temple he couldn't speak. When he returned home, Elizabeth became pregnant and said "The LORD has done this for me and has taken away my disgrace among the people."

28. The Announcement of Jesus

(Luke 1:26-55)

Then God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth to a virgin named Mary who was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. Joseph was a descendant of King David. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary he said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored. The LORD is with you." Mary wondered what he meant. Then he told her that God had blessed her and that she would give birth to a child, whom she should name "Jesus." He said "He will be called the Son of the Most High and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end."

Mary asked the angel how it could be, as she was a virgin. The angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that she would give birth to the Holy One who would be and he would be called the Son of God. Then he said that her cousin Elizabeth was also pregnant in her old age because "nothing is impossible with God."

Mary then said, "I am the Lord's servant." She told him she wanted God to do exactly what he said he would do and then the angel left her.

Then Mary went to visit Elizabeth and when she greeted her, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she told Mary about the baby leaping for joy within her. Elizabeth told Mary that the child Mary would bear would be blessed and that she would be blessed because she had believed that the Lord would do what he had said. Then Mary praised God and declared that God had remembered the promises He made to Abraham and his descendants.

29. The Birth of John

(Luke 1:57-66)

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives all rejoiced with her because God had shown her great mercy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child and were going to name him Zechariah after his father but Elizabeth spoke up and said he was to be named John.

Everyone disagreed and said that there was no one among their relatives with that name. When they made signs to his father Zechariah to ask what he wanted to name the child, he asked for a writing tablet and wrote "His name is John." Everyone was surprised at what he had written, but immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened and he began to speak, praising God.

All of the neighbors were amazed and the news spread throughout the land about what had happened. Everyone who heard the story wondered what kind of child he would be because the Lord's hand was with him.

30. The Birth of Jesus and His Presentation in the Temple

(Luke 2:1-39)

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the town of David to register with the government for a census there because Joseph was a descendant of David. Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married and Mary was expecting a child, even though she had never slept with Joseph.

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born. Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them anywhere else.

At the time of his birth, there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby watching over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were afraid. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born for you. He is Christ the Lord." Then the angels told the shepherds that they would know it was him when they found a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger. Suddenly many more angels appeared and praised God. When they left, the shepherds went to see what the Lord had told them about. When they arrived they found Joseph and Mary and the baby who was lying in the manger. Then the shepherds told everyone and the people were amazed. The shepherds glorified God because what they had heard and seen was exactly as they had been told

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, Joseph and Mary gave the child the name Jesus. Then they took him to the temple to dedicate him to God and make a sacrifice. There was a righteous man named Simeon there. God had promised him that he would not die before he saw the promised descendant who would defeat Satan. When he saw the child Jesus, he took him in his arms and said, "Lord as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation." Mary and Joseph were amazed at what was said and Simeon blessed them.

When Joseph and Mary had done what the Law of the Lord required, they returned to Galilee, to their own town and Jesus grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.

31. Jesus as a Boy in the Temple

(Luke 2:41-52)

Every year, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover to remember how God had delivered their ancestors when they were slaves in Egypt. When Jesus was twelve years old, they were in Jerusalem for the Feast. When it was over Jesus stayed in the temple when his parents left to return home, but they did not know it. After a day, when they realized that he was not traveling with them, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were also amazed and asked why he had made them worry.

Jesus asked, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they didn't understand what he meant.

Then he went back to Nazareth in Galilee with them and was obedient to them. Mary treasured all of these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in body and spirit and in favor with God and men.

32. John's Testimony and the Baptism of Jesus

(Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:19-34)

Jesus' cousin John was only six months older than him. When they grew up, John preached to many people, telling them to repent from their sins and turn back to God. He also baptized people with water. When the priests asked him who he was, John quoted Isaiah the prophet and said, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" The next day, when John saw Jesus, he told everyone around, "Look! This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

Jesus had come to the Jordan River and wanted John to baptize him. John did not think he was worthy to baptize Jesus, but Jesus told him that it was right for John to baptize him. So, John baptized him. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, heaven was opened and he saw the Holy Spirit descend on him like a dove. A voice came from heaven, saying, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

John said that the one who had sent him to baptize with water had told him that when he saw the Spirit come down and remain on a man, he would be the

one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Then John said, "I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God."

33. Jesus Has Power to Forgive Sin: The Paralyzed Man and His Four Friends

(Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26)

Jesus had been on a preaching tour throughout a region called Galilee. When he finished he returned to Capernaum, a small village on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. When he arrived, the news spread quickly through the village and soon the house where he was speaking was completely packed. So many had come to hear him preach that not one more person could get inside the house.

After a while, four men came carrying a friend on his mat. The friend was completely paralyzed and unable to walk. The men tried to get in, but couldn't. When they saw there was no chance to get their friend to Jesus through the door they took him up on the roof. They began to dig a hole in the roof right over where Jesus was. When they finished, they lowered their friend down right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith he said to the man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Now there were some teachers of the Jewish law sitting in the room. They were watching Jesus closely. They began to reason in their own minds, "Why does this man talk this way? He is blaspheming God! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But while they were thinking this in their hearts, Jesus stopped talking to the people and turned to them and said, "Why are you thinking this way in your spirits? Which is easier, to say to this man 'your sins are forgiven' or to say rise, 'take up your mat and walk home'? But in order that you might know that I have authority on the earth to forgive sin..." He turned to the paralytic and said, "I say to you, stand up, take up your mat, and go home."

The paralytic got up, rolled up his mat and walked home! The people were amazed and praised God, saying, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

34. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath: Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

(Mark 2:23-3:6)

One day Jesus was going through the grain fields on the Sabbath and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees saw this and asked why they were doing what was against the law on the Sabbath. Jesus asked if they had ever read about what King David's servants

had done when they were hungry and in need. He reminded them that David had entered the house of God and eaten the consecrated bread and given it also to his companions. This was lawful only for the priests to eat. Then Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue and saw a man with a shriveled hand there. Some were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus told the man with the shriveled hand to stand up in front of everyone. Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with others how they might kill Jesus.

35. Jesus Has Power over Nature: Jesus Calms the Sea

(Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)

Huge crowds were following Jesus and listening to his teaching. Many followed him because of the miracles he performed. Sometimes, when he taught close to the Sea of Galilee, he would get in one of his disciple's boats and push out just a little ways and teach from there.

After teaching one day, Jesus was exhausted, so he suggested that he and the disciples go to the other side of the sea. As they took off, Jesus went to the back of the boat and fell asleep.

A storm came up with strong wind and high waves. The disciples were very afraid because the boat was about to sink. They woke up Jesus and said, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" Jesus stood up and said to the wind and waves, "Quiet, be still." Then the wind stopped blowing and the sea became calm.

Jesus said to the disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

When the disciples saw this, they were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

36. Jesus Has Power over Demons: The Gadarene Demoniac

(Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)

When Jesus reached the other side of the sea, he got out of the boat and was almost immediately met by a wild man who was filled with demons. This man was uncontrollable. The community had chained him in the cemetery, but he would break the chains and cut himself with stones. He went around naked.

When Jesus saw him from a distance, he immediately commanded the demons to come out of him. The man ran up to him and said, "What do you want with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to me that you will not torture me." Jesus asked him his name and the man replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." Then the demons begged Jesus not to send them out of the area. There was a herd of pigs feeding near the cliffs of the sea. The demons begged permission to be cast into them. Jesus gave permission and the demons entered the pigs. The pigs immediately ran over the cliff and drowned in the sea. When the shepherds saw this, they immediately ran to tell people.

The people came to the place where they were, and when they arrived they saw the wild man clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. But the people were afraid of Jesus and asked him to leave their area. However, the man begged Jesus to let him go with him. But Jesus declined, telling him to go back to his home and tell everyone what the Lord had done for him.

37. Jesus Has Power over Death: Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

(John 11:1-46)

Jesus had a friend named Lazarus, who lived in the town of Bethany. Lazarus had two sisters. One was named Mary and the other Martha.

One day the sisters sent a message to Jesus and told him that his friend Lazarus was sick. Jesus told his disciples that this sickness would not end in death, but would bring glory to God and the Son of God. After two days had passed, Jesus and his disciples started going to Bethany. Then Jesus told the disciples that Lazarus had died.

When Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany, there were many people at the home of Lazarus. By that time Lazarus had died and had been buried for four days. Martha went out to meet Jesus and said to him, "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died! But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for." Jesus told her that Lazarus would rise from the dead. She thought Jesus was talking about the resurrection. Jesus said, "I am

the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." He said, "Do you believe this?" Martha answered, "I do believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into this world."

Martha went and called Mary and told her that Jesus had come. Mary went to Jesus, fell weeping at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died."

Jesus asked where they had buried Lazarus. They told him to come and see. Jesus wept. The people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus." But some said, "He caused a blind man to see. Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?"

Then Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus, which was a cave with a stone at the entrance. "Take away the stone," Jesus commanded. Martha said, "There will be a bad smell. He has been dead for four days." Jesus answered, "Did I not tell you that you would see God's glory if you believed?"

Then he prayed out loud and said, "Father, I thank you that you hear me. I know that you always hear me, but I say this because of the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me." Then he called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus came out, with grave cloths still wrapped around his hands, feet, and face. Jesus said, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Many people who saw this believed in Jesus, but the Jewish teachers of the law heard about it and made plans to kill Jesus.

38. Jesus Cleanses the Temple

(John 2:12-23)

When it was almost time for the Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found men selling cattle, sheep and doves in the temple courts. Others were sitting at tables exchanging money. Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove all the people and the animals from the temple area. He scattered the coins of the money changers and turned their tables over. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that there was a prophecy in the Psalms that said "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Then the Jews asked him what miraculous sign he could do to show he had authority to do all of this. Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The Jews knew it had taken 46 years to build the temple and they asked how he would raise it in three days. But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

While he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

39. Jesus and Nicodemus

(John 3:1-21)

After Jesus began publicly speaking to the people and performing many miracles, there was a religious leader named Nicodemus who came to him at night. He said, "Teacher, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for only God can perform the miracles you are doing." Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Nicodemus said, "How can this be? How can a man be born again when he is old? Surely he cannot enter his mother's womb a second time!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. No one has ever gone to heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

40. Abraham, Lazarus, and the Rich Man

(Luke 16:19-31)

One day Jesus told this story to the Jewish teachers of the law:

"There was once a rich man who lived in luxury every day. At his gate was a beggar named Lazarus, who was covered with sores and wanted to eat crumbs from the rich man's table. Even the dogs licked his sores.

"Eventually the beggar died and angels carried him to the side of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, but he went to hell and was in great pain and misery. He looked up and saw Abraham and Lazarus. The rich man called to Abraham and said, 'Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the

tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, there is a great separation between us. It is impossible to go from here to there or from there to here.'

"The rich man said, 'Then I beg you, send Lazarus to my father's house to warn him and my five brothers, so that they don't also come here to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' the rich man said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

"Abraham said, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

41. The Last Supper

(Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-34; John 12:1-30)

It was tradition for the Jewish people to celebrate the time of the Passover as they remembered how God saved their ancestors from bondage in Egypt. Jesus observed the Passover with his twelve disciples, men he had selected to go with him as he traveled around and preached and performed miracles.

Before eating the Passover meal, one of the disciples, a man named Judas, had gone to the teachers of the law. He knew that they wanted to kill Jesus and he offered to help them. They agreed to pay him thirty pieces of silver for his help, and he began to watch for an opportunity to hand over Jesus to them.

As all of the disciples were eating the Passover meal with Jesus, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." They were very sad and all said to him, "Surely not I, Lord?" Jesus said, "It is the one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me as we have eaten this meal. The Son of Man will go just as it has been told long ago, but it will be better for that man if he were never born." Judas said, "Surely not I, teacher?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is you."

They then finished the meal together, and after singing a song, they went out to a place called the Mount of Olives.

42. Jesus Betrayed, Arrested, Accused, Tried, and Sentenced to Death

(Matthew 26:36-56; Matthew 27; Mark 14:32-52; Mark 15;
Luke 22:39-54; Luke 22:66-23:25; John 18:1-13, 19-24, 28; John 19:6)

As Jesus and the other disciples were at the Mount of Olives praying, Judas came with soldiers and some of the temple guards, who were sent by the teachers of the law to capture Jesus. As they came to where Jesus was, Judas walked up to Jesus and kissed him. It was a sign to the soldiers, so that they would know which person was Jesus. Jesus asked them, "Did you have to come with swords and clubs to capture me, as though I were a criminal? Every day I sat down and taught in the temple, and you did not arrest me." As Jesus was arrested, all the disciples left him and ran away.

Jesus was taken to the High Priest. The High Priest questioned Jesus about all he had done. Then they took Jesus to Pilate, the Governor, who also questioned him and asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. Pilate went outside and told the people, "I cannot find any reason to condemn him." Then Pilate told the people that since it was their custom for him to release one prisoner each year, he would release Jesus. But the people wanted a criminal named Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus, so they shouted, "Not him! We want Barabbas!"

Pilate asked, "What shall I do with Jesus then?" The crowd replied, "Crucify him!" Pilate said, "Why? What crime has he committed?" They shouted even louder, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Pilate decided to let the crowd win, so he washed his hands in front of them and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility!" All of the people said, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Then Pilate released Barabbas but sent Jesus to be beaten. All the soldiers stripped Jesus of his clothes and put a crown made of thorns on his head and a robe on him. They made fun of him and said, "Long live the King of the Jews!" Then they spit on him and beat him again and again. Then they took the robe off, put his clothes on, and sent him away to be crucified.

43. The Crucifixion and Burial

(Matthew 27:31-66; Mark 15:20-47; Luke 23:26-56; John 19:17-42)

They placed a cross on his back and took him to a place called Golgotha. A large crowd followed and some of the women were weeping. Soldiers nailed Jesus'

hands and feet to the cross and crucified him. There were two thieves also being crucified, one on either side of Jesus.

The soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with vinegar to drink. They mocked him and insulted him and said, "He saved others, let him save himself." The soldiers wanted his clothes, so they gambled to see who would get them.

Hanging on the cross, Jesus prayed, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

One of the thieves said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

The mother of Jesus was standing near the cross. Jesus saw her and the disciple he loved like a brother. He said to his mother, "He is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "She is your mother." From that time on the disciple took her to live in his home.

At noon the sun stopped shining and it was dark over the whole country until three o'clock in the afternoon. Then Jesus cried out, "It is finished." Then he died.

At that time the veil which was hanging in the temple was torn in two pieces. The earth shook and the rocks broke apart. Some graves opened and many of God's people arose from the graves.

When those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

It was the custom of the Jews that no one was to hang on a cross on the Sabbath day and since it was the day before the Sabbath, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified. They did this to make sure the person was dead. When they came to Jesus they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' side and blood and water came out.

A man named Joseph from Arimathea asked Pilate if he could bury Jesus. So Joseph took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a white linen cloth, and put the body in a tomb which had been dug from a solid rock. The women who had followed Jesus saw the tomb where Jesus' body was laid. A large rock was placed in the opening of the tomb, and soldiers sealed the rock and stood guard around it.

44. The Resurrection and Appearance to Disciples and Followers

(Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-35; John 20:1-18)

Because it was the time of remembering the Passover, no one could go to the tomb before Sunday morning. But some of the women who had followed Jesus knew that his body had not been properly anointed for burial because of the Passover. So they went to anoint it. They weren't sure how they would remove the large stone, but they hoped for help. However, when they arrived at the tomb they saw the stone rolled away! Suddenly two angels appeared and said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen." The women took this report to the disciples. Some of the disciples ran to the tomb and looked inside of it themselves. Jesus was not there.

That same day, two of Jesus' followers traveled to a village called Emmaus. Jesus came up beside them and heard them talking about all the events. He asked them what they were talking about. They said, "Are you a visitor here? Are you the only one that does not know that Jesus was crucified? He was powerful in word and deed and everyone was hoping he would be the one to redeem Israel. But he was killed three days ago and no one has seen him."

Then Jesus said to them, "How foolish you are and slow to believe all that the prophets spoke about the Christ." Then, beginning with Moses and the Prophets, he began to explain to them all that the Old Testament said about himself. When they arrived at the village they invited him to eat with them. When Jesus blessed the food in prayer, their eyes were opened and they realized it was him! Immediately Jesus disappeared. Then they said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn on the way as he explained the Scriptures to us?" Then they returned to Jerusalem and said, "It is true. Jesus is alive! We saw him ourselves."

45. The Miraculous Catch of Fish

(John 21:1-14)

Jesus again appeared to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee when Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two other disciples were there fishing. Simon Peter and the others were fishing all night but they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

Jesus replied, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard this, he jumped into the water and the other disciples followed in the boat towing the net full of fish. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Jesus asked them to bring some of the fish they'd just caught. When they pulled the net ashore, it was full of fish but it was not torn.

Jesus invited them, "Come and have breakfast." None of them dared ask him who he was because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

46. The Great Commission and Jesus Returns to the Father

(Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:26-53; Acts 1:4-11)

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and many followers over a period of forty days. He told them how he was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Then he led his followers out of the city and blessed them. He told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them and that they would be his witnesses in their area and all over the earth. He told them to go and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that he had said. And Jesus promised that he would be with them always. Then he was taken up before their eyes and went into heaven.

As Jesus' followers were looking up into the sky, suddenly two men dressed in white stood before them. They said, "Why are you looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

CHURCH PLANTING TRACK

24 Stories
(Acts 1-28)

1. The Day of Pentecost

(Acts 1:1-2:47)

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem with Mary, Jesus' mother, along with his brothers and some other women. Before He ascended, Jesus had told them not to leave Jerusalem because there they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit as a gift from the Father a few days later. While in Jerusalem the disciples, now called apostles, chose Matthias to replace Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus.

They were all there together in one place on the day of Pentecost when suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit helped them.

There were people from every nation in the world staying in Jerusalem at that time. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together and was amazed, because each person heard the disciples speaking in his own language. They were amazed and asked because these men were all from Galilee but they were speaking about God in many different languages. They all wondered what this meant, but some made fun of them and said they were drunk.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven other disciples, raised his voice and addressed the crowd to explain what had happened. He said, "These men are not drunk. This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel who said that God would pour out His Spirit on all people, young and old, men and women, in the last days and they would prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Peter then told them that all that had happened to Jesus was in God's plan, even when God raised him from the dead as King David had foretold.

He then said, "God has raised the same Jesus that you crucified back to life, and we have all seen it. Now he's at the right hand of God, where the Father gave Him the promised Holy Spirit and Jesus has sent Him to us. This is what you now see and hear. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the others, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Peter continued to warn them and plead with them to be saved. About three thousand people accepted his message, were baptized, and joined them in following Jesus that day.

The believers in Jesus were committed to God's Word and to fellowship with each other, to eating together and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and shared everything, even selling their possessions and goods to give to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together and they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

2. Peter and John Heal the Crippled Man

(Acts 3:1-4:4)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter and John looked straight at him. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man looked at them hoping they would give him something.

Peter said, "I don't have silver or gold, but I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Peter took him by the right hand and helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

When Peter saw that the people wanted to follow him, he told them not to be surprised because this man wasn't healed by their power but by God's power. He went on to explain that although they had killed Jesus, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had now glorified his servant Jesus. Peter said, "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.

It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see."

He encouraged them to repent and turn to God, so their sins could be wiped out. Then he went on to tell them that Moses, Samuel and all the other prophets had foretold this day. God was fulfilling his promise made to Abraham, "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed."

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming the truth about Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. They arrested Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

3. Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin and the Believer's Prayer

(Acts 4:5-31)

The next day after Peter and John had performed this miracle, the rulers, elders and teachers of the law, known as the Sanhedrin, met in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest and others in his family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and told them that this man was healed by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom they had crucified but God had raised from the dead. He said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were ordinary men who had no schooling, they were amazed and remembered that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to leave the court. Then they talked together about what to do with them since everyone living in Jerusalem had heard about this outstanding miracle. They decided that, in order to stop this from spreading any further among the people, they would warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in the name of Jesus.

When they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether

it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

When they were released, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that had been said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God remembering how Jesus had also faced opposition from earthly leaders. Then they asked God to enable them to speak His word with great boldness and to stretch out his hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of his holy servant Jesus.

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

4. Ananias and Sapphira

(Acts 4:32-5:16)

During this time, all the believers continued to serve each other. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to tell everyone that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. There were no needy persons among them because those who owned lands or houses often sold them, brought the money from the sales and gave it to the apostles, who gave it to anyone that needed it.

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property but he kept back part of the money for himself and his wife knew about.

When they brought the rest and gave it to the apostles, Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. Everyone who heard about it was afraid. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife Sapphira came in, but she didn't know what had happened. Peter asked her, "Is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together. More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. Because of this, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

5. Apostles Jailed and Gamaliel's Speech

(Acts 5:12-42)

When the high priest and his associates, the Sadducees, saw how popular the apostles were becoming, they were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out and told them to go and stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life. So as the sun came up, that's what they did.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together all of the elders of Israel, known as the Sanhedrin, and sent to the jail for the apostles. But the officers did not find them there, so they went back and reported that they'd found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but that the apostles were not inside. When they heard about this, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests wondered what would come of this.

Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." So, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles but they did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

They brought the apostles before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest and he said, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet you

have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of Jesus' blood."

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. He told them to think carefully about what they were doing. He said that many men had gained a following of people and that when they died, their followers scattered and it all came to nothing. Then he advised them, "Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is from man, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

The elders believed him so they called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for Jesus' name. Every day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

6. The Choosing of the Seven and the Stoning of Steven

(Acts 6:1-8:1)

As the number of the disciples continued to grow, it was difficult to serve all of the widows when they distributed food each day. So the apostles, also called the Twelve, gathered all the followers of Jesus together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God to wait on tables." They chose seven of the disciples who were full of the Spirit and wisdom and gave this responsibility over to them. The apostles said, "We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; along with Philip and five others and the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Now Stephen was full of God's grace and power, and he did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. No one could stand up against his wisdom because he was led by the Spirit. Therefore they secretly persuaded some men to say they heard him speak against Moses and against God. Stephen was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin where some witnesses lied and said he also claimed that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple and change the customs Moses handed down to them. As everyone sitting in the Sanhedrin looked closely at Stephen, they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Then the high priest asked him, "Are these charges true?"

Stephen responded by reminding them of many of the stories they already knew about God's promises to bless Abraham with many descendants and give them a good land, even though he didn't even have a son. He spoke of how God gave him a son, Isaac, and made a covenant with him. He spoke of Isaac's son Jacob who had twelve sons and how one of them named Joseph suffered greatly because his brothers sold him into slavery but God was with him and used him to save the Israelites from starvation.

He reminded them how Pharaoh later came to power in Egypt and made the Israelites slaves, even killing their newborn babies. But then God raised up Moses and used him to work miracles and to deliver the Israelites after 400 years of slavery in Egypt. He reminded them that Moses had predicted the coming of Jesus, but that their forefathers did not obey him and asked him to give them idols to worship instead. Stephen told them how all of this fulfilled the words of many prophets.

Then Stephen said, "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One and now you have betrayed and murdered him."

When they heard this, they were furious but Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and he looked up to heaven. He said, "Look. I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." When they heard this, they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

Meanwhile, those who watched this laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul, who was there giving approval to his death. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, Stephen died.

7. The Church Persecuted and Scattered

(Acts 8:1b- 25)

On the day Stephen was stoned, a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him, but Saul began to destroy the church by going from house to house, dragging off men and women and putting them in prison.

The people of the church who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. When Philip preached about Jesus in a city in Samaria, the crowds saw the miraculous signs he did, so they all paid close attention to what he said. Evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed, so there was great joy in that city.

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced witchcraft in that city and amazed all the people there. He boasted that he was someone great, and many listened to him and followed him because of his magic. They even called him "the Great Power."

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Simon himself believed and was baptized and he began to follow Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that people in Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them who prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Peter and John placed their hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit.

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money if they would give him the ability to lay his hands on people for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Peter refused and told him he couldn't buy the gift of God with money. He also said to Simon, "You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

8. Philip and the Ethiopian

(Acts 8:26-40)

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. The Ethiopian man had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

So Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture where Isaiah spoke of one who was silent as he was being led like a sheep to the slaughter. This one was humiliated and deprived of justice and his life was taken from the earth.

The eunuch asked Philip to tell him who the prophet was talking about. Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" So he gave orders to stop the chariot and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared in another city and he continued to travel around, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

9. Saul's Conversion

(Acts 9:1-31)

Meanwhile, Saul was still threatening to kill the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked his permission to take any disciples in the city of Damascus as prisoners to Jerusalem.

When he had almost reached Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus where for three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision and told him to go to the house of Judas and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, who was there praying. The Lord told him that this man had seen a vision of you coming and placing your hands on him to restore his sight.

Ananias told the Lord that he'd heard the reports of what this man had done and that he had come there to arrest Jesus' followers.

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

So Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again so he got up and was baptized, and he ate and regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus and he immediately started to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, because they were afraid he had come to take the disciples prisoners. But Saul grew more and more powerful and continued to preach about Jesus Christ, which troubled the Jews so much that

they made plans to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan and escaped to Jerusalem.

When he arrived, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But a man named Barnabas brought Saul to the apostles and told them the story of his conversion and how he'd been preaching Jesus fearlessly. So Saul joined them and continued to speak boldly in the name of the Lord with many. When some Grecian Jews tried to kill him, the disciples took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Then the church throughout the area enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, and they grew in numbers, and in the fear of the Lord.

10. Peter Goes to Cornelius' House

(Acts 9:32-10:48)

During that time Peter was traveling through the country healing the sick and raising the dead. When this became known, many people believed in the Lord. Peter then stayed in the home of Simon the tanner in Joppa for some time.

There was a faithful man of God named Cornelius who lived at Caesarea. He was a soldier and all his family followed God. He gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision and saw an angel of God who said, "Cornelius!"

Cornelius was afraid and asked, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said God had heard his prayers and noticed his gifts to the poor. He told him to send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Peter, who was staying with Simon the tanner. So Cornelius called his servants and sent them to Joppa to find Peter.

The next day, while they were still on their way, Peter was praying and God showed him a vision of heaven opening up and letting down a sheet filled with animals. A voice told Peter to kill and eat them, but Peter refused because they were unclean according to what he'd been taught. The voice replied, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius arrived and called for Peter. God told him to go with them, so Peter went down and welcomed the men to stay with him. The next day he returned with them to Cornelius' house because he wanted to hear what God had to say.

When they arrived and Peter went inside, Cornelius had gathered all of his friends and family together although it was not traditional for Peter, who was an Israelite, to associate with Cornelius and his family because they were Gentiles. So Peter told them what God had told him. Cornelius told Peter, "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Then Peter began to speak and tell them that he now understood that God accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. He told them all about Jesus Christ and all that he'd seen; how Jesus had the power of the Holy Spirit and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

He said that God had chosen him to tell everyone about Jesus and how "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message and the believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on them, even though they weren't Israelites. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ since they had received the Spirit just like they had. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

11. Peter Explains His Visit to Cornelius' House

(Acts 11:1-18)

The apostles and the brothers throughout the area heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised men also known as the Israelites or the Jews, criticized him and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."

So Peter told them exactly what had happened: He told them about the vision he saw of the sheet filled with animals that was let down from heaven and how he heard a voice saying "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." He told them how he had disagreed but then how the voice from heaven told him two times not to call anything impure that God had made clean. He said that after this happened three times, the sheet was pulled back up to heaven again.

Then he told them about the men who'd come to the house where he was staying and how the Spirit told him to go with them to Cornelius' house. He

shared how Cornelius was there waiting for the message from God with all of his friends and relatives when he arrived.

He told them how the Holy Spirit came on them as he was speaking. Then Peter said that he had remembered what the Lord had said: "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." He knew that if they'd received the same gift of the Holy Spirit from God when they believed in Jesus Christ, he couldn't stand against God.

When they heard this, they were glad and praised God because salvation had come to the Gentiles.

12. The Church at Antioch

(Acts 11:19-30; 12:25; 13:1-3)

When Stephen was stoned, the church experienced persecution and they were scattered to many different areas, but they continued to share the message with the Jews. Some of them, who went to Antioch began to tell the Greeks the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

When the church in Jerusalem heard this news they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus and found Saul. He also brought him to Antioch and for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

During this time Agabus came down with some other prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch. Agabus stood up in the power of the Holy Spirit and predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (Later this happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea as much as each one could. They sent their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, and John Mark went with them.

In the church at Antioch there were several prophets and teachers. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me

Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

13. Saul and Barnabas Sent Off

(Acts 13:4-14:5)

Barnabas and Saul then left and sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived, they proclaimed God's word to the Jews there with John's help. When they came to a town called Paphos, they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus who wanted to hear the word of God from them. But the sorcerer opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith so Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Bar-Jesus and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas then sailed on and came to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

Paul stood up and motioned with his hand and said, "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!" He went on to tell them that God had chosen their fathers and rescued them from Egypt and how he'd endured their bad conduct in the desert. He then reminded them of how God had given them kings and leaders and how he finally brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.

Paul went on to preach the good news of Jesus to them telling them that through Jesus their sins could be forgiven and that through him everyone who believes is made right with God

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath and many followed them. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and spoke against Paul and his message.

Then Paul and Barnabas preached the good news to the Gentiles and many who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jews stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and left, but the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

When they came to Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue and a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas stayed there for a while sharing the good news and performing miracles, but the people of the city were divided. When the men found out some wanted to stone them, they left and went to Lystra and Derbe where they continued to preach the good news.

14. Paul and Barnabas and the Crippled Man

(Acts 14:6-28)

In Lystra there was a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" The man jumped up and began to walk.

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted and proclaimed that Paul and Barnabas were gods and some of the Greek priests came to offer sacrifices to them with bulls.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they were upset, tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Men, why are you doing this? We are only men like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them." They went on to remind them of God's kindness in providing rain and crops for the people. But the people still wanted to sacrifice to them.

Then some Jews came and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city.

The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe, where they preached the good news and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to encourage the disciples in some of the other cities by sharing how they had suffered saying, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

Then they appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord.

They continued to preach the Word of God in many places until they sailed back to Antioch where they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

15. The Jerusalem Council

(Acts 15)

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching that unless a man is circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with this so they and some other believers were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. As they went, they shared everywhere how the Gentiles were being saved and this made all the brothers very glad.

When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, and they told them everything God had done through them. Then some of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and reminded them that God had chosen to use him to share the good news with the Gentiles and how those who believed had received the Holy Spirit from God, just as they had. Peter said, "God made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith." He went on to ask why they were also requiring circumcision for them to be saved. He then said, "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up and reminded them that the prophets had said the Gentiles would come and follow God, so they shouldn't be making it difficult for them.

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas with a letter to instruct the Gentile believers. In the letter they apologized for those who were telling them they had to be circumcised to be saved and encouraged

them to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.

The men were sent off and went down to Antioch to deliver the letter. The church read it and they were glad for its encouraging message.

Paul and Barnabas stayed for a while teaching and preaching the Word of God until they decided to return to the towns where they'd preached before to see how they were doing. When Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, Paul disagreed because he had deserted them before. They decided not to go together, so Barnabas took John Mark and sailed for Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas and went to encourage some of the other churches.

16. The Macedonian Vision

(Acts 16:1-10)

When Paul and Silas came to Derbe and then to Lystra, they met a disciple named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers there spoke well of him and Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey, and the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Now the Holy Spirit directed Paul and his companions where they were to preach the Word of God and where they were not to preach it. When the Spirit of God spoke to them, they did not go to certain areas, but they were allowed to go to Troas. While they were there, during the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, they got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel to the people there.

17. Lydia's Conversion and Paul and Silas in Prison

(Acts 16:11-40)

From Troas they sailed on to several cities and finally reached Philippi, where they stayed for several days. On the Sabbath they went outside the city gate to the river to pray and sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in

purple cloth, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she told Paul and his companions, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And they did.

Once when they were going to the place of prayer, they were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by telling the future. This girl followed Paul and the rest of them, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days until Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and they ordered them to be stripped and beaten severely. Then they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully so he put them in the inner cell and chained their feet.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake and the foundations of the prison were shaken. All the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell down before Paul and Silas. After bringing them out, he asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. The jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and gave them a meal. He was filled with joy because he and his entire family had come to believe in God.

When it was daylight, the jailer was ordered to release Paul and Silas, so he told them, "Go in peace."

But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

This was reported to the officials. When they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed so they did as they were expecting and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.

18. Paul Preaches in Thessalonica, Berea and Athens

(Acts 17)

When they traveled on, they came to Thessalonica. Paul went to the Jewish synagogue there on three Sabbath days explaining and proving from the Scriptures that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. When he told them Jesus was the Messiah, some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and many prominent women.

But the Jews were jealous; so they stirred up the crowds and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas, but when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king called Jesus." When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were very upset so they made Jason and the others pay and let them go.

That night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. There they went to the Jewish synagogue and found that the Bereans were eager to receive the message. They examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many more Jews and Greeks believed. When more trouble arose, Paul was taken to Athens and left Silas and Timothy behind, asking them to join him as soon as possible.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. Paul preached the good news about Jesus and the resurrection in the synagogue and in the marketplace daily. Some people argued with him while others thought he was promoting foreign gods.

Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of important judges who wanted to know the meaning of the new teaching they heard from him. Paul then stood up and told them he could see how religious they were with so many objects of worship and even an altar where it was written: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Paul then said, "Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you."

He told them that the God who created the world does not live in temples built by hands. He said that human hands don't serve him because he doesn't need anything. He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. He made all men in every nation from one man, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

He promised that even though God had overlooked their ignorance in the past, now he was commanding all people everywhere to repent because, on his appointed day, Jesus who had risen from the dead would judge the world with justice.

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them were upset, but others wanted to hear more on the subject. Then Paul left them. A few men followed Paul and believed.

19. Paul in Corinth

(Acts 18)

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth where he met a Jew named Aquila who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, when all the Jews had been ordered to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he spoke in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

When Silas and Timothy finally came, Paul kept preaching, telling the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, but when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." Then Paul left the synagogue but the synagogue ruler and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and

harm you, because I have many people in this city." So Paul stayed for a year and a half in Corinth, teaching them the word of God.

Paul stayed in Corinth for some time until he sailed with Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus. Then Paul sailed back to Antioch and then on to other places in the region to strengthen the disciples.

Meanwhile a well educated Jew named Apollos who knew the Word of God well came to Ephesus. He spoke the truth about Jesus with great excitement, although he only knew about John's baptism. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Then Apollos was encouraged by the disciples to go to Achaia, and he was welcomed by the brothers there and he helped the believers. For he spoke strongly to the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

20. Paul in Ephesus

(Acts 19)

Paul went to Ephesus and found some disciples who had never heard of the Holy Spirit but only the baptism of John. Paul told them that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, but that they needed to believe in Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and all twelve of them spoke in other languages and prophesied.

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months about the kingdom of God but some of them opposed him and refused to believe. So Paul left and took the disciples with him and continued to teach them daily for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did amazing miracles through Paul, and even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus saying, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." A Jewish chief priest had seven sons who were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "I know Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. When the people in Ephesus heard about this, they were afraid, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many people believed and openly

confessed their evil deeds. Those who had practiced witchcraft brought their very valuable scrolls and burned them publicly. The word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

About that time there arose a great disturbance about those who followed Jesus. Many of the people in Ephesus worshipped a goddess names Artemis whom they believed had fallen from heaven. A man who made silver shrines of Artemis gathered all those who made money in this way and warned them that Paul was leading many people astray saying that man-made gods are no gods at all. He warned them that they would lose their jobs and Artemis would not be worshipped throughout Asia.

When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized two of Paul's friends and the crowd came together. Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples and the local officials begged him not to.

The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. Then they all shouted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" for two hours.

Finally, the city clerk quieted the crowd and reminded them that all the world knew that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven. He then encouraged them not to act in haste with these men since they had done nothing against the temple or their goddess. He said they should take the matter to court or they would be charged with rioting. Then he dismissed the assembly.

21. Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

(Acts 20:13-38)

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said good-by and left for Macedonia. He traveled through the area encouraging the people, and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months. Timothy and the other men traveling with Paul went on ahead and waited for him at Troas until he arrived.

On the first day of the week they were eating together and Paul spoke to the people until midnight since he would leave the next day. A young man was sitting in a window and he fell into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. He fell out the window and was found dead on the ground. So Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him and said, "Don't be alarmed. He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate.

After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Then they began traveling toward Jerusalem, but they passed Ephesus so they might make it to Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost. When they stopped on the way, Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus. When they arrived, he reminded them how he'd always served the Lord with great humility and tears, though he'd been severely tested by the Jews. He said he'd tried to preach anything that would help them and that both Jews and Greeks heard that they should turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Then he told them that the Spirit was compelling him to go to Jerusalem, not knowing what would happen to him there, although the Spirit had warned him that prison and hardships were waiting in every city for him.

Then Paul said, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."

He let them know he was innocent of the blood of all men because he had preached the whole will of God. Paul then reminded them that they were to keep close watch over the flock God had given to them and said, "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." Paul warned them to be on their guard because savage wolves would come in among them after he left to kill the flock. He said even disciples would distort the truth so that others would follow them.

Then Paul committed them to God and to His word and said he hadn't coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. He had supplied his own needs and the needs of his companions. In everything he did, he showed them they should work hard to help the weak because Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Then he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. When he said they would never see his face again, this grieved them most. Then they accompanied him to the ship

22. Trouble in Jerusalem

(Acts 21:1-23:22)

After they said their difficult goodbyes, they sailed on and at every port the disciples urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but he continued on their journey.

Then Agabus the prophet came from Judea. He took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

Everyone continued to plead with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem but he said he was ready to be bound and to die for the name of the Lord Jesus there. So they all gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." And they went on to Jerusalem where they were warmly welcomed by the brothers.

The next day Paul and the others went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and told them what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry and they praised God.

There were some Jews in the area who were concerned that Paul was preaching against the law of Moses and when they saw him in the temple, they stirred up the crowd and seized him and dragged him out and shut the gates quickly. When the commander of the Roman troops heard they were trying to kill him, he stopped them, but Paul was arrested and bound with chains. He asked who he was and what he had done but the noise was too great, so he was taken inside. Paul asked the commander if he could speak to the people, and he received permission. He stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were silent he spoke to them in their own language of Aramaic so they listened closely.

He told them how he was born a Jew and trained in the law under Gamaliel and how he had been committed to the Law just like them, even killing followers of Jesus and throwing others into prison. Then he shared the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus, how suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around him and how he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

When he asked, 'Who are you, Lord,' he told them that the voice replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

He told them how the Lord had told him to go into Damascus and how he was led there by his companions because the light had blinded him. He recounted how a man named highly respected Jew named Ananias had come to see him and stood beside him and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' Paul said, "At that very moment I was able to see him."

Paul told them how Ananias had told him he was chosen by the God of our fathers to know and see the Righteous One and be his witness. Paul then said that he was baptized in the name of Jesus and that the Lord had promised him

that those in Jerusalem would not accept his testimony and that he was being sent far away to the Gentiles.

When the crowd heard this, they raised their voices and wanted to kill him. As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul asked the centurion if it was legal to flog a Roman citizen who hadn't been found guilty. When they found out he was born a Roman citizen they were concerned about it and they stopped what they were doing.

The next day, Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin. When he told them he was obeying God, the high priest told them to strike him on the mouth. When Paul said he was being tried because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead, the Sanhedrin was divided because the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection like the Pharisees did. The disagreement became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them so he ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them.

The next night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

The next morning more than forty Jews committed themselves not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. They went to the chief priests and elders and told them about it and asked that they bring Paul before the Sanhedrin again and they would kill him on the way. But when Paul's nephew heard of this plot, he told him, and Paul had him sent to the commander to inform him.

When they reached the commander, he warned him about their plot to kill Paul. Then the commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

23. Witnessing in Prison in Caesarea

(Acts 23:23-26:32)

The commander ordered for Paul to be taken to Caesarea under armed guards with a letter to the Governor Felix telling how the commander had rescued him since he was a Roman citizen. He read the letter and ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace until they brought their charges against him before the governor Felix. They accused Paul of being a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world and disrespecting the temple; the Jews joined in and agreed with the accusations.

Paul admitted he had gone to Jerusalem to worship, but denied ever arguing with anyone or stirring up the people. He said, "I worship the God of our

fathers as a follower of Jesus and I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets. I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."

Felix didn't make a decision but put Paul in prison. He regularly called for Paul and spoke with him hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe but after two years in prison Festus succeeded Felix as governor.

The chief priests and the Jews requested for Festus to transfer Paul to Jerusalem so that they could have him killed along the way, but he said they'd have to bring him to court if they wanted to accuse him. When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove.

Paul defended himself and said, "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar" and he appealed to Caesar. Festus agreed to send him to Caesar.

A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to visit Festus. He told them about Paul's case and they asked to hear him. When Paul was brought before them, King Agrippa asked him to speak for himself. Paul asked him to listen patiently as he told him how he'd grown up as a Pharisee and opposed the name of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem and put saints in prison in many cities. Then he told him the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus and how Jesus had sent him to open the eyes of the Gentiles and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins. Paul said he'd obeyed this vision when he went everywhere preaching that people should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews had arrested him and tried to kill him. Then Paul said that he was only saying what the prophets and Moses said would happen – that Christ would suffer and rise from the dead and then the message would go to the Gentiles.

Festus interrupted Paul and said, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane."

Paul replied, "I am not insane, most excellent Festus, What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king knows about this." Then he asked King Agrippa if he believed the prophets. Then Agrippa said, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Paul replied, "I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

The king and all the others got up and left the room saying, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment and he could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

24. Paul's Voyage to Rome

(Acts 27:1-28:31)

It was decided that Paul would sail for Rome, so he and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius. On the way, their boat had difficulty because of a dangerous wind. Paul warned them that their trip would be a disaster and that they would lose their ship, their cargo and even risk their lives, but the centurion wouldn't listen and they sailed on.

A strong wind arose and their boat faced a storm so strong that they tried to hold the boat together with rope and began to throw their cargo and tackle overboard. When the storm continued raging, they did not see the sun or stars for many days and they gave up all hope of being saved.

After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and told them they should have listened to him, but now they should take courage because none of them would be lost, even though the ship would be destroyed. He told them that he had faith because an angel of God had promised him this.

After they had sailed for two weeks, about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. As the water grew more shallow, they were afraid they would crash against the rocks, so some of the men tried to escape from the ship but Paul said that unless everyone stayed with the ship, they could not be saved, so they returned to the boat.

Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat because they'd been hungry for two weeks. He promised them that they would all survive. Paul took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They all ate as much as they wanted and were encouraged. Then they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. At daylight the ship hit the land and the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners so they wouldn't escape, but the centurion spared Paul's life and everyone reached land in safety on the island of Malta.

The people there were kind to them and built a fire to warm them. The chief official's father was sick in bed. Paul prayed for him and placed his hands on him and healed him. Then the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. They honored them in many ways and when they were ready to sail,

they provided them with the supplies they needed and they sailed off in a ship that was there.

When they finally reached Rome, they were greeted by the brothers. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and was encouraged. In Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

Paul called together the Jewish leaders and told them everything. Then they came in large numbers to the place where he was staying to hear more. From morning until evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. Paul told them the prophet Isaiah had predicted they would not listen and that's why God's salvation was sent to the Gentiles, because they would listen.

Paul stayed there for two whole years in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ boldly.

SPIRITUAL LIFE TRACK

24 Stories
(Romans – Jude)

1. Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome: God's Judgment and His Salvation

(Romans 1-3:23)

Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ who wrote a letter to the believers in Rome.

In his letter, he thanked God for them and told them how people all over the world were talking about their faith. Paul longed to visit them and to make them strong because he was called to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles. Paul said he was not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Paul also told them that since God created the world, he had shown himself to all men through his creation so that they could see his power and his nature, but since men did not give glory to God, they became more and more sinful. He said that God was going to judge them because they continued to sin even though they knew they deserved judgment.

Paul warned them that God would judge everyone according to what they had done and would not show favoritism. He said they should not judge others since they were doing the same things they judged others for. He reminded them that in order to be right with God, their hearts needed to be circumcised by the Spirit, no matter whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

Paul told the believers in Rome that the prophets had always declared that no one was righteous. He said that the only way to become righteous is to have faith in Jesus Christ because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

2. Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome: Salvation by Faith

(Romans 3:25-5:8)

Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ who wrote a letter to the believers in Rome.

In his letter, he taught them that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and that all are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

He reminded them that when Abraham believed God he became the father of many nations, just as God had promised him, even when it was hard to have hope. He was about one hundred years old and knew that his body was almost dead and he knew that Sarah had been unable to have children, but he did not become weak in his faith. He trusted God's promises because he knew that God had power to do what he had promised. Paul said this was why Abraham was

considered a righteous man, and God would also consider us righteous if we believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead. He went on to say that Jesus demonstrated his love for us by dying for us while we were still sinners.

3. Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome: Righteousness by Faith

(Romans 9-10)

Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ who wrote a letter to the believers in Rome.

Paul told them that the Gentiles had received righteousness by faith. The people of Israel had not received righteousness by trying to follow the law. This was because they tried to become righteous by what they did and not by their faith.

He told them that his desire and prayer to God was for Israel to be saved. Then Paul said that if they confessed "Jesus is Lord" with their mouth and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead they would be saved.

Paul told them that there were no differences between Jews and Gentiles because one Lord is over all and richly blesses all who call on him because everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Then he asked how anyone could believe in someone they've never heard of and how they could call on one they did not believe in. Paul reminded them that the Scriptures say that the feet of those who bring good news are beautiful.

4. Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome: Christian Living

(Romans 12-13)

Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ who wrote a letter to the believers in Rome.

Paul urged them to give their bodies to God as living sacrifices because he would accept them and he encouraged them to remember what he had done for them. He said they shouldn't copy the behavior and customs of the world but let God change them into new people by changing the way they thought. This way they would know what God wanted them to do, and what his perfect will is.

Paul was God's messenger and he warned them not to think of themselves more highly than they should because in Christ, we're all one body and we all belong to each other. He said they should be committed to each other in love and to honor each other above themselves.

Paul said that they should never be lazy, but serve the Lord with all their power. He told them to be joyful in hope, patient in suffering and faithful in prayer sharing with brothers in need. He encouraged them to be hospitable and spend time with lowly people without trying to act important.

Paul also told them to submit to the governing authorities because all governments have been placed in power by God. This means that if we refuse to obey the laws of our land, we are refusing to obey God and we will be punished. Paul challenged them to pray for God to bless those who persecuted them instead of cursing them. He said they were never to pay back evil for evil to anyone but to do what was right in everyone's eyes and to try to live at peace with everyone.

Finally Paul told them not to be overcome with evil, but to overcome evil with good.

5. Paul's 1st Letter to the Church in Corinth: Unity in the Church

(1 Corinthians 1-6)

Paul was an apostle of God who wrote a letter to the believers in Corinth.

He told the people to stop arguing so that there would be perfect unity instead of division in the church. Some were saying that they followed Paul and others were saying they followed Peter, but Paul told them that Christ could not be divided because he is the power and wisdom of God.

Paul reminded them that few of them were wise, powerful or wealthy when God called them but God alone made it possible for them to be in Christ. He told them to stop boasting and taking pride in following a particular leader because they all belonged to Christ.

Paul made it clear that the people should get rid of all wickedness among them. He told them that if they did have disagreements with each other, they should resolve the issues within the church and not take the case before the ungodly. Paul said it would be even better to avoid these problems altogether. He told them that if they are cheated or wronged they should just forgive the offense and maintain unity among the believers.

6. Paul's 1st Letter to the Church in Corinth: Spiritual Gifts

(1 Corinthians 12-13)

Paul was an apostle of God who wrote a letter to the believers in Corinth.

Paul spoke to the people about spiritual gifts. He told them that the same Spirit of God works in all men even though there are different gifts given to each person. He said that some were given wisdom, some were given faith, and others given prophecy, but all had the same Spirit and each gift was given for the good of everyone.

Paul reminded them that in Christ, all people are part of the same body, even Jews and Gentiles. He said that one part of the body cannot say that it is not a part of the body because God arranged every part just like he wanted them to be. He said that everyone should have an equal concern for one another.

Then Paul told them that it was not good to have any spiritual gift if they did not also have love. He told them that love does not get angry easily and that it does not keep a record of wrongs. He said that love always protects and always endures and that love never fails.

7. Paul's 2nd Letter to the Church in Corinth: The Message of Reconciliation

(2 Corinthians 5)

Paul was an apostle of God who wrote a second letter to the believers in Corinth.

Paul told the people that because Christ died for everyone, they also died to the old life they used to live. He said that Christ died for everyone so that those who receive new life will no longer live to please themselves.

Paul told them to stop evaluating other people by what the world thinks about them. He said that he used to think about Christ like the rest of the world, as though he was only a human being. But now, Paul said that he thought about Christ very differently.

Because of this, he said that those who are in Christ are new people. Their old life is gone and a new life has begun because of what Christ did. Paul reminded them that God had given them the task of reconciling people to him. He said that God forgave people's sin through Christ. This was the wonderful message that he had given them to tell others.

8. Paul's 2nd Letter to the Church in Corinth: Cheerful Giving

(2 Corinthians 8-9)

Paul was an apostle of God who wrote a second letter to the believers in Corinth.

He told the people of Corinth about the church in Macedonia. He said that even though they had recently gone through many hard times, they continued to have deep joy and they were giving generously. He said that the Macedonians had been willing to give to other believers far more than they could afford. Even better, he said that they had followed God's will by giving first to God and then to others.

Paul told them that just as they had much faith, knowledge and love, they should also be very generous. He reminded them that Jesus showed his love and kindness when he became poor in order to make them rich.

Paul encouraged them to give cheerfully because a gift is good when it is given with happiness. Then he gave an example that a farmer who planted only a few seeds would get a small crop but a farmer who plants many seeds would get a big crop.

He told them to not give reluctantly or because of pressure, because God loves someone who gives cheerfully. Then he told them that God would provide generously for all their needs. Paul said that when they were generous, God would receive the glory. He told them that their generosity would prove their obedience to the Good News of Jesus because Jesus was a gift too wonderful for words!

9. Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia

(Galatians 1-5)

Paul and the brothers with him wrote a letter to all the churches in the area of Galatia.

Paul said that no one is saved by following the law, but by faith in Jesus. Paul gave up his old way of life so that Jesus could live in him. He now lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and died for him. He could not forget the grace of God, because if righteousness could come through following the law, then Jesus died for nothing!

Paul reminded the people that Abraham believed God and was considered a righteous man. Those who believe are children of Abraham. Abraham was told that all nations would be blessed through him. So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Paul told them to live by the Holy Spirit and they would not satisfy the desires of the sinful nature. He said that the sinful nature wants what the Holy Spirit does not want and the Holy Spirit wants what the sinful nature does not want. But if people are led by the Spirit, they do not have to follow the law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious, with things like sexual immorality and idolatry and witchcraft. People who always live like that will not be saved. But those who follow the Holy Spirit will have love, joy, and peace. There is no law against those things.

10. Paul's Letter to the Believers in Ephesus

(Ephesians 1-6)

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ who wrote a letter to the believers in the area of Ephesus.

Paul told them that once they had been dead in their sin in the way that they used to live, because they had followed Satan and the sin of the world. He said that at one time, everyone was like that. But because of his great love for us, God made them alive in Jesus even when they were dead in their sin. They were saved through grace because of faith. This was not from themselves but was a gift from God. It was not because of anything anyone had done, so that no one could boast.

Paul told them that now they should live a life worthy of their calling from God. He told them to make every effort to keep unity and peace because there is one God and Father over all people.

He told them to live a life of love since God loved them so much. They were to stay away from sexual immorality and other things that were not pleasing to God and live a life of purity.

Then Paul taught them that the husband was the head of the wife as Jesus is the head of the church. The church submits to Jesus and the wife should submit to the husband. Husbands should love their wives like Jesus loves the church and gave his life for the church. Children should obey their parents and honor them.

He then told them to be strong in the Lord and in his great power. He told them to stand against the work of Satan. He reminded them that the battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers of evil. He told them to be on guard and always keep on praying.

11. Paul and Timothy's Letter to the Believers in Philippi

(Philippians 1-4)

Paul and Timothy wrote a letter to the believers in the area of Philippi.

They told them that they always prayed with joy for them because they followed Jesus together. Paul and Timothy told them to always live in a way worthy of the gospel of Jesus so that they would know that they were standing firm and remaining in unity whether they came to see them or only heard about them. They told them to remain in unity by serving others before themselves.

Their attitude was to be the same as Jesus. He was God, but made himself nothing and became a human. He then humbled himself and became obedient even to death on a cross. God then raised him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

Paul told them how he had accomplished many things but none of them were as important to him as knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. Paul had lost everything for the sake of Jesus, but he considered everything else as garbage so that he could gain Jesus. Paul wanted a righteousness that did not come on his own but through faith in Jesus.

Paul and Timothy told them to rejoice always and not to worry, but to pray and give thanks to God in everything so that the peace of God would guard their hearts and minds. Paul and Timothy had learned to be content no matter the situation, whether they had food or no food and whether they had a lot or a little. They could do everything through the one who gave strength.

12. Paul and Timothy's Letter to the Believers in Colosse

(Colossians 1-4)

Paul and Timothy wrote a letter to the believers in the area of Colosse.

They wrote that they always thanked God for them because they had heard of their faith in Jesus and their love for all the believers. They were praying that the Colossians would live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.

Paul and Timothy wrote that when we see Jesus we see what the invisible God looks like. All things were created by Jesus and for him because He existed before all things. They said that all of God's fullness was found in Jesus and that all men were brought back to God through his blood.

Paul said that he worked with all his energy to teach everyone about Jesus so that all believers may become mature disciples of Jesus. They warned the people not to be deceived through false teaching. It is Jesus who is the head over every power and authority and who defeated them by the cross.

Because of Jesus, the believers were to put to death all of their old sinful actions, including sexual immorality and idolatry. They were now to have kindness and humility, forgiving each other as the Lord had forgiven them.

Paul and Timothy told them to devote themselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. They asked the Colossians to pray for God to open doors for them to tell others about Jesus.

13. Paul, Silas and Timothy's Letters to the Church in Thessalonica

(1 and 2 Thessalonians)

Paul, Silas and Timothy wrote two letters to the church in Thessalonica.

They reminded the church how much they loved them, how they had shared the gospel and their lives with them, and treated them like a mother treats her child. The believers in Thessalonica knew that Paul and his friends spoke God's words and not their own and they believed them.

They reminded the believers how to live to please God by controlling their own bodies, avoiding sexual immorality, and living holy lives. They encouraged them to seek to lead quiet lives, to mind their own business and to work with their hands to win the respect of outsiders.

They encouraged them not to be idle but to work hard and earn their food because, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." They also said they should never grow tired of doing the right thing.

Then they said that when someone dies, believers should not grieve like men without hope, because when Christ returns from heaven with a loud command,

believers who had already died would rise to meet him first. Then those who were still alive would be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord and to go and be with Him forever.

No one knows when this will happen but the day will come like a thief in the night when people don't expect it. They told them, "be joyful always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Finally, they warned them that before Jesus returned a wicked man would stand in God's temple and proclaim he was God, doing fake miracles, signs and wonders by the power of Satan. But when Jesus returned He would overthrow him by the breath of his mouth.

14. Paul's Letters to Timothy

(1 and 2 Timothy)

Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus and he wrote two letters to Timothy, his true son in the faith.

He told Timothy that Christ Jesus had come into the world to save sinners, and that Paul himself was the worst. God gave him mercy to show his unlimited patience. He encouraged Timothy to fight the good fight and hold on to faith and a good conscience.

He urged Timothy to pray for those in authority over him and to live a peaceful, quiet life. He encouraged women to dress modestly and to let their good deeds make them beautiful.

He taught that a church leader should live as a good example with one wife. He should be self controlled and gentle, not quarreling and not loving money, managing his own family well. He must not be a new believer.

He said that anyone who does not provide for his own family is worse than an unbeliever. He warned that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil and told Timothy to command the rich not to trust in their riches but to put their hope in God and to be generous and willing to share.

Paul told Timothy not to let others look down upon him because he was young but to set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Paul encouraged Timothy to study the Word of God so that he would handle it correctly and not be ashamed. He told him that all scripture came from God's mouth and that it was useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that men of God would be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

15. Paul's Letter to Titus

(Titus)

Paul was a servant of God who wrote a letter to another son in the faith named Titus.

He said that many claimed to know God but denied him by their actions. He encouraged Titus to teach those people and show them how to live.

He instructed him to teach the older men to be worthy of respect, self controlled, faithful and patient. He said to teach the older women to be reverent and not to speak slander against others or to be addicted to wine. Instead they were to teach what is good and to train the younger women to love their husbands and children and to be busy at home, respecting their husbands.

He said to encourage the young men to be self controlled and to follow Titus's good example of teaching with integrity and seriousness, so that nothing bad could be said about them.

Paul also reminded him that God's grace had appeared to all men and taught them to say no to worldly passions and to live godly lives as they waited for Christ to return in glory.

16. Paul's Letter to the Philemon

(Philemon)

Paul and Timothy wrote a letter to Philemon and the church that met in his home.

They wrote that they always thanked God for their church in their prayers because of their faith in Jesus and their love for all believers. They were praying that Philemon would be active in sharing his faith with others so that he would understand all the good things he has in Christ. The love he had showed to other believers had brought great joy to Paul.

Then Paul said that he himself was an old man and a prisoner of Christ Jesus. He was writing Philemon to talk to him about their friend, Onesimus. Onesimus had been a slave but was now staying with Paul and helping him. Paul was now sending him back to Philemon who was originally his master and said that now Onesimus was no longer a slave but was a dear brother in the Lord.

So Philemon should welcome Onesimus like he would welcome Paul himself. If Onesimus owed anything to Philemon, Paul said that he would pay it back. And Paul was confident that Philemon would do even more than he was asked.

17. The Letter to the Hebrew Christians: Jesus is Above All

(Hebrews 1-3)

When the number of Gentile Christians had grown, a letter was written to the Hebrew Christians to teach and encourage them in their faith.

They were taught that God had spoken through the prophets in many different ways to their forefathers, but now He had spoken through His Son, Jesus. Jesus was the perfect likeness of God showing all of His glory. After he provided for our sins to be forgiven, he sat down at God's right hand in Heaven.

Jesus is above all the angels because His name is greater than theirs. The angels are spirits that minister to believers but Jesus is God's Son and the angels worship Him. Jesus' throne will last forever even after the world He created comes to an end.

The Hebrew Christians were told that even though they couldn't see it now, Jesus is above all things. He has a crown of glory and honor because He suffered to make men holy and bring them into His family. He is able to help those who are being tempted because He also suffered temptation.

They were taught that Jesus is also greater than Moses. Moses was faithful in God's house, but Jesus was faithful over all believers which also make up His house. And they would be His house if they held on to their courage and their hope.

18. The Letter to the Hebrew Christians: God's Living Word and Jesus our Eternal High Priest

(Hebrews 4-10)

When the number of Gentile Christians had grown, a letter was written to the Hebrew Christians to teach and encourage them in their faith.

They were taught that God's Word is alive and active and sharper than any two-edged sword because it judges the thoughts and attitudes of all hearts.

They were also told that Jesus was the perfect High Priest because he could sympathize with their weaknesses. He was tempted to sin just like they were but He never sinned. That is why they could approach God's throne with confidence to find mercy and grace to help them when they needed it.

They were taught that Jesus is a priest forever and he still intercedes for whoever comes to God. He doesn't have to offer sacrifices day after day like the other high priests, but He made one sacrifice for all time when He offered himself. Under the first covenant between God and Israel there were regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth called the Tabernacle. The High Priest had to offer blood for his own sins and the sins of the people in the Holy of Holies every year. Jesus Christ entered the perfect Tabernacle in heaven and offered his own blood as the perfect sacrifice to remove their sins once for all. He will never have to do it again and now He has taken sins away forever.

Because of this, they were encouraged to come near to God with sincere hearts in faith and hold on to their hope because God is faithful to keep His promises. They were also taught to keep meeting together and to encourage one another toward love and good deeds.

19. The Letter to the Hebrew Christians: Jesus our Perfect Example of Faith

(Hebrews 11-13)

When the number of Gentile Christians had grown, a letter was written to the Hebrew Christians to teach and encourage them in their faith.

They were told the meaning of faith: It is being sure of what is hoped for and certain of what can't be seen. It is impossible to please God without faith because they must believe that He exists and rewards those who truly seek Him.

They were reminded of many examples of faith from God's Word.

By faith we believe that God spoke and made the universe out of nothing.

By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain and God commended him.

By faith Noah built an ark to save his family because God warned him and he was considered righteous.

By faith Abraham went to a place he didn't know because God called him. Then he believed God would keep his promise to give him a son even though he was old and God gave him descendants as many as the stars in the sky. By faith Abraham offered his one and only son Isaac as a sacrifice because he believed that God could even raise the dead in order to keep his promise to bless him through Isaac.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau and Jacob blessed Joseph's sons.

By faith Moses' parents hid him from Pharaoh and by faith Moses chose to be mistreated along with God's people rather than to enjoy sinful pleasures for a short time, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he led the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea.

From that time until the time of Jesus many more lived by faith, even when they suffered greatly because they believed God would keep his promises to reward them.

The Hebrew Christians were told to remember all of these examples of faith and to get rid of sin in their lives and run the race that God had set before them with perseverance while looking to Jesus as their perfect example of faith.

20. James' Letter to Christians Everywhere: Trials and Temptations

(James 1:1-4, 12-15, 19; 5:7-8, 13-16)

James was a servant of God and of Jesus who wrote a letter to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered all over the world.

He wrote to the people telling them be joyful in the midst of trials because the testing of faith develops perseverance which leads to maturity. He also said that the man who perseveres under trial will receive a crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Then James told the people not to accuse God of sending temptation because God cannot be tempted by evil and he doesn't tempt anyone. In fact, each person is tempted when his own evil desires drag him away. These evil desires then give birth to sin which gives birth to death.

He told the people to pay attention: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry because man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. He told them to be patient until the Lord's coming just like a farmer is patient for rain.

Then James asked the questions: is anyone in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? He should sing praise. Is anyone sick? He should have the elders of the church pray over him in the name of the Lord. And a prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. James said that they were to confess their sins to each other and pray for each other so that they may be healed. Because the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

21. James' Letter to Christians Everywhere: Doers of the Word

(James 1:1, 22-24; 2:14-23; 3:13-17)

James was a servant of God and of Jesus who wrote a letter to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered all over the world.

He warned the people not to deceive themselves by only listening to the word but to actually do what it says. Then he asked them: what good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no works? Can that type of faith save him? He told them that if they saw a person in need of clothes or food but did nothing about it, this was no good. In the same way, faith without works is dead.

Then James reminded the people that Abraham was considered righteous for what he did when he offered Isaac on the altar. Because his faith and works were working together, his faith was made complete by what he did. And that is how the promise was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God and God considered him righteous." Because just as the body is dead without the spirit, so faith without works is dead.

22. Peter's Letters to Scattered Christians

(1 & 2 Peter)

Peter was an apostle of Jesus Christ who wrote letters to the Christians of that day.

He told them that God, in his mercy, had given them new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And He had given them an inheritance that would never fade. He told them to rejoice even though they were currently suffering many kinds of trials because this would prove that their faith was sincere and to bring praise to Jesus.

He told them that they would be blessed even if they suffered for what is right and that they shouldn't be surprised at their painful trials but to rejoice that they could join Christ in his suffering.

He told them that they were a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people chosen by God to show his goodness to the world. They were to live such good lives that even unbelievers would see their good works and glorify God when He returns.

For the Lord's sake, they were to submit themselves to every human authority, including the king and those he appointed. Servants were to submit to masters and wives were to submit to husbands, but husbands were to honor and respect their wives. All people were to live in harmony with one another and to be humble.

Finally, Peter reminded them that God had given them everything they needed to live a godly life.

23. John's Letters to His Christian Friends

(1, 2 & 3 John)

John was an elder who wrote letters to those he loved to make their joy complete.

He wrote the message he had heard from Jesus: God is light and in him is no darkness. So people are lying if they claim to have fellowship with God but continue to live in darkness. Instead, if they confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

He reminded them of the old commandment to love one another. But also told them that love means obedience to God's commands. So if someone says he knows God but doesn't obey his commands, they could be sure that this person was not living in God. John warned them that there were many such people who lied about their faith and had left the church. So he encouraged them to remain faithful to what they had been taught in the beginning: to love one another.

This is how they could know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for all and so they were to love their brothers and sisters by giving up their lives for each other. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God because God is love.

John said that Jesus came so they could know the true God. And they would only be in God if they were in Christ.

Finally, he warned them to keep away from anything that might take God's place in their hearts.

24. Jude's Letter to Those Who Have Been Called

(Jude)

Jude was a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James who wrote a letter to those who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.

He urged them to defend the faith that had been entrusted to them because some godless men had secretly come in among their churches saying that God's grace allowed them to live immoral lives.

Jude reminded them that even the angels who had rebelled against God were bound forever for their future judgment. In the same way these godless men live immorally, reject authority and laugh at things they don't even understand.

They are like shepherds who only feed themselves, and like dead trees without fruit. He told them how one of the old prophets named Enoch spoke about men like this when he said that the Lord would come with his holy angels to judge all of the ungodly. Even the apostles of Jesus foretold about these ungodly men without the Holy Spirit who would cause division in the church.

But Jude told them to build themselves up in the faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. He urged them to be merciful to those whose faith is wavering, to rescue others from the fire of judgment, and to show mercy to others mixed with caution hating the sins that control their lives.

END TIMES TRACK

24 Stories
(Revelation 1-22)

1. John's Vision of the Son of Man

(Revelation 1)

God's servant, John, was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for his testimony about Jesus. God wanted to show his servants what was going to happen soon so He sent His angel and told John to write down what he saw and to send it to seven churches.

John said that Jesus was coming with the clouds and every eye would see him, even those who had killed him and that all the people of the earth would mourn because of him. The Lord God said, "I am the Beginning and the End, who is, who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

When John heard the voice and turned around he saw seven golden lampstands and a son of man was standing near them. He was dressed in a long robe with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white and his eyes looked like blazing fire. His feet were like fine metal and his voice sounded like rushing waters. He held seven stars in his right hand and out of his mouth came a double-edged sword. His face was shining as bright as the sun.

John fell down at his feet but the man placed his right hand on John and said, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now I am alive for ever and ever! I hold the keys of death and Hell. Now write down what you've seen because the seven stars in my right hand are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

2. The Letter to the Church in Ephesus

(Revelation 2:1-7)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Ephesus. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Ephesus:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles and are not, and you have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary.

But this is what I hold against you: You have left your first love for me! Remember how much you once loved me. Repent and do what you did at first. If you don't I'll come and remove your lampstand from its place.

I am glad that you hate the evil practices of the Nicolaitans because I hate what they do also.

Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Whoever overcomes will be given the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

3. The Letter to the Church in Smyrna

(Revelation 2:8-11)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Smyrna. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Smyrna:

These are the words of the One who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know that those who are against you say they are Jews but they are not, because their synagogue is of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Whoever overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

4. The Letter to the Church in Pergamum

(Revelation 2:12-17)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Pergamum. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Pergamum:

This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword:

I know that you live where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not deny your faith in me, even when one of you was put to death for his faith in your city where Satan lives.

But I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam. He taught Balak to lead the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. You must repent or I will soon come to you and will fight with the sword of my mouth against those who teach lies.

Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Whoever overcomes, I will give some of the manna hidden in heaven. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it that no one understands except the one who receives it.

5. The Letter to the Church in Thyatira

(Revelation 2:18-29)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Thyatira. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Thyatira:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like fine metal. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

But, I have this against you: You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who claims to be a prophetess. She is misleading my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent, but she will not. So I will cause her to suffer along with those who commit adultery with her, unless they repent of their ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the One who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Now for all of you who do not hold to her teaching which is really from Satan, hold on to what you have until I come. Whoever overcomes and does my will to the end, they will have the same authority I received from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

6. The Letter to the Church in Sardis

(Revelation 3:1-6)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Sardis. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Sardis:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know what you do; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead because your works do not meet the requirements of God. Remember what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know when I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not made their clothes dirty with sin. They will walk with me, dressed in white, because they are worthy.

Whoever overcomes will be dressed in white like them and I will never erase his name from the book of life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

7. The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia

(Revelation 3:7-13)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Philadelphia. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Philadelphia:

This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open:

I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. Although you have little strength you have obeyed my word and did not deny me. Look, I will force those who belong to Satan's synagogue to come and bow down at your feet and acknowledge that you are the ones I love. They say they are Jews but they are not.

Because you have persevered, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. Whoever overcomes will become a pillar in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. I

will write the name of my God on them, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. I will also write on them my new name.

Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

8. The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

(Revelation 3:14-22)

When God spoke to his servant John he told him to write down this letter and send it to the church in Laodicea. This is what he told him to say to the angel of the church in Laodicea:

This is the message from the one who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation:

I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like water that is neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Buy white garments from me so you will not be ashamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love.

Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Whoever overcomes will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

Let anyone who has an ear listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

9. The Throne in Heaven

(Revelation 4)

After John wrote down the letters, he looked and saw a door standing open in heaven and the voice that had spoken to him said, "Come up here, and I will show you what will take place next."

Then John was in the Spirit and he saw a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it who looked like beautiful jewels. There was a rainbow that looked like an emerald that was around the throne.

There were also twenty-four other thrones around the throne with twenty-four elders seated on them. They were dressed in white with golden crowns on their heads. Flashes of lightning and loud thunder came from the throne and the seven spirits of God were lamps that were lit before the throne. In front of the throne was a sea of glass that was perfectly clear.

There were also four living creatures around the throne covered with eyes all over. One was like a lion. Another was like an ox. The third was like a man and the fourth was a flying eagle. All of them had six wings and they never stop day and night saying,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Whenever they give glory, honor and thanks to the one on the throne who lives forever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him and worship Him and they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and are alive."

10. The Scroll and the Lamb

(Revelation 5)

When John was looking at the throne in heaven he saw that the one on the throne had a scroll in his right hand with writing on the front and the back. It was sealed with seven seals.

Then he saw a strong angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one on earth or in heaven could open it or look inside. John wept because no one was worthy to open the scroll but one of the elders said,

"Do not weep! See the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Then John saw a Lamb that looked like it had been killed, standing in the center of the throne, surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God.

The Lamb came and took the scroll from the right hand of the One on the throne and when he did, the four living creatures and the elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and a golden bowl of incense which are the prayers of the saints. They sang a new song,

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were killed and you purchased men for God with your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them into a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Then John looked and heard thousands and thousands and thousands of angels around the throne singing that the Lamb who was killed is worthy to receive all the praise!

Then he heard everything in creation singing praises to the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever.

The four living creatures said, "Amen" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

11. The Seals and the 144,000

(Revelation 6-9)

John continued to watch as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals on the scroll and one of the living creatures spoke with a loud voice and said, "Come!" John saw a white horse with a rider holding a bow and wearing a crown. He rode out to conquer.

Then the Lamb opened three more seals and he saw a red horse, a black horse and a pale horse, all with different riders. The pale horse and its rider were given power over one fourth of the earth to kill by the sword, by famine and plague and by the wild beasts.

When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, John saw that the souls of those who were killed for the Word of God and their testimonies were under the altar. They were calling out asking how long until the Lord would judge the earth and avenge their blood. Each of them was given a white robe and told to wait until the number of all the servants of God who were to be killed for their faith was completed.

When the Lamb opened the sixth seal there was an earthquake and the sun turned black. The moon turned red. The stars fell from the sky and all the mountains were moved while the kings and generals and the rich of the earth were afraid and hid their faces from the Lamb on the throne.

Then John saw four angels that were given power to harm the earth but another angel spoke and told them not to harm the earth until God's servants had a seal put on their foreheads and 144,000 received this seal.

Then he saw more people than he could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches and cried out,

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb."

The angels, the living creatures and the elders also fell on their faces and worshiped God. Then one of the elders told John that the ones wearing white robes had faced great tribulation and had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. He promised that God would shelter them forever as they worshiped Him and God would wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Then the Lamb opened the seventh seal and there was silence in heaven for thirty minutes. And he saw seven angels standing before God with seven trumpets. Then he saw another angel take fire from God's altar and throw it to the earth as six of the angels sounded their trumpets and great disasters came upon the earth. Fire burned much of the earth and one third of the sea turned into blood and living creatures in the seas died and ships were destroyed. Stars fell from the sky and one third of the sun, moon and stars turned dark. Then locusts came up and harmed all the people who didn't have God's seal and they stung them like scorpions.

Then four angels were released to kill one third of all people, but those who weren't killed still didn't repent of their sinful ways.

12. The Angel and the Little Scroll

(Revelation 10)

After he saw all of this destruction, John saw another strong angel coming down from heaven wearing a cloud with a rainbow over his head. His face shined like the sun and his legs were like fire and he held a little scroll that was open in his hand. He put one foot on the sea and another foot on the land and he shouted as loudly as a lion's roar. As he shouted seven thunders spoke and

John was going to write down what they said, but a voice from heaven told him not to write it down.

Then the angel raised his right hand to heaven and promised by the One who created all things that there would be no more waiting. He said that God's mystery would be accomplished just like he told the prophets when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet.

Then the voice from heaven told John to take the scroll from the strong angel and when he did, the angel told him to eat it. He warned him that it would turn his stomach sour but that it would be as sweet as honey in his mouth. So John took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It was sweet in his mouth but it turned his stomach sour.

Then he was told that he must prophesy again.

13. The Two Witnesses

(Revelation 11:1-14)

After eating the little scroll, John was given a measuring stick and was told to measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the number of people worshiping there. But he was told not to measure the outer courtyard because it was given to the Gentiles. They will trample the holy city for 42 months. During this time, God would give power to his two witnesses who would be clothed in sackcloth and would prophesy during those 1,260 days.

If anyone tries to harm these two prophets, fire flashes from their mouths and kills their enemies. They have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall for as long as they prophesy. And they have the power to turn the waters into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.

When they complete their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will declare war against them, and he will conquer and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city where their Lord was crucified. And for three and a half days, all tribes, languages, peoples, and nations will stare at their bodies. No one will be allowed to bury them. All the people who belong to this world will gloat over them and give presents to each other to celebrate the death of the two prophets who had tormented them.

But after three and a half days, God breathed life into them so that they stood up and everyone who saw them was terrified. Then a loud voice from heaven called to the two prophets, "Come up here!" And they rose to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched.

At the same time there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city. Seven thousand people died in that earthquake, and everyone else was terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14. The Woman and the Dragon

(Revelation 11:15-12:17)

Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet and loud voices came from heaven saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever." And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped God. Then there were flashes of lightning, rumblings of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

John saw a great sign in heaven: it was a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant, and she cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: a large red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

After this there was war in heaven. The chief angel, Michael, and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The dragon and his angels were thrown down to the earth—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But she was given two wings like an eagle's so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness where she would be cared for and protected from the dragon.

Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from his mouth. But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that came out from the mouth of the dragon. And the dragon was angry at the woman and declared war against the rest of her children who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

15. The Beasts

(Revelation 13)

While the dragon stood on the shore of a sea, John saw a beast come out of the sea. It had seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on its horns, and written on each head were names that cursed God. This beast looked like a leopard, but it had the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave the beast his own power and throne and great authority.

John saw that one of the heads of the beast seemed to have a serious wound—but the wound was healed! The whole world was amazed at this miracle and followed the beast. They worshiped the dragon for giving the beast such power, and they also worshiped the beast. They said, "Who is as great as the beast? Who is able to fight against him?"

For 42 months, the beast was given authority to do whatever he wanted and he cursed God and slandered his name. He was allowed to wage war against God's holy people and conquer them. He was given authority over all tribes and nations and all the people of the world whose names are not written in the book of life worshiped the beast.

John heard, "Let anyone who has an ear hear..." this means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently and remain faithful.

Then John saw another beast come out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke with the voice of a dragon. He had the same authority as the first beast and he required all people to worship the first beast, whose serious wound had been healed. He did amazing miracles, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone was watching. And he deceived all the people who belong to this world with all the miracles he was allowed to perform.

He ordered the people to make a great statue of the first beast, who was seriously wounded and then came back to life. He was then permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak and the statue commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die.

He required everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on the right hand or on the forehead. And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name. Let anyone with understanding solve the meaning of the number of the beast, for his number is 666.

16. The Lamb, the 144,000, the Three Angels and the Harvest

(Revelation 14)

Then John saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. He heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and a loud peal of thunder and it sounded like music.

This choir sang a wonderful new song in front of the throne of God, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. No one could learn this song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed. They had been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb. They told no lies and were without blame.

John saw another angel and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to every nation. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory because the time for judgment has come. Worship the Creator."

A second angel followed and said, "Babylon is fallen because she made all the nations drink her wine of immorality."

A third angel followed and said, "If anyone worships the beast and receives his mark, he will also drink the wine of God's anger. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast or receive his mark. This means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently by obeying God's commands and remaining faithful to Jesus."

Then John heard a voice from heaven telling him to write, "Those who die in the Lord from now on are blessed, and they will rest from their hard work because their good deeds will follow them."

John saw someone that looked like the son of man sitting on a cloud with a golden crown on his head and a sickle in his hand. Another angel came out of the temple and told him to swing his sickle and reap because the harvest of the earth has come. The angel swung his sickle and the earth was harvested.

17. The Seven Plagues and the Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

(Revelation 15-16)

Then John saw another great sign in heaven: seven angels with seven final plagues that would complete God's wrath. The temple in heaven was opened and the angels came out of the temple. One of the four living creatures gave

the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with God's wrath to be poured out on the earth.

The first angel poured his bowl on the land and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

The second angel poured his bowl out on the sea and it turned into blood so that every living thing in it died.

The third angel poured his bowl out on the rivers and they became blood.

The fourth angel poured his bowl out on the sun which burned people with its intense heat. The people cursed God but refused to repent and give him glory.

The fifth angel poured his bowl out on the throne of the beast and his kingdom was put into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in great pain and cursed God but still they refused to repent for their deeds.

The sixth angel poured his bowl out on the Euphrates River and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies toward the west. Then John saw three evil demon spirits that looked like frogs jump from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. They work miracles and gather the rulers of the world for battle against the Lord on the great Day of Judgment in a place called Armageddon.

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air and a loud voice came from the temple and said, "It is done!" Then there came great thunder and lightning and an earthquake larger than any that has ever occurred. The great city, Babylon, was split into three parts and the cities of many nations collapsed. So God remembered all of Babylon's sins and made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his wrath. Then every island and every mountain disappeared. A huge hailstorm fell from the sky on people and they cursed God because of the hail.

18. The Great Prostitute and the Beast

(Revelation 17)

One of the seven angels spoke to John. He said, "Come with me, and I will show you the judgment that is going to come on the great prostitute, who rules over many waters. The kings of the world have committed adultery with her, and the people who belong to this world have been made drunk by the wine of her immorality."

John saw a woman with lots of gold and jewelry sitting on a red beast that had seven heads and ten horns, and curses against God were written all over it. She held a golden cup in her hand that was full of sin. She had a strange name on her forehead: "Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Sins in the World." She was drunk with the blood of God's holy people who were witnesses for Jesus.

Then the angel explained what John saw. The beast in the vision was dead but he would return to life from the bottomless pit. And the people of this world would be amazed but he would go to his eternal destruction.

The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills where the woman rules as well as seven kings who will be destroyed.

The red beast was another king and his ten horns are ten kings who would reign with him for a short time. They will give him their power and authority and go to war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings. And his chosen and faithful ones will be with him.

Then the angel told John that the waters where the prostitute is ruling represent people of every nation. The red beast and his ten horns hate the prostitute. They will strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her remains with fire just as God has planned. They will agree to give their authority to the red beast, so the words of God will be fulfilled.

19. The Fall of Babylon

(Revelation 18)

After this John saw another angel come down from heaven. He had great authority and the earth grew bright from his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and every unclean animal because all the nations have drunk from her wine of immorality. The kings of the earth have committed adultery with her and the merchants of the world have become rich because of her."

Then John heard another voice say: "Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins or you will be punished with her. She boasted in her heart that she was a queen on her own throne so death, mourning and famine will overtake her in a single day. She will be completely consumed by fire because the Lord who judges her is powerful."

The kings who committed adultery with her and the merchants who became rich because of her will see her in ruins and weep for her.

Then a mighty angel picked up a large rock and threw it into the sea. He said, "Just like this, Babylon will be thrown down with violence and will never be found again. There will be no more sounds of joy ever again because she deceived the nations with her witchcraft."

20. The Praise of the Multitude and the Rider on the White Horse

(Revelation 19)

Then John heard what sounded like a great multitude shouting in heaven: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God because his judgments are true and just. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth."

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God and a voice from the throne said, "Praise our God, all you his servants who fear him."

Then the great multitude shouted, "Hallelujah! Let us rejoice and be glad and give God glory! Because the wedding of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready."

The angel told John to write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" John fell at the angel's feet to worship him but he told him not to do it because he was a fellow servant of Jesus. He told him to worship God.

Then John saw heaven opened and a horse was standing there whose rider is called Faithful and True. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in white clothes. A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to strike down the nations and on his robe is written the title: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

Then John saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured along with the false prophet who performed miracles for the beast. With these miracles he had deceived those who received the mark of the beast. Both the beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into a lake of fire.

21. The Thousand Years, Satan's Doom and the Judgment of the Dead

(Revelation 20)

Then John saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He seized the dragon—that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years. The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he must be released for a little while.

Then John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or accepted his mark on their forehead or their hands. They all came to life again and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

When the thousand years come to an end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will deceive all the nations and gather a mighty army for battle. They surrounded God's people. But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them.

Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then John saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The dead, both great and small, were standing before God's throne and the books, including the Book of Life, were opened. The dead were judged according to what they had done, as written in the books. Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

22. The New Jerusalem

(Revelation 21)

Then John saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. He saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

John heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Beginning and the End. I will give the water of life freely to all who are thirsty. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

"But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars will go to the lake of fire which is the second death."

Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to John, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

So he showed John the holy city, Jerusalem and it was filled with God's glory and looked like a precious jewel as clear as glass. It had a high wall with twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on it. And the wall had twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel showed him the measurements of the city and he saw that the city was made of many different jewels.

But John saw no temple in the city because God and the Lamb are its temple. And there was no sun or moon because the Lamb was the light for all nations to walk by. The city's gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

23. The River of Life

(Revelation 22)

Then the angel showed John a river with the water of life that was as clear as glass. It flowed from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the center of the main road. A tree of life grew on each side of the river and each tree bore twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. And there will be no night there – no need for lamps or the sun – because the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

Then the angel said to John, "Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who speaks to his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon."

24. Jesus Is Coming Soon

(Revelation 22)

John said that he was the one who heard and saw all these things. Then, John fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed him these things. But the angel said, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and the prophets and all who obey God's commands. Worship only God!"

Then he told John, "Do not seal up the prophecies because the time is near. Let the one who is wicked continue to be wicked; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously."

Jesus said, "Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their works. I am the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Those who wash their robes are blessed. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. Outside the city are the dogs—the witchdoctors, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshippers, and all who love to tell lies.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the Root of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Then John said to everyone who hears the words of prophecy in God's Word: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in his Word. And if anyone removes any of the words of prophecy from God's Word, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city.

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!"

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people.