



JESUS-CENTERED BIBLE



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OLD TESTAMENT

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Exodus	68	Ezra.....	564	Hosea.....	1076
Leviticus.....	122	Nehemiah	580	Joel	1092
Numbers	160	Esther	600	Amos	1098
Deuteronomy	214	Job.....	612	Obadiah	1110
Joshua.....	260	Psalms.....	654	Jonah	1114
Judges	292	Proverbs.....	760	Micah.....	1118
Ruth	322	Ecclesiastes	800	Nahum	1128
1 Samuel.....	328	Song of Songs	812	Habakkuk	1134
2 Samuel.....	366	Isaiah.....	822	Zephaniah	1140
1 Kings.....	400	Jeremiah	906	Haggai.....	1146
2 Kings.....	440	Lamentations	986	Zechariah.....	1150
1 Chronicles	480	Ezekiel.....	996	Malachi.....	1164

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NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew.....	1172	Ephesians	1436	Hebrews.....	1488
Mark.....	1218	Philippians	1444	James.....	1504
Luke	1248	Colossians.....	1450	1 Peter.....	1510
John	1296	1 Thessalonians	1456	2 Peter.....	1518
Acts.....	1332	2 Thessalonians	1462	1 John.....	1524
Romans.....	1374	1 Timothy.....	1466	2 John.....	1530
1 Corinthians.....	1394	2 Timothy.....	1474	3 John.....	1532
2 Corinthians.....	1414	Titus	1480	Jude.....	1534
Galatians	1428	Philemon.....	1484	Revelation.....	1538

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ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF BIBLE BOOKS

Acts.....	1332	Judges.....	292
Amos.....	1098	1 Kings.....	400
1 Chronicles.....	480	2 Kings.....	440
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Jonah.....	1114	Titus.....	1480
Joshua.....	260	Zechariah.....	1150
Jude.....	1534	Zephaniah.....	1140

A NOTE TO READERS

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

The Publishers



THE HEART BEHIND THE JESUS-CENTERED BIBLE

In a way, we are all like caterpillars longing to emerge into our butterfly life—where the numbing rhythms of everyday life are replaced by the deep sense that who we are and what we do *really matters* in the world. Life can be ugly, but we long for beauty. We want to be released from the captivity of our diminished dreams and set free into a life that deeply satisfies. And what is our pathway into that kind of life? A lot of us have been seduced into traveling the false roads of financial success or physical pleasure or social popularity. But anyone who has ventured down these roads very far knows there is always a dead end around the bend.

A little over 150 years ago, the British pastor C.H. Spurgeon was the most famous person in the world—but it's likely you've never heard of him. He earned the nickname "the Prince of Preachers" when he was just 22 because of his inspiring sermons as the pastor of London's famous downtown church, New Park Street Chapel. Every Sunday he'd preach twice, to congregations of 6,000 people, before the days of microphones and amplification. Today, he still has more books in print than any pastor in history, including more than 2,500 sermons.

Spurgeon's path out of a caterpillar life was guided by a very simple conviction—he "beelined" everything in his life and ministry to Jesus. Of course, "beeline" is a funny word to us—it means that no matter what he was preaching or teaching about, Spurgeon was always headed to Jesus. He lived and urged the Jesus-centered life. Once, a young pastor asked Spurgeon to critique his preaching, and the older man was blunt: "That was a poor sermon." When the young man asked for an explanation, Spurgeon replied: "Because there was no Christ in it." The young man protested that his chosen Scripture verse had nothing to do with Jesus. Spurgeon responded: "Don't you know, young man, that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London? And so from every text in Scripture there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ."

Spurgeon's passion for Jesus, and his determination to track everything in the Bible back to the "metropolis" of Christ, is the light we need to find our way through a life that can seem like a dark jungle. And as we draw near to the heart of Jesus, the transformation we experience will feel like we've been set free into a life that is bursting with fruit—everywhere we go, with everyone we meet, we leave a trail of good impact. When we, like the apostle Paul before us, can say, "I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), then we are caught up in a caterpillar-to-butterfly transformation. The closer we get to Jesus, the more we discover our true identity and purpose in life.

And that's the heart that fuels the passion behind the *Jesus-Centered Bible*—the story of God contained in its pages revolves around a person, not a set of principles. Here, you'll take the plunge into a Jesus-centered life as you experience him in every book, from every vantage point, and in surprising new ways. There has never been a Bible like this before, where every page points you to Jesus in a fresh way. This Bible will energize you. Challenge you. Change you. And, like the "rabboni" from Nazareth himself, draw you back again and again and again.

Rick Lawrence, *General Editor*

THE FEATURES OF THE JESUS-CENTERED BIBLE

BLUE-LETTER TEXT

Many Bibles use red-colored text to highlight Jesus' words in the New Testament. The *Jesus-Centered Bible* highlights blue letters to point out references to Jesus throughout the Old Testament. From Genesis to Malachi, it's amazing how often the things Jesus said and did, and prophecies that specifically reference him, are woven into the ancient texts. The blue-letter text and explanations jump off the page, so you get an unforgettable experience of the breadth and depth of Jesus in all Scripture. And that makes perfect sense, because Jesus is the focal point for all of the Bible. Jesus offers us a perfect way to see and understand the God described in the Old Testament. In *Ruthless Trust*, author Brennan Manning writes: "It must be noted that Jesus alone reveals who God is... We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; however, we must deduce everything about God from what we know about Jesus."

When we get to know Jesus, we get to know the God we can't see, because Jesus gives us a "perfect mirror" of God. And as you "taste and see" God's plans for Jesus unfold throughout the Bible, you get a clearer understanding of his plans for your life, too. The more you draw near to Jesus, the more obvious his purpose for you becomes.

Blue-Letter Text Editor Ken Castor, along with General Editor Rick Lawrence, worked together to find and unveil Old Testament examples of Jesus threading into the narrative. In the end, they selected close to seven hundred blue-letter texts to highlight—and could have chosen many more if space had allowed. Likely, as you get used to reading the Old Testament through a "blue letter" filter, you'll uncover your own "beeline to Jesus" passages. We encourage you to read with a blue highlighter, marking these

passages for yourself and scribbling your own beeline connections in the margins. As you do, you'll discover a growing conviction in your soul—that all of life, and all of God's message to his people, orbit around the redemptive presence of Jesus.

restore the sparkie to my eyes, or I will die.
⁴ Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!" Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.

⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me.

⁶ I will sing to the LORD because he is good to me.

14 *For the choir director: A psalm of David.*

¹ Only fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; not one of them does good!

² The LORD looks down from heaven on the entire human race;

1 **PSALM 14:7**—David longs for salvation to come from Zion. Paul, in his letter to the followers of Jesus in Rome, references Jesus when he says: "The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness" (Romans 11:26).

⁷ Who will come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel? When the LORD restores his people, Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice.

15 *A psalm of David.*

¹ Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?

² Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts.

³ Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends.

⁴ Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD, and keep their promises even when it hurts.

⁵ Those who lend money without charging interest, and who cannot be bribed to lie about the innocent. Such people will stand firm forever.

Blue-Letter Text
& Explanation

JESUS IN EVERY BOOK

Whether you're a lifelong biblical scholar or have just been introduced to the Story of God for the first time, our Bible Book Introductions are designed to give you a surprising, profound, and personal experience of the "hovering presence" of Jesus in every nook and cranny of this ancient collection of God-breathed writings. The Bible is often called "God's Word," and the apostle John begins his Gospel with this stirring connection to Jesus:

In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:1-5)

Simply, the only way to truly understand the message and significance of the Bible is to embrace its central focus, which is the person of Jesus. The "good news" of the Bible is that we have a champion and a rescuer and a lover who will set us free from our captivity to the expectations and limitations of a broken world. Jesus is our promised Messiah, the one who will save us, and his story is a thread that runs through all of Scripture. Close your eyes and point your finger anywhere in the Bible, and you'll find the fingerprints of Jesus.

JESUS in JOSHUA

...ping with friends at a mountain park near Denver. I woke up
...e camper, where the air was crisp and the early-morning sun w
...like a kaleidoscope. The couple who'd invited us was already coo
...e—the smell was bacon intoxicating, and the chirping birds comple
...they handed me a cup of steaming coffee, then sat together on a l
...ing ritual included a "through the Bible" reading plan, breaking the
...nks from both the Old and New Testaments. That day, their out-lo
...and 11.

little sacred eavesdropping. The beauty that surrounded me
...of that beauty. But a few seconds into Joshua 10, my pea
...ering a lullaby. These chapters chronicle a brutal milit
...me out the armies occupying the Promised Land
...in you victory over them. Not a single

is it okay to be a
and mild version of him that so many of us have embedded in our minds? God has a dangerous
past. Jesus has a dangerous side. Yet Joshua and later David and later Peter and later...we can't
get enough of him. Not only is Jesus good, but he defines good. And the book of Joshua forces
me to grapple with the raw edge of his goodness through history. Jesus says, "I came not to
bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

Goodness, it turns out, is serious business. The brokenness that defines us must be confronted
to be redeemed. Joshua is a chronicle of the messy advance of goodness, where the stakes are
high and the people are real. There is nothing about God that should not be known. He's not
embarrassed or ashamed. ("My ways are far beyond anything you could imagine" Isaiah 55:8.)
We can't run from God's dangerous side. To know him fully, we must run toward it. And when
we do, Jesus says this is what we can expect: "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry
heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

—Rick Lawrence

REFRAMING JESUS INSIGHTS

Beauty is in the details, and that's never truer than when our focus is on Jesus. When he performed his first miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana, the guests remarked to the host that he'd obviously saved his best wine for the end of the party, instead of serving it at the beginning, when it's customary to lead with the finest vintage (John 2). The metaphor embedded in this story is an overriding truth about Jesus: He makes every little thing beautiful, and always turns the mundane into the "best wine at the party." But we have to pay attention to find the true depths of his beauty. And that is our aim in the 150 Reframing Jesus Insights that we've scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments.

These short pieces offer interesting context, surprising backstories, and penetrating theological insights that highlight the beauty of Jesus threaded through Scripture. When we understand the true impact of Jesus on the people around him, we're drawn to worship him. And when we focus on the details of the things he says and does, we're astonished by his goodness.

We recruited a small team of college, university, and seminary professors who share our passion for a Bible that proactively points the reader to Jesus no matter where the finger lands in its pages. Their Reframing Jesus pieces function like a smart, engaged friend who knows how to spot Jesus in all the obscure places he likes to hang out.

...bearing him from the rock, I go after him with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death.³⁶ I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God!
³⁷ **The LORD who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!"**

J. REFRAMING JESUS

1 SAMUEL 17:40-51—JESUS LOOKS BEYOND HUMAN LABELS

If there's one thing we learn in the pages of 1 Samuel, it is this: God frequently messes up all the "rules" we set up for how life should work. Young shepherds, for example, shouldn't defeat giants. And when Jesus comes on the scene, he lives out God's values. He has a habit of breaking the "rules," and it drives the religious leaders crazy. During Jesus' time, there are strict labels about who is "in" and who is "out"—people deemed acceptable by the religious establishment and those who are rejected and labeled as "sinners" by the religious elite. But Jesus rips up those labels and throws them away. Knowing that even society's outcasts are people made in the image of God, Jesus dines with them, speaks to them, touches them, and befriends them. Jesus' life beyond labels reveals the dignity of each human being.

THE JESUS QUESTIONS

One of Jesus' favorite teaching strategies was to ask surprising, personal, and specific questions—a recipe that made people think deeply, long after their encounter with him. In the spirit of his love for time-bomb questions, we've scattered more than 100 of our own surprising questions about Jesus, and questions about our relationship with him, throughout the New Testament. Every question is designed to help you slow down and chew on a truth about Jesus and how you relate to him—and to get you thinking long after you've moved on. A few sample questions:

- What does it mean to be shrewd, and why are Christians typically bad at it? (Luke 16:1-9)
- Good friendships are based on mutual giving—what can we offer Jesus that he doesn't already have? (Romans 16:1-6)
- What's the one thing you'd want Jesus to know about you if you sat down to dinner with him? (1 Corinthians 11:20-26)
- How are other people's expectations of you and Jesus' expectations of you similar—and different? (2 Corinthians 3:1-6)
- Which word comes closest to describing the way you see Jesus—nice, fierce, or mysterious? Explain. (Revelation 5:5)

HOW IS A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS AFFECTED BY THE FACT THAT WE CAN'T SEE, TOUCH, OR AUDIBLY HEAR HIM? (ACTS 1:9)

The Ascension of Jesus
 6 So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"
 7 He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
 9 After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. 10 As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood

THE FATHER ALONE HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SET THOSE DATES AND TIMES, AND THEY ARE NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW. 8 BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON YOU. AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES, TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT ME EVERYWHERE—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. 16 "Brothers," he said, "the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. 17 Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us."

18 (Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery; Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. 19 The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the

Matthias Replaces Judas
 12 Then the apostles drew lots to see who would replace Judas, who had fallen from the number of the twelve. 13 When the lots were cast, the name of Matthias came up, and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). 14 They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

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1:1 The reference is to the Gospel of Luke. 1:5 Or in; also in 1:5b. 1:12 Greek a Sabbath day's journey. 1:15 Greek: brothers.

THE RED-LETTER NAMES OF JESUS

Of course, it's not only a sign of honor when we highlight in red the words of Jesus throughout the New Testament, but it also helps us to zero in on his voice. To live a Jesus-centered life, we pay closer attention to what he says and what he does. But outside of the Gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (and a few brief places elsewhere, including the first pages of Acts), the red goes away. So our team decided to weave the "red thread" of Jesus through the rest of the New Testament by highlighting in red every time his name is mentioned, including all the "nicknames" the writers of the Bible use for him. As you read, his name will rise to the surface, over and over. "Centering" our life on Jesus means accentuating his voice and presence in every aspect of what we do, and our highlighted red-letter names will help. "Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

One important note: Sometimes the New Testament writers use the title "Lord" when talking about God the Father, while other times they use it in reference to God the Son, Jesus. We have done our best to determine when the title "Lord" specifically refers to Jesus, but it's sometimes ambiguous. So when the context makes it clear that "Lord" is about Jesus, we have chosen to highlight it in red. If the context is unclear, we have chosen to not highlight.

1 CORINTHIANS 5 //

1396

as a manager must be faithful. ³As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. ⁴My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

⁵So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

⁶Dear brothers and sisters,* I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures,* you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. ⁷For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift from God?

⁸You think you already know the things you need to do, but you don't

gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment.

¹⁴I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. ¹⁶So I urge you to imitate me.

¹⁷That's why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.

¹⁸Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again. ¹⁹But I will come—and soon—if the Lord lets me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people just give me speeches or whether they really are

God's people. ²⁰For the Lord, who is coming, will bring you to free Israel and restore our kingdom.*

⁷He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

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JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

At some point in our lives, we all grapple with the BIG questions that represent the universal mysteries of our humanity. To borrow a phrase from Winston Churchill, life can seem like “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” And so, in the Jesus-Centered Bible, we address humanity’s nine biggest questions, and highlight how Jesus answers these questions, over and over:

- What’s my purpose in life?
- Is God real?
- Why do bad things happen?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Is this all there is?
- Will everything be OK?
- What is truth?
- What is love?
- What is right and wrong?

Not only will you discover Jesus’ penetrating responses to each of these questions, but you’ll also marvel at how sensitive he is to your raw reality. Along the way, you’ll learn to trust more deeply in the only One who can guide you through life’s toughest challenges. By sinking into Jesus’ own responses to these nine questions, you’ll tackle your uncertainties, with his perspective as your context. Jesus will help you make sense of your personal struggles, doubts, and fears. No question is too big, and no answer is too small.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 5:17-20—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG?

The Pharisees have supercharged the quest for “what is right and wrong” and made it into a kind of extreme competition. They have taken the basics of the “law” that God delivered to them—ways of relating to him and to each other—and exploded that simple outline into hundreds and hundreds of tiny rules and regulations designed to guarantee “righteousness.” And here Jesus says that “unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” And then, through the rest of Matthew 5, he drives home his point by comparing common standards for what’s right and wrong to the standard he’s set. He’s saying it’s essentially impossible to live a “righteous” life by working harder at it—our solitary hope for living righteously is to allow the only Righteous Presence in the universe to live in us, to live through us. We will know right and wrong not when we try harder to meet God’s standards of righteousness, but when we yield ourselves to Jesus, who will help us to live righteously from the inside out.

A SAMPLER GUIDE TO ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS JESUS ANSWERED

Jesus has a job description, first prophesied in the book of Isaiah and then repeated by him at the start of his ministry (Luke 4:18-19): “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.” Setting captives free is at the core of Jesus’ heart. And that’s why our deepest human questions—the questions that go right to our core—always find an answer in Jesus. Here we’ve pointed to a sampling of those times when Jesus answered our nine essential questions.

WHAT’S MY PURPOSE IN LIFE?

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 1:16-20

Mark 2:14-17

Mark 9:50

John 21:15-18

IS GOD REAL?

Matthew 6:1-6

Luke 7:1-10

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Matthew 7:24-27

Matthew 13:24-30

John 9:1-5

John 11:1-44

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

Matthew 25:31-46

Mark 4:1-20

Luke 14:25-33

IS THIS ALL THERE IS?

Mark 5:1-17

Luke 6:17-23

Luke 20:27-40

WILL EVERYTHING BE OK?

Matthew 10:25-28

Luke 8:22-25

Luke 12:22-31

John 6:16-21

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Luke 4:1-13

John 6:53-69

John 15:1-8

WHAT IS LOVE?

Matthew 11:28-30

Matthew 20:1-16

Mark 8:34-9:1

Luke 13:34-35

Luke 15:3-7

WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG?

Matthew 5:17-20

Matthew 21:28-32

Matthew 23:1-36

Mark 2:23-28

John 4:43-54



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INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered

the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

TRANSLATION PROCESS AND TEAM

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

WRITTEN TO BE READ ALOUD

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

THE TEXTS BEHIND THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

TRANSLATION ISSUES

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of

silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek *a denarius*, the payment for a full day’s labor.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.

- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “*the third day of the month Adar*.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’ ” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’ ”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts in sorrow.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.
- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example,

the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful* as the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.

- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the Jewish leaders,” where appropriate.
- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

LEXICAL CONSISTENCY IN TERMINOLOGY

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

THE SPELLING OF PROPER NAMES

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

THE RENDERING OF DIVINE NAMES

In the Old Testament, all appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (*YHWH*) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” When *’elohim* and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “LORD God.” When *YH* (the short form of *YHWH*) and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When *YHWH* appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the Gospels and Acts, the Greek word *christos* has normally been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed (which is consistently the case in the Epistles and Revelation), *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

TEXTUAL FOOTNOTES

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread*.”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).
- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’ ” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

As we submit this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God's Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God's guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God's Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

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OLD TESTAMENT

JESUS *in the* OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus. Do you remember the first time you heard his name? I don't. He's always been in the air I breathe. Maybe that's your story, too. Or maybe he's a more recent acquaintance. Either way, we are, even on our best days, living in the fog of a partial and puny understanding of the most significant person in human history. So, if we really want to know Jesus in greater depth, we'll need to go all the way back to Genesis.

Thirty-nine books. Thirty authors. The Old Testament is a compilation that took more than a thousand years to piece together. Yet, through all its disparate and (on the surface) disconnected narrative, the story points to a singular message—the rescue of the people of God by the Messiah Jesus. The Old Testament is a collection of books like no other. Penned by kings and prophets but breathed by God Almighty, the message of the Old Testament is clear: There is a redeemer named Jesus, the Savior of the world, and he's the one we're all waiting for.

The story of humanity begins in perfection...

Jesus, God the Son, is right there with God the Father and God the Spirit, reigning over all. "Let us make human beings in our image" (Genesis 1:26), the triune God says, and Adam and Eve are created. Not long after, "all hell breaks loose" as Adam and Eve choose their own way and are separated from God. Broken and ashamed, they hide from God. But instead of punishing them or destroying them, God pursues Adam and Eve, lovingly restoring the relationship. And their story becomes our story. We are rebels hiding from a perfect God, but God in his great mercy is always

looking for us. He longs to restore us into rich relationship with him. His plan is simple: Jesus will redeem us.

So from Genesis to Malachi we follow the story of humanity in all its pain and brokenness, longing for healing. And from Genesis to Malachi we see a loving God who pursues his people, longing to redeem them. Just as an Instagram account has one theme but many images, the Old Testament offers us a narrative carousel that circles around the same message: A Savior is coming, and he's the one our hearts long for.

In Genesis 3, Jesus is the seed of the woman who will one day crush Satan. He is foreshadowed in the blood that is shed when Adam first kills and skins an animal, fashioning clothing to cover his shame and brokenness. We see Jesus in the ark, the only refuge of safety in a world filled with evil. We see him in the call of Abram and the promise of a son. We see him as the ram, the perfect provision taking the place of Isaac on the altar. We see him in the vision of a ladder coming down from heaven for Jacob. We see him in Joseph, the one who would save his people from famine. We see him in Moses, leading his people out of Egypt.

We see Jesus as the perfect Passover Lamb, atoning for the sins of all who receive him. He is the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness. He is the Ark of the Covenant, always near his people. He is the commander of the Lord's army in Joshua. We see him in Judges, delivering his people even when they don't deserve it. He is the "family redeemer" in the book of Ruth. He is David defeating Goliath. We see him in Esther, interceding for his people. He is the

Good Shepherd in the Psalms. We see him in the prophets as king, judge, and “a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief” (Isaiah 53:3). We see him threaded through the whole of the Old Testament, yearning for relationship with his people. He is hope for the hopeless and healer of the hurting.

And then, at last, comes silence. Four hundred years of silence. It is the silence of waiting. It is the silence of longing. It is the silence of anticipation. And it is in this silence that we recognize the depth of our need and the truth about our desperate condition. We are sinners in need of a Savior. We are waiting for a redeemer, the promised one, who is Jesus the Messiah.

And then one day, one glorious and epic day, the promise finds its port in reality. Jesus is born into the world, after four hundred years of waiting. And after such a long time in the liminal space,

many fail to recognize their salvation. They have stared at the picture hard but have missed its meaning. Maybe they have studied too closely, or too casually, or maybe they haven't bothered to look at all. They have eyes, but they can't see.

Helen Keller once said, “The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” As you turn the pages of this book and explore the Old Testament, I'm praying that your eyes will be opened to see Jesus on every single page. And when you do, I pray that transformation will cover you like a blanket, and you will find living water for your thirsty heart. Jesus is the only one who can satisfy our deeper thirsts.

The perfect Passover Lamb bled and died for you. May this picture be imprinted on your heart as you seek to know Jesus more deeply.

—*Lina AbulJamra*

I'm often fascinated by beginnings.

For instance, I spent a number of years as an entertainment journalist, interviewing minor celebrities and writing features about them. I remember talking with a TV actor who'd been very public about his Christianity. I'm the curious type, so I said to him, "How did your faith begin?"

He recalled riding in the family car as a preschooler and staring at the beautiful sky outside his window. A question popped into his mind. "Mom," he asked, "who's God?" His sweet mother explained to him the gospel—that God our Creator had become the man Jesus to save us from our sins. Right there in a car seat, childlike faith was born.

I just love beginnings like this, don't you?

Maybe that's why I'm fascinated by Genesis—aptly named because it is indeed a book of beginnings. In 50 chapters, this sprawling story lays the foundations of prehistory, known history, and of the people of Israel revealed onto the world stage. Most important, Genesis 1:1 tells us:

"In the beginning God created..."

Everything else we know of God flows from these five words. Because God created, we can exist. Because we exist, God cares. Because God cares, he redeems and guides and showers us with blessings from all creation.

"In the beginning God created."

And here—even in the earliest moments of Genesis—I see glimpses of Jesus. "Let us," God says in 1:26, "make human beings in our image, to be like us." Theologians recognize this pluralized pronoun as a reference to God the Son, Jesus Christ, because Colossians 1:16 reveals:

"For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see...Everything was created through him and for him."

How cool is that?

However, not every beginning that's recorded in Genesis is a good thing. In fact, what happens next makes me cringe. Sin enters God's creation for the first time; devastation follows.

And then...

Only moments after sin comes to life, God again does something new. He creates his first promise for you and me—a prophecy that Jesus will one day come to crush the power of Satan in our lives (Genesis 3:15). Later, God doubles down, promising Abraham that "through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). This hopeful promise came true in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, giving you and me the possibility of new beginnings to call our own—new, eternal life in him.

—Mike Nappa

GENESIS

The Account of Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷ And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸ God called the space "sky."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened.

¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened.

¹² The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵ Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened.

¹⁶ God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

1. GENESIS 1:1—Jesus is the co-creator of all things, and he was there at the beginning of all things (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-16).

²² Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵ God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,* and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the

fruit trees for your food. ³⁰ And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹ Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ² On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴ This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The Man and Woman in Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶ Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹ The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

J. GENESIS 1:26-27—We were created to be like God, which is why Jesus told us that we would do the things he did, and even greater things than he did (John 14:12).

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵**The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.** ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³"At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

²⁴**This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.**

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

The Man and Woman Sin

3 **The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"**

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the

1. GENESIS 2:15—This describes the "rule" of the first Adam, called a "representation" of Jesus, who would come later to "rule" our hearts (Romans 5:12-19).

1. GENESIS 2:24—When the conniving Pharisees try to set a theological trap for Jesus by posing a hypothetical question about divorce, Jesus quotes this passage back to them (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7-8).

1. GENESIS 3:1—Satan (the "serpent") is a liar, even "the father of lies," according to Jesus (John 8:44).

LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹ "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic
and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long
as you live.

J. REFRAMING JESUS

GENESIS 3:15—JESUS WILL FIGHT FOR HUMANITY

After the serpent leads Adam and Eve into sin, humankind is trapped in a cosmic hostage crisis. But God responds by launching a full-scale covert operation to fight for humanity. His strategy is to squash the serpent through a descendant of Eve—a Rescuer who will give his all to the struggle. And though he would be wounded, this Son of Man would ultimately be victorious in combat. God's scheme pivots on embedding Jesus behind "enemy lines," where he can battle Satan head-on and triumph against sin and death. Reporting on Jesus' assault on the serpent, the apostle Paul describes God's war plans: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" (Romans 16:20).

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike* your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶ Then he said to the woman,

"I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.*"

¹⁷ And to the man he said,

"Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return."

Paradise Lost: God's Judgment

²⁰ Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.* ²¹ And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²² Then the LORD God said, "Look, the human beings* have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!"

²³ So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam

3:15 Or bruise; also in 3:15b. 3:16 Or And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you.

3:20 Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means "to give life." 3:22 Or the man; Hebrew reads ha-adam.

out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made.²⁴ After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain and Abel

4 Now Adam* had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced* a man!"² Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground.³ When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD.⁴ Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift,⁵ but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

⁶ "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? ⁷ You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

⁸ One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields."* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹ Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

¹⁰ But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"¹¹ Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood.¹² No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard

you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment* is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴ You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!"

¹⁵ The LORD replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him.¹⁶ So Cain left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

The Descendants of Cain

¹⁷ Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son.¹⁸ Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah.²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents.²¹ His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute.²² Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubalcain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubalcain had a sister named Naamah.²³ One day Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who
attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴ If someone who kills Cain is
punished seven times,
then the one who kills me will be
punished seventy-seven times!"

4:1a Or *the man*; also in 4:25. 4:1b Or *I have acquired*. *Cain* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "produce" or "acquire." 4:8 As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks "Let's go out into the fields." 4:13 Or *My sin*. 4:16 *Nod* means "wandering." 4:18 Or *the ancestor of*, and so throughout the verse.

The Birth of Seth

²⁵Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth,* for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.” ²⁶When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. **At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.**

The Descendants of Adam

5 This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings,* he made them to be like himself. **²He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”**

³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth. ⁴After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of* Enosh. ⁷After the birth of* Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived

another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel.

¹³After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

²¹**When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah.**

²²After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son.

²⁹Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, “May he bring us relief* from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed.” ³⁰After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and

J. GENESIS 4:26b—This marks the beginning of the worship of the Lord; later, in the book of Revelation, John the disciple says Jesus will be worshiped for eternity (Revelation 4:8b).

J. GENESIS 5:2—The Pharisees try to trap Jesus by asking him what looks like an innocent question about divorce, and Jesus responds by quoting this verse (Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6).

4:25 *Seth* probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.” 5:1 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2. 5:6 Or *the ancestor of*; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. 5:7 Or *the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26. 5:29 *Noah* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “relief” or “comfort.”

daughters.³¹ Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

³²After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

A World Gone Wrong

6 Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them.² The sons of God saw the beautiful women* and took any they wanted as their wives.³ Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with* humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil.⁶ So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart.⁷ And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.”⁸ But Noah found favor with the LORD.

The Story of Noah

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.¹⁰ Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with

violence.¹² God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt.¹³ So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!”

¹⁴“Build a large boat* from cypress wood* and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior.¹⁵ Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.*¹⁶ Leave an 18-inch opening* below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die.¹⁸ But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives.¹⁹ Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood.²⁰ Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive.²¹ And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

J. GENESIS 5:21-24—God delights in us “walking in close fellowship” with him, and Jesus has invited us to walk “in close fellowship” by knowing his heart and mind (Luke 24:35).

J. GENESIS 6:11-13—Jesus compares the condition of the world and the surprise of God’s judgment upon it with the circumstances that will surround the time when he returns to earth (Matthew 24:37-39).

6:2 Hebrew *daughters of men*; also in 6:4. 6:3 Greek version reads *will not remain in*. 6:14a Traditionally rendered *an ark*. 6:14b Or *gopher wood*. 6:15 Hebrew *300 cubits* [138 meters] *long, 50 cubits* [23 meters] *wide, and 30 cubits* [13.8 meters] *high*. 6:16 Hebrew *an opening of 1 cubit* [46 centimeters].

The Flood Covers the Earth

7 When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ² Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice,* and take one pair of each of the others. ³ Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴ Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

⁵ So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

⁶ Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷ He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. ⁸ With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹ They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰ After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹ When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹² The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³ That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem,

Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴ With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵ Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶ A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷ For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸ As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹ Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰ rising more than twenty-two feet* above the highest peaks. ²¹ All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²² Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³ God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. **All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat.** ²⁴ **And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.**

The Flood Recedes

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. ² The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³ So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴ exactly five months from the time the flood began,* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ Two and a half months later,* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

J. GENESIS 7:23b-24—Jesus is, metaphorically, our “boat”—those who are “in” him will be saved from God’s judgment (John 3:16-17).

7:2 Hebrew of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8. 7:20 Hebrew 15 cubits [6.9 meters]. 8:4 Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. 8:5 Hebrew On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷ and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began,* the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by,* and at last the earth was dry!

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.* ²¹**And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from**

childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

God Confirms His Covenant

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

⁵“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings* in his own image. ⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹“I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

¹²Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come.

1. GENESIS 8:21-22—Here God promises to never again destroy the world because of its sin; instead, he sacrifices his own Son to undermine the power of sin in our lives.

8:13 Hebrew *On the first day of the first month*; see 7:11. 8:14 Hebrew *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13. 8:20 Hebrew *every clean animal and every clean bird*. 9:6 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.

¹³ I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴ When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵ and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the flood-waters destroy all life. ¹⁶ When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth." ¹⁷ Then God said to Noah, "Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth."

Noah's Sons

¹⁸ The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹ From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰ After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴ When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. ²⁵ Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

"May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to
his relatives."

²⁶ Then Noah said,

"May the LORD, the God of Shem,
be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!"

²⁷ May God expand the territory
of Japheth!
May Japheth share the prosperity
of Shem,*
and may Canaan be his servant."

²⁸ Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹ He lived 950 years, and then he died.

10 This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

Descendants of Japheth

² The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³ The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴ The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.* ⁵ Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

Descendants of Ham

⁶ The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷ The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth. ⁹ Since he was the greatest hunter in the world,* his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world." ¹⁰ He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia,* with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. ¹¹ From there he expanded

9:27 Hebrew *May he live in the tents of Shem.* 10:4 As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*. 10:9 Hebrew *a great hunter before the LORD*; also in 10:9b. 10:10 Hebrew *Shinar*.

his territory to Assyria,* building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah,¹² and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).

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

¹⁵ Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,*¹⁶ Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites,¹⁷ Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,¹⁸ Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out,¹⁹ and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

²⁰ These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Descendants of Shem

²¹ Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

²² The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,* and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵ Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means "division"), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother's name was Joktan.

²⁶ Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba,²⁹ Ophir,

Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan.³⁰ The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.

³¹ These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Conclusion

³² These are the clans that descended from Noah's sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words.² As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia* and settled there.

³ They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.)⁴ Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."

⁵ But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building.⁶ "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them!"⁷ Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

1. GENESIS 11:5-9—Here the Lord scatters his people because they are bent on finding their own way, apart from him. Later, Jesus said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (John 12:32).

10:11 Or *From that land Assyria went out.* 10:14 Hebrew *Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, and Caphtorites.* Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7. 10:15 Hebrew *ancestor of Heth.* 10:21 Or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth.* 10:24 Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah.* Compare Luke 3:36. 11:2 Hebrew *Shinar.*

⁸ In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why the city was called Babel,* because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

The Line of Descent from Shem to Abram

¹⁰ This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of* Arphaxad. ¹¹ After the birth of* Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹² When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. ¹³ After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

¹⁴ When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵ After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶ When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷ After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸ When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹ After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰ When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹ After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²² When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³ After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived

another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴ When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵ After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶ After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Family of Terah

²⁷ This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. ²⁸ But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. ²⁹ Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.) ³⁰ But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

³¹ One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. ³² Terah lived for 205 years* and died while still in Haran.

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

11:9 Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." 11:10 Or *the ancestor of*; also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. 11:11 Or *the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25. 11:12-13 Greek version reads

¹²When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan. ¹³After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. Compare Luke 3:35-36. 11:32 Some ancient versions read 145 years; compare 11:26 and 12:4.

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.”* And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹ Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

¹⁰ At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹ As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, “Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’” ¹³ So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you.”

¹⁴ And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai’s beauty. ¹⁵ When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶ Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷ But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because

of Sarai, Abram’s wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. “What have you done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?” ¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!” ²⁰ Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. ² (Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) ³ From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. ⁴ This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

⁵ Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. ⁶ But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. ⁷ So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸ Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives!” ⁹ The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

1. GENESIS 12:2-3—Just as God’s plan was to bless all nations through one man, Abram, he later offered his own Son, Jesus, as the “way” into blessing (John 14:6).

¹⁰ Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹² So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³ But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴ After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants* as a permanent possession. ¹⁶ And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! ¹⁷ Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you."

¹⁸ So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the LORD.

Abram Rescues Lot

14 About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia,* King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim ² fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³ This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea*). ⁴ For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

⁵ One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emmites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as Elparan at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷ Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸ Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea.* ⁹ They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰ As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹ The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹² They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

¹³ But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴ When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan. ¹⁵ There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

13:15 Hebrew *seed*; also in 13:16. 14:1 Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. 14:3 Hebrew *Salt Sea*. 14:8 Hebrew *Siddim Valley* (see 14:3); also in 14:10.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

¹⁷After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High,* brought Abram some bread and wine. ¹⁹Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies
for you."

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered."

²²Abram replied to the king of Sodom, "I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich.' ²⁴I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre."

The LORD's Covenant Promise to Abram

15 Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

²But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir."

⁴Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." ⁵Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

⁶And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

⁷Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession."

⁸But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?"

⁹The LORD told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them.

J. REFRAMING JESUS

GENESIS 14:18-20—JESUS THE KING & PRIEST

The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament connects the role of Melchizedek directly to Jesus. Melchizedek served as the king of Salem, a word that means "peace." It's interesting that the region where Jerusalem is now located is called Salem. Melchizedek, whose name means "King of Justice," also served as a priest who leads his people to the Lord. When he encounters Abraham, Melchizedek served him bread and wine, mediates a blessing, and receives an offering. Hebrews 5:1-10 explores the ways that Jesus is "a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek." Why might people need Jesus, our King of kings, to also serve as our "Highest" priest?

J. GENESIS 15:5-6—In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul honors Abraham for his unwavering faith, and Jesus makes it possible for God to "count us as righteous" because of our faith in him (Romans 4:18-25; James 2:23).

Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. ¹¹Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction."

¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt* to the great Euphrates

River—¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

The Birth of Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. ³So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

⁴So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who's wrong—you or me!"

⁶Abram replied, "Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied.

⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." ¹⁰Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

¹¹And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means

J. REFRAMING JESUS

GENESIS 15:17-18—JESUS WALKS THROUGH

Imagine the scene: Animals slaughtered—cut in half and arranged in two rows, blood spilled all over the ground, and the smell of death in the air. It must have been a gruesome sight. But still the holy Lord chooses to walk between the two halves of Abram's sacrifices. In effect, the Lord is saying to his beloved people, "I love you so much that I will subject myself to the brutality of death, just to have a relationship with you." It's important to note that the Lord does not require Abram to do the same. It's the Lord who is uniquely the "light...in the darkness," passing from death to life (John 1:5). How is Jesus, right now, pursuing the same "covenant" relationship with us?

15:18 Hebrew *the river of Egypt*, referring either to an eastern branch of the Nile River or to the Brook of Egypt in the Sinai (see Num 34:5).

'God hears'), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.¹² This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."

¹³ **Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me."*** She also said, "Have I truly seen the **One who sees me?**"¹⁴ So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

Abram Is Named Abraham

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—"God Almighty." Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ² I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."

³ **At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him,** ⁴ **"This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!"** ⁵ **What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham,* for you will be the father of many nations.** ⁶ **I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!**

⁷ **"I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants* after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.** ⁸ **And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants.**

It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

The Mark of the Covenant

⁹ Then God said to Abraham, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰ **This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised.** ¹¹ You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³ All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant."

Sarai Is Named Sarah

¹⁵ Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. * ¹⁶ And I will bless her and give

J. GENESIS 16:13—Hagar worships God because he sees her heart like no one else has. And Jesus always sees past our exterior to the essence of who we are, then "marks" our true identity (Matthew 16:18).

J. GENESIS 17:3-7—The covenant God made with Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus—it is through the promise of Jesus that we are restored into intimate relationship with God.

J. GENESIS 17:10—Jesus was taken to the Temple to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth—that's when he was given the name of Jesus (Luke 2:21).

16:13 Hebrew *El-roi*. 17:5 *Abram* means "exalted father"; *Abraham* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "father of many." 17:7 Hebrew *seed*; also in 17:7b, 8, 9, 10, 19. 17:15 *Sarai* and *Sarah* both mean "princess"; the change in spelling may reflect the difference in dialect between Ur and Canaan.

you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants."

¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of 100?" he thought. "And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?" ¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, "May Ishmael live under your special blessing!"

¹⁹ But God replied, "No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac,* and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year." ²² When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

²³ On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. ²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵ and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. ²⁶ Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, ²⁷ along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

J. GENESIS 18:13-14—The people of God are always underestimating the power of God to supersede "natural law"—just as Jesus amazed the ancient world by performing supernatural miracles.

A Son Is Promised to Sarah

18 The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ² He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³ "My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴ Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵ And since you've honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

⁶ So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry! Get three large measures* of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread." ⁷ Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸ When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹ "Where is Sarah, your wife?" the visitors asked.

"She's inside the tent," Abraham replied.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!"

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, "How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?"

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?'"

17:19 *Isaac* means "he laughs." 18:6 Hebrew 3 *seahs*, about half a bushel or 22 liters.

¹⁴ **Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.**

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh."

But the LORD said, "No, you did laugh."

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

¹⁶ Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷ "Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked. ¹⁸ "For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised."

²⁰ So the LORD told Abraham, "I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹ I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know."

²² The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. ²³ **Abraham approached him and said, "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵ Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"**

²⁶ **And the LORD replied, "If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."**

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there."

²⁹ Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty."

³⁰ "Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?"

And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it if I find thirty."

³¹ Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

³² Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please don't be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?"

And the LORD replied, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten."

³³ When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19 That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground. ² "My lords," he said, "come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again."

"Oh no," they replied. "We'll just spend the night out here in the city square."

³ But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. ⁴ But before they retired for the night, all the men of

1. GENESIS 18:23-26—Here Abraham persistently "bargains" with God to convince him to do what he would like; later, Jesus tells a parable that encourages his disciples to persistently ask him for what they want (Luke 11:5-13).

Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house.

⁵ They shouted to Lot, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!"

⁶ So Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him. ⁷ "Please, my brothers," he begged, "don't do such a wicked thing. ⁸ Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection."

⁹ "Stand back!" they shouted. "This fellow came to town as an outsider, and now he's acting like our judge! We'll treat you far worse than those other men!" And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

¹⁰ But the two angels* reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door. ¹¹ Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

¹² Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. "Do you have any other relatives here in the city?" they asked. "Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the LORD, and he has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴ So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters' fiancés, "Quick, get out of the city! The LORD is about to destroy it." But the young men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵ At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!"

¹⁶ When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful. ¹⁷ When they were safely out of

the city, one of the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸ "Oh no, my lord!" Lot begged. ¹⁹ "You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁰ See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don't you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved."

²¹ "All right," the angel said, "I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village. ²² But hurry! Escape to it, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." (This explains why that village was known as Zoar, which means "little place.")

²³ Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. ²⁴ Then the LORD rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵ He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. ²⁶ But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Abraham got up early that morning and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the LORD's presence. ²⁸ He looked out across the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah and watched as columns of smoke rose from the cities like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹ But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰ Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters. ³¹ One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone

else. And our father will soon be too old to have children. ³² Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³³ So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁴ The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, "I had sex with our father last night. Let's get him drunk with wine again tonight, and you go in and have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father." ³⁵ So that night they got him drunk with wine again, and the younger daughter went in and had intercourse with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁶ As a result, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their own father. ³⁷ When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab.* He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites. ³⁸ When the younger daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Ben-ammi.* He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites.

Abraham Deceives Abimelech

20 Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, ² Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³ But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!"

⁴ But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵ Didn't Abraham tell

me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean."

⁶ In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die."

⁸ Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹ Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What have you done to us?" he demanded. "What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰ Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?"

¹¹ Abraham replied, "I thought, 'This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.' ¹² And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³ When God called me to leave my father's home and to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'"

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵ Then Abimelech said, "Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live." ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your 'brother' 1,000 pieces of silver* in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared."

19:37 *Moab* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "from father." 19:38 *Ben-ammi* means "son of my kinsman."
20:16 Hebrew 1,000 [*shekels*] of silver, about 25 pounds or 11.4 kilograms in weight.

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸ For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.

The Birth of Isaac

21 The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. ² She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. ³ And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴ Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵ Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

⁶ And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter.* All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷ Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!"

Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away

⁸ When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. ⁹ But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac.* ¹⁰ So she turned to Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!"

¹¹ This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. ¹² But God told Abraham, "Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. ¹³ But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he is your son, too."

¹⁴ So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar's

shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards* away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears.

¹⁷ But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸ Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants."

¹⁹ Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, ²¹ and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

Abraham's Covenant with Abimelech

²² About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. "God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do," Abimelech said. ²³ "Swear to me in God's name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner."

²⁴ Abraham replied, "Yes, I swear to it!" ²⁵ Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had taken by force from Abraham's servants.

²⁶ "This is the first I've heard of it," Abimelech answered. "I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before."

²⁷ Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech,

21:6 The name *Isaac* means "he laughs." 21:9 As in Greek version and Latin Vulgate; Hebrew lacks of her son, *Isaac*. 21:16 Hebrew a bowshot.

and they made a treaty.²⁸ But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves.²⁹ Abimelech asked, "Why have you set these seven apart from the others?"

³⁰ Abraham replied, "Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well." ³¹ Then he named the place Beersheba (which means "well of the oath"), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

³² After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. ³³ Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God.* ³⁴ And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

Abraham's Faith Tested

22 Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

² "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

³ The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about.

⁴ On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

⁶ So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷ Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

⁸ "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. ¹¹ At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

¹² "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the LORD will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶ "This is what the LORD says: Because you have

J. REFRAMING JESUS

GENESIS 22:8-14—THE LORD WILL PROVIDE JESUS

The place where God supplies a sacrifice for Abraham eventually becomes the site of the Temple, where Israel will focus its entire system of faith on God. It's on this same mountain that Jesus will be sentenced to death as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. What did Abraham know about God that filled him with such faith? How does Jesus' death on the cross compare to the sacrifice that the Lord provides in Genesis 22?

obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that ¹⁷I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants* beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. ¹⁸And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

¹⁹Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

²⁰Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor's wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. ²¹The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), ²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. ²³(Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, ²⁴Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

The Burial of Sarah

23 When Sarah was 127 years old, ²she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders, ⁴"Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial."

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶"Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way."

⁷Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites ⁸and said, "Since you are willing to help me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar ⁹to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the

presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family."

¹⁰Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as the others listened, speaking publicly before all the Hittite elders of the town. ¹¹"No, my lord," he said to Abraham, "please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead."

¹²Abraham again bowed low before the citizens of the land, ¹³and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. "No, listen to me. I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵"My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth 400 pieces* of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead."

¹⁶So Abraham agreed to Ephron's price and paid the amount he had suggested—400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard. The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

¹⁷So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees. ¹⁸It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate. ¹⁹Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron). ²⁰So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

A Wife for Isaac

24 Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ²One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, "Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh. ³Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth,

22:17 Hebrew *seed*; also in 22:17b, 18. 23:15 Hebrew *400 shekels*, about 10 pounds or 4.6 kilograms in weight; also in 23:16.

that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ⁴ Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

⁵ The servant asked, "But what if I can't find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?"

⁶ "No!" Abraham responded. "Be careful never to take my son there. ⁷ For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants.* He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a wife there for my son. ⁸ If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there."

⁹ So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham's instructions. ¹⁰ Then he loaded ten of Abraham's camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled. ¹¹ He made the camels kneel beside a well just outside the town. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

¹² "O LORD, God of my master, Abraham," he prayed. "Please give me success today, and show unfailing love to my master, Abraham. ¹³ See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ This is my request. I will ask one of them, 'Please give me a drink from your jug.' If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!'—let her be the one you have selected as Isaac's wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unfailing love to my master."

¹⁵ Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah

coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah. ¹⁶ Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again. ¹⁷ Running over to her, the servant said, "Please give me a little drink of water from your jug."

¹⁸ "Yes, my lord," she answered, "have a drink." And she quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw water for all his camels.

²¹ The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the LORD had given him success in his mission. ²² Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets* for her wrists.

²³ "Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "And please tell me, would your father have any room to put us up for the night?"

²⁴ "I am the daughter of Bethuel," she replied. "My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah. ²⁵ Yes, we have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and we have room for guests."

²⁶ The man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. ²⁷ "Praise the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham," he said. "The LORD has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master's relatives."

²⁸ The young woman ran home to tell her family everything that had happened. ²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who ran out to meet the man at the spring. ³⁰ He had seen the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man

24:7 Hebrew *seed*; also in 24:60. 24:22 Hebrew *a gold nose-ring weighing a beka* [0.2 ounces or 6 grams] and *two gold bracelets weighing 10 [shekels]* [4 ounces or 114 grams].

had said. So he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. ³¹ Laban said to him, "Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the LORD! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?"

³² So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw for their bedding, fed them, and provided water for the man and the camel drivers to wash their feet. ³³ Then food was served. But Abraham's servant said, "I don't want to eat until I have told you why I have come."

"All right," Laban said, "tell us."

³⁴ "I am Abraham's servant," he explained. ³⁵ "And the LORD has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The LORD has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys.

³⁶ "When Sarah, my master's wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master's son, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ And my master made me take an oath. He said, 'Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ³⁸ Go instead to my father's house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.'

³⁹ "But I said to my master, 'What if I can't find a young woman who is willing to go back with me?' ⁴⁰ He responded, 'The LORD, in whose presence I have lived, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful. Yes, you must find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father's family. ⁴¹ Then you will have fulfilled your obligation. But if you go to my relatives

and they refuse to let her go with you, you will be free from my oath.'

⁴² "So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: 'O LORD, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. ⁴³ See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, 'Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.' ⁴⁴ If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too,' let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master's son.'

⁴⁵ "Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' ⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!' So I drank, and then she watered the camels.

⁴⁷ "Then I asked, 'Whose daughter are you?' She replied, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁴⁸ "Then I bowed low and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master's niece to be his son's wife. ⁴⁹ So tell me—will you or won't you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I'll know what to do next."

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The LORD has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say. ⁵¹ Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

⁵² When Abraham's servant heard their answer, he bowed down to the ground and worshiped the LORD. ⁵³ Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothing and presented them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive presents to her brother and mother. ⁵⁴ Then they ate their meal, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight.

J. GENESIS 24:50-51—Throughout this section of Genesis and elsewhere in Scripture, we're reminded of a profound truth: Jesus has entrusted the advancement of his kingdom to profoundly imperfect, flawed people.

But early the next morning, Abraham's servant said, "Send me back to my master."

⁵⁵ "But we want Rebekah to stay with us at least ten days," her brother and mother said. "Then she can go."

⁵⁶ But he said, "Don't delay me. The LORD has made my mission successful; now send me back so I can return to my master."

⁵⁷ "Well," they said, "we'll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks." ⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah. "Are you willing to go with this man?" they asked her.

And she replied, "Yes, I will go."

⁵⁹ So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham's servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah's childhood nurse went along with her. ⁶⁰ They gave her this blessing as she parted:

"Our sister, may you become
the mother of many millions!
May your descendants be strong
and conquer the cities of their
enemies."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham's servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

⁶² Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi. ⁶³ One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming. ⁶⁴ When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel.

⁶⁵ "Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?" she asked the servant.

And he replied, "It is my master." So Rebekah covered her face with her veil.

⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

The Death of Abraham

25 Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. ² She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummmites. ⁴ Midian's sons were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

⁵ Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. ⁶ But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

⁷ Abraham lived for 175 years, ⁸ and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. ⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. ¹⁰ This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. ¹¹ After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

Ishmael's Descendants

¹² This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. ¹³ Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶ These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes named after them, listed according to the places they settled and camped. ¹⁷ Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. ¹⁸ Ishmael's descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.*

The Births of Esau and Jacob

¹⁹ This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. ²⁰ When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹ Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. ²² But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

²³ And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

²⁴ And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! ²⁵ The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. ²⁶ *Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.*

Esau Sells His Birthright

²⁷ As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the

wilderness exhausted and hungry. ³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

³¹ "All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

³² "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

³³ But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

Isaac Deceives Abimelech

26 A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

² The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. ³ Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants,* just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴ I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. ⁵ I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." ⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷ When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "They will kill me to get her, because she is so beautiful." ⁸ But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah.

J. GENESIS 25:26—Jacob's name means "deceiver"—but his name is later changed to "Israel," which means "one who struggles with God." His very nature is reborn, just as Nicodemus was promised that we could be "born again" through belief in Jesus (John 3:1-21).

25:25 *Esau* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "hair" and "deceiver." 26:3 Hebrew *seed*; also in 26:4, 24.

25:26 *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel"

⁹ Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

"Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied.

¹⁰ "How could you do this to us?" Abimelech exclaimed. "One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin."

¹¹ Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: "Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!"

Conflict over Water Rights

¹² When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him.

¹³ He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. ¹⁴ He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him. ¹⁵ So the Philistines filled up all of Isaac's wells with dirt. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

¹⁶ Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷ So Isaac moved away to the Gerar Valley, where he set up their tents and settled down. ¹⁸ He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.

¹⁹ Isaac's servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. ²⁰ But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well Esek (which means "argument"). ²¹ Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. So Isaac named it Sitnah (which means "hostility"). ²² Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so

Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means "open space"), for he said, "At last the LORD has created enough space for us to prosper in this land."

²³ From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, ²⁴ where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." ²⁵ Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

Isaac's Covenant with Abimelech

²⁶ One day King Abimelech came from Gerar with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander. ²⁷ "Why have you come here?" Isaac asked. "You obviously hate me, since you kicked me off your land."

²⁸ They replied, "We can plainly see that the LORD is with you. So we want to enter into a sworn treaty with you. Let's make a covenant. ²⁹ Swear that you will not harm us, just as we have never troubled you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away from us in peace. And now look how the LORD has blessed you!"

³⁰ So Isaac prepared a covenant feast to celebrate the treaty, and they ate and drank together. ³¹ Early the next morning, they each took a solemn oath not to interfere with each other. Then Isaac sent them home again, and they left him in peace.

³² That very day Isaac's servants came and told him about a new well they had dug. "We've found water!" they exclaimed.

³³ So Isaac named the well Shibah (which means "oath"). And to this day the town that grew up there is called Beersheba (which means "well of the oath").

³⁴ At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon.

³⁵ But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing

27 One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son."

"Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

² "I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. ³ Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴ Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

⁵ But Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son Esau. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game, ⁶ she said to her son Jacob, "Listen. I overheard your father say to Esau, ⁷ 'Bring me some wild game and prepare me a delicious meal. Then I will bless you in the LORD's presence before I die.' ⁸ Now, my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you. ⁹ Go out to the flocks, and bring me two fine young goats. I'll use them to prepare your father's favorite dish. ¹⁰ Then take the food to your father so he can eat it and bless you before he dies."

¹¹ "But look," Jacob replied to Rebekah, "my brother, Esau, is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. ¹² What if my father touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."

¹³ But his mother replied, "Then let the curse fall on me, my son! Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats for me!"

¹⁴ So Jacob went out and got the young goats for his mother. Rebekah took them and prepared a delicious meal, just the way Isaac liked it. ¹⁵ Then she took Esau's favorite clothes, which were there in the house, and gave them to her younger son, Jacob. ¹⁶ She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of the young goats. ¹⁷ Then she gave Jacob the delicious meal, including freshly baked bread.

¹⁸ So Jacob took the food to his father. "My father?" he said.

"Yes, my son," Isaac answered. "Who are you—Esau or Jacob?"

¹⁹ Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your first-born son. I've done as you told me. Here is the wild game. Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing."

²⁰ Isaac asked, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

"The LORD your God put it in my path!" Jacob replied.

²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau." ²² So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's," Isaac said. ²³ But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob's hands felt hairy just like Esau's. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. ²⁴ "But are you really my son Esau?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," Jacob replied.

²⁵ Then Isaac said, "Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing." So Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. ²⁶ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son."

²⁷ So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, "Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the LORD has blessed!"

²⁸ "From the dew of heaven
and the richness of the earth,
may God always give you abundant
harvests of grain
and bountiful new wine.

²⁹ May many nations become your
servants,
and may they bow down to you.
May you be the master over your
brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow
down to you.
All who curse you will be cursed,
and all who bless you will be
blessed."

³⁰ As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had

left his father, Esau returned from his hunt. ³¹ Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, "Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing."

³² But Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"

Esau replied, "It's your son, your first-born son, Esau."

³³ Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, "Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!"

³⁴ When Esau heard his father's words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. "Oh my father, what about me? Bless me, too!" he begged.

³⁵ But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing."

³⁶ Esau exclaimed, "No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice.* First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?"

³⁷ Isaac said to Esau, "I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?"

³⁸ Esau pleaded, "But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!" Then Esau broke down and wept.

³⁹ Finally, his father, Isaac, said to him,

"You will live away from the richness
of the earth,
and away from the dew of the
heaven above.

⁴⁰ You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your
brother.

But when you decide to
break free,
you will shake his yoke from
your neck."

Jacob Flees to Paddan-Aram

⁴¹ From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: "I will soon be mourning my father's death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob."

⁴² But Rebekah heard about Esau's plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, "Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. ⁴³ So listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. ⁴⁴ Stay there with him until your brother cools off. ⁴⁵ When he calms down and forgets what you have done to him, I will send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

⁴⁶ Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm sick and tired of these local Hittite women! I would rather die than see Jacob marry one of them."

28 So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, "You must not marry any of these Canaanite women. ² Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban's daughters. ³ May God Almighty* bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants multiply and become many nations! ⁴ May God pass on to you and your descendants* the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham."

⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother's brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

⁶ Esau knew that his father, Isaac, had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife, and that he had warned Jacob, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman." ⁷ He also knew that Jacob had obeyed his parents and gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸ It was now very clear to Esau that his father did not like the local Canaanite women. ⁹ So Esau visited his

uncle Ishmael's family and married one of Ishmael's daughters, in addition to the wives he already had. His new wife's name was Mahalath. She was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹ **At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep.** ¹² **As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.**

¹³ **At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants."** ¹⁴ **Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.**

¹⁵ **What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."**

¹⁶ **Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!"** ¹⁷ **But he was also afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!"**

¹⁸ **The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive**

oil over it. ¹⁹ **He named that place Bethel (which means "house of God"), although it was previously called Luz.**

²⁰ **Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, ²¹ and if I return safely to my father's home, then the LORD will certainly be my God. ²² And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me."**

Jacob Arrives at Paddan-Aram

29 **Then Jacob hurried on, finally arriving in the land of the east.** ² **He saw a well in the distance. Three flocks of sheep and goats lay in an open field beside it, waiting to be watered. But a heavy stone covered the mouth of the well.**

³ **It was the custom there to wait for all the flocks to arrive before removing the stone and watering the animals. Afterward the stone would be placed back over the mouth of the well.** ⁴ **Jacob went over to the shepherds and asked, "Where are you from, my friends?"**

"We are from Haran," they answered.

⁵ **"Do you know a man there named Laban, the grandson of Nahor?" he asked.**

"Yes, we do," they replied.

⁶ **"Is he doing well?" Jacob asked.**

"Yes, he's well," they answered. "Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the flock now."

⁷ **Jacob said, "Look, it's still broad daylight—too early to round up the animals. Why don't you water the sheep and goats so they can get back out to pasture?"**

⁸ **"We can't water the animals until all the flocks have arrived," they replied. "Then the shepherds move the stone from the mouth of the well, and we water all the sheep and goats."**

⁹ **Jacob was still talking with them when Rachel arrived with her father's flock, for she was a shepherd.** ¹⁰ **And because Rachel was his cousin—the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother—and because the sheep and goats belonged to his uncle Laban, Jacob went over to the**

J. GENESIS 28:11-19—Here Jacob experiences the promise of God's blessing in a dream, and he calls the place where he had that dream "the very gateway to heaven." Later, Jesus calls himself the "narrow gate" that opens to heaven (Matthew 7:13).

well and moved the stone from its mouth and watered his uncle's flock. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and he wept aloud. ¹² He explained to Rachel that he was her cousin on her father's side—the son of her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

¹³ As soon as Laban heard that his nephew Jacob had arrived, he ran out to meet him. He embraced and kissed him and brought him home. When Jacob had told him his story, ¹⁴ Laban exclaimed, "You really are my own flesh and blood!"

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, ¹⁵ Laban said to him, "You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be."

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷ There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes,* but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face. ¹⁸ Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

¹⁹ "Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me." ²⁰ So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

²¹ Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my agreement," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her."

²² So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. ²³ But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴ (Laban had given Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.)

²⁵ But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What have you done

to me?" Jacob raged at Laban. "I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?"

²⁶ "It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn," Laban replied. ²⁷ "But wait until the bridal week is over; then we'll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me."

²⁸ So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. ²⁹ (Laban gave Rachel a servant, Bilhah, to be her maid.) ³⁰ So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years.

Jacob's Many Children

³¹ **When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive.** ³² So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,* for she said, "The LORD has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me."

³³ She soon became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She named him Simeon,* for she said, "The LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me another son."

³⁴ Then she became pregnant a third time and gave birth to another son. He was named Levi,* for she said, "Surely this time my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!"

³⁵ Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah,* for she said, "Now I will praise the LORD!" And then she stopped having children.

1. GENESIS 29:31—It is through the line of Leah, the one who was rejected and "unloved" by Jacob, that Jesus is eventually born.

29:17 Or *Leah had dull eyes*, or *Leah had soft eyes*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. **29:32** *Reuben* means "Look, a son!" It also sounds like the Hebrew for "He has seen my misery." **29:33** *Simeon* probably means "one who hears." **29:34** *Levi* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "being attached" or "feeling affection for." **29:35** *Judah* is related to the Hebrew term for "praise."

30 When Rachel saw that she wasn't having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

² Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. "Am I God?" he asked. "He's the one who has kept you from having children!"

³ Then Rachel told him, "Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her. She will bear children for me,* and through her I can have a family, too." ⁴ So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her. ⁵ Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son. ⁶ Rachel named him Dan,* for she said, "God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son." ⁷ Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son. ⁸ Rachel named him Naphtali,* for she said, "I have struggled hard with my sister, and I'm winning!"

⁹ Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn't getting pregnant anymore, so she took her servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Soon Zilpah presented him with a son. ¹¹ Leah named him Gad,* for she said, "How fortunate I am!" ¹² Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son. ¹³ And Leah named him Asher,* for she said, "What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me."

¹⁴ One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵ But Leah angrily replied, "Wasn't it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son's mandrakes, too?"

Rachel answered, "I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes."

¹⁶ So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. "You must come and sleep with me tonight!" she said. "I have

paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found." So that night he slept with Leah. ¹⁷ And God answered Leah's prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob.

¹⁸ She named him Issachar,* for she said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife."

¹⁹ Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob.

²⁰ She named him Zebulun,* for she said, "God has given me a good reward. Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons." ²¹ Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Then God remembered Rachel's plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children. ²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. "God has removed my disgrace," she said. ²⁴ And she named him Joseph,* for she said, "May the LORD add yet another son to my family."

Jacob's Wealth Increases

²⁵ Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Please release me so I can go home to my own country."

²⁶ Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you."

²⁷ "Please listen to me," Laban replied. "I have become wealthy, for* the LORD has blessed me because of you. ²⁸ Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I'll pay it."

²⁹ Jacob replied, "You know how hard I've worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care."

³⁰ You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The LORD has blessed you through everything I've done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?"

30:3 Hebrew *bear children on my knees*. 30:6 Dan means "he judged" or "he vindicated." 30:8 Naphtali means "my struggle." 30:11 Gad means "good fortune." 30:13 Asher means "happy." 30:18 Issachar sounds like a Hebrew term that means "reward." 30:20 Zebulun probably means "honor." 30:24 Joseph means "may he add." 30:27 Or *I have learned by divination that*.

³¹ "What wages do you want?" Laban asked again.

Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. ³² Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages. ³³ In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you'll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you."

³⁴ "All right," Laban replied. "It will be as you say." ³⁵ But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons, ³⁶ who took them a three-days' journey from where Jacob was. Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for the rest of Laban's flock.

³⁷ Then Jacob took some fresh branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of bark, making white streaks on them. ³⁸ Then he placed these peeled branches in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, for that was where they mated. ³⁹ And when they mated in front of the white-streaked branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ Jacob separated those lambs from Laban's flock. And at mating time he turned the flock to face Laban's animals that were streaked or black. This is how he built his own flock instead of increasing Laban's.

⁴¹ Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob would place the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of them. Then they would mate in front of the branches. ⁴² But he didn't do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob's. ⁴³ As a result, Jacob

became very wealthy, with large flocks of sheep and goats, female and male servants, and many camels and donkeys.

Jacob Flees from Laban

31 But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were grumbling about him. "Jacob has robbed our father of everything!" they said. "He has gained all his wealth at our father's expense." ² And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban's attitude toward him.

³ Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you."

⁴ So Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching his flock. ⁵ He said to them, "I have noticed that your father's attitude toward me has changed. But the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ You know how hard I have worked for your father, ⁷ but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to do me any harm. ⁸ For if he said, 'The speckled animals will be your wages,' the whole flock began to produce speckled young. And when he changed his mind and said, 'The striped animals will be your wages,' then the whole flock produced striped young. ⁹ In this way, God has taken your father's animals and given them to me.

¹⁰ "One time during the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the females were streaked, speckled, and spotted. ¹¹ Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' And I replied, 'Yes, here I am.'

¹² "The angel said, 'Look up, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen how Laban has treated you. ¹³ I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel,* the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.'"

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah responded, "That's fine with us! We won't inherit any of our father's wealth anyway. ¹⁵ He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. And after he sold us, he wasted the money you paid him for us. ¹⁶ All the wealth God has given you from our father legally belongs to us and our children. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷ So Jacob put his wives and children on camels, ¹⁸ and he drove all his livestock in front of him. He packed all the belongings he had acquired in Paddan-aram and set out for the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived. ¹⁹ At the time they left, Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father's household idols and took them with her. ²⁰ Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramean, for they set out secretly and never told Laban they were leaving. ²¹ So Jacob took all his possessions with him and crossed the Euphrates River,* heading for the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Pursues Jacob

²² Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³ So he gathered a group of his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with Jacob seven days later in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴ But the previous night God had appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and told him, "I'm warning you—leave Jacob alone!"

²⁵ Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, and he set up his camp not far from Jacob's. ²⁶ "What do you mean by deceiving me like this?" Laban demanded. "How dare you drag my daughters away like prisoners of war? ²⁷ Why did you slip away secretly? Why did you deceive me? And why didn't you say you wanted to leave? I would have given you a farewell feast, with singing and music, accompanied by tambourines and harps. ²⁸ Why didn't you let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very foolishly! ²⁹ I could

destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and warned me, 'Leave Jacob alone!' ³⁰ I can understand your feeling that you must go, and your intense longing for your father's home. But why have you stolen my gods?"

³¹ "I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² But as for your gods, see if you can find them, and let the person who has taken them die! And if you find anything else that belongs to you, identify it before all these relatives of ours, and I will give it back!" But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the household idols.

³³ Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then the tents of the two servant wives—but he found nothing. Finally, he went into Rachel's tent. ³⁴ But Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them in her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. When Laban had thoroughly searched her tent without finding them, ³⁵ she said to her father, "Please, sir, forgive me if I don't get up for you. I'm having my monthly period." So Laban continued his search, but he could not find the household idols.

³⁶ Then Jacob became very angry, and he challenged Laban. "What's my crime?" he demanded. "What have I done wrong to make you chase after me as though I were a criminal? ³⁷ You have rummaged through everything I own. Now show me what you found that belongs to you! Set it out here in front of us, before our relatives, for all to see. Let them judge between us!"

³⁸ "For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. ³⁹ If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay

for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night.

⁴⁰“I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. ⁴¹Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! ⁴²In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac*—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and rebuked you!”

Jacob's Treaty with Laban

⁴³Then Laban replied to Jacob, “These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? ⁴⁴So come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment.”

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. ⁴⁶Then he told his family members, “Gather some stones.” So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal. ⁴⁷To commemorate the event, Laban called the place Jegar-sahadutha (which means “witness pile” in Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed (which means “witness pile” in Hebrew).

⁴⁸Then Laban declared, “This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today.” This explains why it was called Galeed—“Witness Pile.” ⁴⁹But it was also called Mizpah (which means “watchtower”), for Laban said, “May the LORD keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this covenant when we are out of each other's

sight. ⁵⁰If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other wives, God will see it even if no one else does. He is a witness to this covenant between us.

⁵¹“See this pile of stones,” Laban continued, “and see this monument I have set between us. ⁵²They stand between us as witnesses of our vows. I will never pass this pile of stones to harm you, and you must never pass these stones or this monument to harm me. ⁵³I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to serve as a judge between us.”

So Jacob took an oath before the fearsome God of his father, Isaac,* to respect the boundary line. ⁵⁴Then Jacob offered a sacrifice to God there on the mountain and invited everyone to a covenant feast. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁵*Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.

32 ¹As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him. ²When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, “This is God's camp!” So he named the place Mahanaim.*

Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau

³Then Jacob sent messengers ahead to his brother, Esau, who was living in the region of Seir in the land of Edom. ⁴He told them, “Give this message to my master Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob. Until now I have been living with Uncle Laban, ⁵and now I own cattle, donkeys, flocks of sheep and goats, and many servants, both men and women.

1. GENESIS 31:45-50—Here Jacob piles stones as a symbol of his covenant with Laban; Jesus is the sign of God's covenant with us today (Matthew 26:27-29).

I have sent these messengers to inform my lord of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to me.”

⁶After delivering the message, the messengers returned to Jacob and reported, “We met your brother, Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you—with an army of 400 men!” ⁷Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two groups. ⁸He thought, “If Esau meets one group and attacks it, perhaps the other group can escape.”

⁹Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O LORD, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly.’” ¹⁰I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps! ¹¹O LORD, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children. ¹²But you promised me, ‘I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.’”

¹³Jacob stayed where he was for the night. Then he selected these gifts from his possessions to present to his brother, Esau: ¹⁴200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, ¹⁵30 female camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys. ¹⁶He divided these animals into herds and assigned each to different servants. Then he told his servants, “Go ahead of me with

the animals, but keep some distance between the herds.”

¹⁷He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: “When my brother, Esau, meets you, he will ask, ‘Whose servants are you? Where are you going? Who owns these animals?’”

¹⁸You must reply, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob, but they are a gift for his master Esau. Look, he is coming right behind us.’”

¹⁹Jacob gave the same instructions to the second and third herdsmen and to all who followed behind the herds: “You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’”

Jacob thought, “I will try to appease him by sending gifts ahead of me. When I see him in person, perhaps he will be friendly to me.” ²¹So the gifts were sent on ahead, while Jacob himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles with God

²²During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. ²³After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.

²⁴*This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break.* ²⁵*When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket.* ²⁶*Then the man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!”*

But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

²⁷*“What is your name?” the man asked. He replied, “Jacob.”*

²⁸*“Your name will no longer be Jacob,” the man told him. “From now on you will be called Israel,* because you have fought with God and with men and have won.”*

²⁹*“Please tell me your name,” Jacob said.*

J. GENESIS 32:24-30—Jacob wrestles with God and is wounded, and through this he sees God's face. And it is most often through people wrestling with Jesus, and their wounds, that they see him for who he is.

“Why do you want to know my name?” the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

³⁰ Jacob named the place Peniel (which means “face of God”), for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared.” ³¹ The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel,* and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. ³² (Even today the people of Israel don’t eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the man strained the tendon of Jacob’s hip.)

Jacob and Esau Make Peace

33 Then Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and his two servant wives. ² He put the servant wives and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him. ⁴ Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept.

⁵ Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, “Who are these people with you?”

“These are the children God has graciously given to me, your servant,” Jacob replied. ⁶ Then the servant wives came forward with their children and bowed before him. ⁷ Next came Leah with her children, and they bowed before him. Finally, Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed before him.

⁸ “And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?” Esau asked.

Jacob replied, “They are a gift, my lord, to ensure your friendship.”

⁹ “My brother, I have plenty,” Esau answered. “Keep what you have for yourself.”

¹⁰ But Jacob insisted, “No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift

from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God!” ¹¹ Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough.” And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.

¹² “Well,” Esau said, “let’s be going. I will lead the way.”

¹³ But Jacob replied, “You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, even for one day, all the animals could die. ¹⁴ Please, my lord, go ahead of your servant. We will follow slowly, at a pace that is comfortable for the livestock and the children. I will meet you at Seir.”

¹⁵ “All right,” Esau said, “but at least let me assign some of my men to guide and protect you.”

Jacob responded, “That’s not necessary. It’s enough that you’ve received me warmly, my lord!”

¹⁶ So Esau turned around and started back to Seir that same day. ¹⁷ Jacob, on the other hand, traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was named Succoth (which means “shelters”).

¹⁸ Later, having traveled all the way from Paddan-aram, Jacob arrived safely at the town of Shechem, in the land of Canaan. There he set up camp outside the town. ¹⁹ Jacob bought the plot of land where he camped from the family of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for 100 pieces of silver.* ²⁰ And there he built an altar and named it El-Elohe-Israel.*

Revenge against Shechem

34 One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area. ² But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her. ³ But then he

32:31 Hebrew *Penuel*, a variant spelling of Peniel. 33:19 Hebrew *100 kesitahs*; the value or weight of the kesitah is no longer known. 33:20 *El-Elohe-Israel* means “God, the God of Israel.”

fell in love with her, and he tried to win her affection with tender words. ⁴ He said to his father, Hamor, "Get me this young girl. I want to marry her."

⁵ Soon Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter, Dinah. But since his sons were out in the fields herding his livestock, he said nothing until they returned. ⁶ Hamor, Shechem's father, came to discuss the matter with Jacob. ⁷ Meanwhile, Jacob's sons had come in from the field as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious that their sister had been raped. Shechem had done a disgraceful thing against Jacob's family,* something that should never be done.

⁸ Hamor tried to speak with Jacob and his sons. "My son Shechem is truly in love with your daughter," he said. "Please let him marry her. ⁹ In fact, let's arrange other marriages, too. You give us your daughters for our sons, and we will give you our daughters for your sons. ¹⁰ And you may live among us; the land is open to you! Settle here and trade with us. And feel free to buy property in the area."

¹¹ Then Shechem himself spoke to Dinah's father and brothers. "Please be kind to me, and let me marry her," he begged. "I will give you whatever you ask. ¹² No matter what dowry or gift you demand, I will gladly pay it—just give me the girl as my wife."

¹³ But since Shechem had defiled their sister, Dinah, Jacob's sons responded deceitfully to Shechem and his father, Hamor. ¹⁴ They said to them, "We couldn't possibly allow this, because you're not circumcised. It would be a disgrace for our sister to marry a man like you! ¹⁵ But here is a solution. If every man among you will be circumcised like we are, ¹⁶ then we will give you our daughters, and we'll take your daughters for ourselves. We will live among you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you don't agree to be circumcised, we will take her and be on our way."

¹⁸ Hamor and his son Shechem agreed to their proposal. ¹⁹ Shechem wasted no time in acting on this request, for he wanted Jacob's daughter desperately. Shechem was a highly respected member of his family, ²⁰ and he went with his father, Hamor, to present this proposal to the leaders at the town gate.

²¹ "These men are our friends," they said. "Let's invite them to live here among us and trade freely. Look, the land is large enough to hold them. We can take their daughters as wives and let them marry ours. ²² But they will consider staying here and becoming one people with us only if all of our men are circumcised, just as they are. ²³ But if we do this, all their livestock and possessions will eventually be ours. Come, let's agree to their terms and let them settle here among us."

²⁴ So all the men in the town council agreed with Hamor and Shechem, and every male in the town was circumcised. ²⁵ But three days later, when their wounds were still sore, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, who were Dinah's full brothers, took their swords and entered the town without opposition. Then they slaughtered every male there, ²⁶ including Hamor and his son Shechem. They killed them with their swords, then took Dinah from Shechem's house and returned to their camp.

²⁷ Meanwhile, the rest of Jacob's sons arrived. Finding the men slaughtered, they plundered the town because their sister had been defiled there. ²⁸ They seized all the flocks and herds and donkeys—everything they could lay their hands on, both inside the town and outside in the fields. ²⁹ They looted all their wealth and plundered their houses. They also took all their little children and wives and led them away as captives.

³⁰ Afterward Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have ruined me! You've made me stink among all the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites. We are so few that they will join

34:7 Hebrew *a disgraceful thing in Israel*.

forces and crush us. I will be ruined, and my entire household will be wiped out!"

³¹ "But why should we let him treat our sister like a prostitute?" they retorted angrily.

Jacob's Return to Bethel

35 Then God said to Jacob, "Get ready and move to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau."

² So Jacob told everyone in his household, "Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing. ³ We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has been with me wherever I have gone."

⁴ So they gave Jacob all their pagan idols and earrings, and he buried them under the great tree near Shechem. ⁵ As they set out, a terror from God spread over the people in all the towns of that area, so no one attacked Jacob's family.

⁶ Eventually, Jacob and his household arrived at Luz (also called Bethel) in Canaan. ⁷ Jacob built an altar there and named the place El-bethel (which means "God of Bethel"), because God had appeared to him there when he was fleeing from his brother, Esau.

⁸ Soon after this, Rebekah's old nurse, Deborah, died. She was buried beneath the oak tree in the valley below Bethel. Ever since, the tree has been called Allon-bacuth (which means "oak of weeping").

⁹ Now that Jacob had returned from Paddan-aram, God appeared to him again at Bethel. God blessed him, ¹⁰ saying, "Your name is Jacob, but you will not be called Jacob any longer. From now on your name will be Israel." ¹¹ So God renamed him Israel.

"Then God said, 'I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Be fruitful and multiply.

You will become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! ¹² And I will give you the land I once gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants after you." ¹³ Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob.

¹⁴ Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. Then he poured wine over it as an offering to God and anointed the pillar with olive oil. ¹⁵ And Jacob named the place Bethel (which means "house of God"), because God had spoken to him there.

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

¹⁶ Leaving Bethel, Jacob and his clan moved on toward Ephrath. But Rachel went into labor while they were still some distance away. Her labor pains were intense. ¹⁷ After a very hard delivery, the midwife finally exclaimed, "Don't be afraid—you have another son!" ¹⁸ Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named the baby Ben-oni (which means "son of my sorrow"). The baby's father, however, called him Benjamin (which means "son of my right hand"). ¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ Jacob set up a stone monument over Rachel's grave, and it can be seen there to this day.

²¹ Then Jacob* traveled on and camped beyond Migdal-eder. ²² While he was living there, Reuben had intercourse with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Jacob soon heard about it.

These are the names of the twelve sons of Jacob:

1. GENESIS 35:11—God reinitiate his relationship with every generation, no matter how far they run from him. And Jesus is his great and eternal offering of reinitiation.

35:10 Jacob sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver." *Israel* means "God fights." **35:21** Hebrew *Israel*; also in 35:22a. The names "Jacob" and "Israel" are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.

- ²³ The sons of Leah were Reuben (Jacob's oldest son), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.
- ²⁴ The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.
- ²⁵ The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naphtali.
- ²⁶ The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, were Gad and Asher.
- These are the names of the sons who were born to Jacob at Paddan-aram.

²⁷ So Jacob returned to his father, Isaac, in Mamre, which is near Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had both lived as foreigners.

²⁸ Isaac lived for 180 years. ²⁹ Then he breathed his last and died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death. And his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him.

Descendants of Esau

36 This is the account of the descendants of Esau (also known as Edom). ² Esau married two young women from Canaan: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite. ³ He also married his cousin Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and the sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Adah gave birth to a son named Eliphaz for Esau. Basemath gave birth to a son named Reuel. ⁵ Oholibamah gave birth to sons named Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. All these sons were born to Esau in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Esau took his wives, his children, and his entire household, along with his livestock and cattle—all the wealth he had acquired in the land of Canaan—and moved away from his brother, Jacob. ⁷ There was not enough land to support them both because of all the livestock and possessions they had acquired. ⁸ So Esau (also known as Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.

⁹ This is the account of Esau's descendants, the Edomites, who lived in the hill country of Seir.

- ¹⁰ These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah;

and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

- ¹¹ The descendants of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² Timna, the concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, gave birth to a son named Amalek. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Adah.
- ¹³ The descendants of Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.
- ¹⁴ Esau also had sons through Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon. Their names were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.
- ¹⁵ These are the descendants of Esau who became the leaders of various clans:

The descendants of Esau's oldest son, Eliphaz, became the leaders of the clans of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶ Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Eliphaz. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Adah.

- ¹⁷ The descendants of Esau's son Reuel became the leaders of the clans of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the clan leaders in the land of Edom who descended from Reuel. All these were descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.
- ¹⁸ The descendants of Esau and his wife Oholibamah became the leaders of the clans of Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the clan leaders who descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.
- ¹⁹ These are the clans descended from Esau (also known as Edom), identified by their clan leaders.

Original Peoples of Edom

²⁰ These are the names of the tribes that descended from Seir the Horite. They lived in the land of Edom: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

These were the Horite clan leaders, the descendants of Seir, who lived in the land of Edom.

- ²² The descendants of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister was named Timna.
- ²³ The descendants of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.
- ²⁴ The descendants of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah. (This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the wilderness while he was grazing his father's donkeys.)
- ²⁵ The descendants of Anah were his son, Dishon, and his daughter, Oholibamah.
- ²⁶ The descendants of Dishon* were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.
- ²⁷ The descendants of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.
- ²⁸ The descendants of Dishan were Uz and Aran.
- ²⁹ So these were the leaders of the Horite clans: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. The Horite clans are named after their clan leaders, who lived in the land of Seir.

Rulers of Edom

- ³¹ These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites*:
- ³² Bela son of Beor, who ruled in Edom from his city of Dinhabah.
- ³³ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king in his place.
- ³⁴ When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king in his place.
- ³⁵ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad became king in his place and ruled from the city of Avith. He was the one who defeated the Midianites in the land of Moab.

³⁶ When Hadad died, Samlah from the city of Masrekah became king in his place.

³⁷ When Samlah died, Shaul from the city of Rehoboth-on-the-River became king in his place.

³⁸ When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Acbor became king in his place.

³⁹ When Baal-hanan son of Acbor died, Hadad* became king in his place and ruled from the city of Pau. His wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

⁴⁰ These are the names of the leaders of the clans descended from Esau, who lived in the places named for them: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinton, ⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³ Magdiel, and Iram. These are the leaders of the clans of Edom, listed according to their settlements in the land they occupied. They all descended from Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites.

Joseph's Dreams

37 So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.

² This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³ Jacob* loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe.* ⁴ But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

⁵ One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they

36:26 Hebrew *Dishan*, a variant spelling of Dishon; compare 36:21, 28. **36:31** Or *before an Israelite king ruled over them*. **36:39** As in some Hebrew manuscripts, Samaritan Pentateuch, and Syriac version (see also 1 Chr 1:50); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Hadar*. **37:3a** Hebrew *Israel*; also in 37:13. See note on 35:21. **37:3b** Traditionally rendered *a coat of many colors*. The exact meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

hated him more than ever. ⁶ “Listen to this dream,” he said. ⁷ “We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!”

⁸ His brothers responded, “So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

⁹ Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. “Listen, I have had another dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!”

¹⁰ This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked. “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?”

¹¹ But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

¹² Soon after this, Joseph’s brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks at Shechem. ¹³ When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”

“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.

¹⁴ “Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.” So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

¹⁵ When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.

¹⁶ “I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”

¹⁷ “Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

Joseph Sold into Slavery

¹⁸ When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. ¹⁹ “Here comes the dreamer!” they said. ²⁰ “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

²¹ But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph’s rescue. “Let’s not kill him,” he said. ²² “Why should we shed any blood? Let’s just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he’ll die without our laying a hand on him.” Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

²³ So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. ²⁴ Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain by killing our brother? We’d have to cover up the crime.” ²⁷ Instead of hurting him, let’s sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!” And his brothers agreed. ²⁸ **So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph’s brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces* of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.**

J. GENESIS 37:28—Here Joseph is sold by his brothers for 20 pieces of silver; later, Jesus’ “brother” Judas betrays him for 30 pieces of silver.

²⁹ Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. ³⁰ Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?"

³¹ Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood.

³² They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"

³³ Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!"

³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. ³⁵ His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "I will go to my grave* mourning for my son," he would say, and then he would weep.

³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianite traders* arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

Judah and Tamar

38 About this time, Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he stayed with a man named Hirah. ² There he saw a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua, and he married her. When he slept with her, ³ she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and he named the boy Er. ⁴ Then she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, and she named him Onan. ⁵ And when she gave birth to a third son, she named him Shelah. At the time of Shelah's birth, they were living at Kezib.

⁶ In the course of time, Judah arranged for his firstborn son, Er, to marry a young woman named Tamar. ⁷ But Er was a wicked man in the LORD's sight, so the LORD took his life. ⁸ Then Judah said to

Er's brother Onan, "Go and marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. You must produce an heir for your brother."

⁹ But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. ¹⁰ But the LORD considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the LORD took Onan's life, too.

¹¹ Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Go back to your parents' home and remain a widow until my son Shelah is old enough to marry you." (But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went back to live in her father's home.

J. REFRAMING JESUS

GENESIS 37–50—JOSEPH AS A FORERUNNER TO JESUS

The story of Joseph is, in many ways, a prelude to the story of Jesus. Joseph, the privileged son of Jacob (also called Israel), is stripped of his "royal" coat, bears the consequence of his brothers' sins, and yet is eventually lifted to a seat of honor. He rules with wisdom and godliness, offers forgiveness to his brothers, and saves his family from drought. It is through Joseph's actions that Israel becomes a mighty nation and eventually returns to the land through which God will bring redemption to the world. Jesus, the only Son of God, is stripped of his royal robe, bears humanity's sin, and yet is eventually lifted to a seat of honor. His rule is characterized by wisdom and godliness. He offers forgiveness to sinners and saves people from eternal thirst. It is through Jesus' actions that redemption is brought to the world. What other similarities can you find between the accounts of Joseph and Jesus in the Bible?

37:35 Hebrew *go down to Sheol*. 37:36 Hebrew *the Medanites*. The relationship between the Midianites and Medanites is unclear; compare 37:28. See also 25:2.

¹² Some years later Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. ¹³ Someone told Tamar, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

¹⁴ Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but no arrangements had been made for her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. ¹⁵ Judah noticed her and thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. ¹⁶ So he stopped and propositioned her. "Let me have sex with you," he said, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

"How much will you pay to have sex with me?" Tamar asked.

¹⁷ "I'll send you a young goat from my flock," Judah promised.

"But what will you give me to guarantee that you will send the goat?" she asked.

¹⁸ "What kind of guarantee do you want?" he replied.

She answered, "Leave me your identification seal and its cord and the walking stick you are carrying." So Judah gave them to her. Then he had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. ¹⁹ Afterward she went back home, took off her veil, and put on her widow's clothing as usual.

²⁰ Later Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat to the woman and to pick up the things he had given her as his guarantee. But Hirah couldn't find her. ²¹ So he asked the men who lived there, "Where can I find the shrine prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to Enaim?"

"We've never had a shrine prostitute here," they replied.

²² So Hirah returned to Judah and told him, "I couldn't find her anywhere, and

the men of the village claim they've never had a shrine prostitute there."

²³ "Then let her keep the things I gave her," Judah said. "I sent the young goat as we agreed, but you couldn't find her. We'd be the laughingstock of the village if we went back again to look for her."

²⁴ About three months later, Judah was told, "Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has acted like a prostitute. And now, because of this, she's pregnant."

"Bring her out, and let her be burned!" Judah demanded.

²⁵ But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: "The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?"

²⁶ Judah recognized them immediately and said, "She is more righteous than I am, because I didn't arrange for her to marry my son Shelah." And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

²⁷ When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. ²⁸ While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child's wrist, announcing, "This one came out first." ²⁹ But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! "What!" the midwife exclaimed. "How did you break out first?" So he was named Perez. ³⁰ Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.*

Joseph in Potiphar's House

39 When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

² The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. ³ Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. ⁴ This pleased

Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. ⁵ From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. ⁶ So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, ⁷ and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

⁸ But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. ⁹ No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

¹⁰ She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. ¹¹ One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. ¹² She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house.

¹³ When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, ¹⁴ she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. "Look!" she said. "My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me."

¹⁶ She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me," she said. ¹⁸ "But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!"

Joseph Put in Prison

¹⁹ Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. ²⁰ So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. ²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the LORD made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. ²² Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. ²³ The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

Joseph Interprets Two Dreams

40 Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. ² Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, ³ and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. ⁴ They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.

⁵ While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. ⁶ When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. ⁷ "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

⁸ And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

⁹ So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. ¹⁰ The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. ¹¹ I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

¹² “This is what the dream means,” Joseph said. “The three branches represent three days. ¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. ¹⁴ And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. ¹⁵ For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I’m here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it.”

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. ¹⁷ The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head.”

¹⁸ “This is what the dream means,” Joseph told him. “The three baskets also represent three days. ¹⁹ Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh.”

²⁰ Pharaoh’s birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned* his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. ²¹ He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. ²² But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. ²³ Pharaoh’s chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

Pharaoh’s Dreams

41 Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. ² In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ³ Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These

cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. ⁴ Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

⁵ But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ⁶ Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. ⁷ And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

⁸ The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

⁹ Finally, the king’s chief cup-bearer spoke up. “Today I have been reminded of my failure,” he told Pharaoh. ¹⁰ “Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. ¹¹ One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. ¹² There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. ¹³ And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole.”

¹⁴ Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. ¹⁵ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it.”

¹⁶ “It is beyond my power to do this,” Joseph replied. “But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease.”

¹⁷ So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, ¹⁸ and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ¹⁹ But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. ²¹ But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

²² "In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ²³ Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. ²⁴ And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

²⁵ Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. ²⁶ The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. ²⁷ The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

²⁸ "This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. ²⁹ The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. ³⁰ But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. ³¹ This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. ³² As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

³³ "Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in

charge of the entire land of Egypt. ³⁴ Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. ³⁵ Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. ³⁶ That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land."

Joseph Made Ruler of Egypt

³⁷ Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. ³⁸ So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

⁴¹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. ⁴⁴ And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

⁴⁵ Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah.* He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.* So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. ⁴⁶ He was thirty years old when he began

41:45a *Zaphenath-paneah* probably means "God speaks and lives." 41:45b Greek version reads of *Heliopolis*; also in 41:50.

serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

⁴⁷As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. ⁴⁸During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. ⁴⁹He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

⁵⁰During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. ⁵¹Joseph named his older son Manasseh,* for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father's family." ⁵²Joseph named his second son Ephraim,* for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief."

⁵³At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. ⁵⁴Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. ⁵⁵Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, "Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you." ⁵⁶So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

42 When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another? ²I have heard

there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die."

³So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. ⁴But Jacob wouldn't let Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. ⁵So Jacob's* sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well.

⁶Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where are you from?" he demanded.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied. "We have come to buy food."

⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn't recognize him. ⁹And he remembered the dreams he'd had about them many years before. He said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become."

¹⁰"No, my lord!" they exclaimed. "Your servants have simply come to buy food."

¹¹We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!"

¹²"Yes, you are!" Joseph insisted. "You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become."

¹³"Sir," they said, "there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us."

¹⁴But Joseph insisted, "As I said, you are spies! ¹⁵This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶One of you must go and get your brother. I'll keep

41:51 *Manasseh* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "causing to forget." 41:52 *Ephraim* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "fruitful." 42:5 Hebrew *Israel*'s. See note on 35:21.

the rest of you here in prison. Then we'll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don't have a younger brother, then I'll know you are spies."

¹⁷ So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. ¹⁸ On the third day Joseph said to them, "I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. ¹⁹ If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. ²⁰ But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die." To this they agreed.

²¹ Speaking among themselves, they said, "Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why we're in this trouble."

²² "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?" Reuben asked. "But you wouldn't listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!"

²³ Of course, they didn't know that Joseph understood them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. ²⁴ Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.

²⁵ Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother's payment at the top of his sack. He also gave them supplies for their journey home. ²⁶ So the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home.

²⁷ But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack. ²⁸ "Look!" he exclaimed to his brothers. "My money has been returned; it's here in my sack!" Then

their hearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, "What has God done to us?"

²⁹ When the brothers came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them. ³⁰ "The man who is governor of the land spoke very harshly to us," they told him. "He accused us of being spies scouting the land. ³¹ But we said, 'We are honest men, not spies. ³² We are twelve brothers, sons of one father. One brother is no longer with us, and the youngest is at home with our father in the land of Canaan.'

³³ "Then the man who is governor of the land told us, 'This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your starving families and go on home. ³⁴ But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give you back your brother, and you may trade freely in the land.'"

³⁵ As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man's sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money. ³⁶ Jacob exclaimed, "You are robbing me of my children! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!"

³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I don't bring Benjamin back to you. I'll be responsible for him, and I promise to bring him back."

³⁸ But Jacob replied, "My son will not go down with you. His brother Joseph is dead, and he is all I have left. If anything should happen to him on your journey, you would send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.*"

The Brothers Return to Egypt

43 But the famine continued to ravage the land of Canaan. ² When the grain they had brought from Egypt was almost gone, Jacob said to his sons, "Go back and buy us a little more food."

³ But Judah said, "The man was serious when he warned us, 'You won't see my face again unless your brother is with you.' ⁴ If you send Benjamin with us, we will go down and buy more food. ⁵ But if you don't let Benjamin go, we won't go either. Remember, the man said, 'You won't see my face again unless your brother is with you.'"

⁶ "Why were you so cruel to me?" Jacob* moaned. "Why did you tell him you had another brother?"

⁷ "The man kept asking us questions about our family," they replied. "He asked, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' So we answered his questions. How could we know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here?'"

⁸ Judah said to his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will be on our way. Otherwise we will all die of starvation—and not only we, but you and our little ones. ⁹ I personally guarantee his safety. You may hold me responsible if I don't bring him back to you. Then let me bear the blame forever. ¹⁰ If we hadn't wasted all this time, we could have gone and returned twice by now."

¹¹ So their father, Jacob, finally said to them, "If it can't be avoided, then at least do this. Pack your bags with the best products of this land. Take them down to the man as gifts—balm, honey, gum, aromatic resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. ¹² Also take double the money that was put back in your sacks, as it was probably someone's mistake. ¹³ Then take your brother, and go back to the man. ¹⁴ May God Almighty* give you mercy as you go before the man, so that he will release Simeon and let Benjamin return. But if I must lose my children, so be it."

¹⁵ So the men packed Jacob's gifts and double the money and headed off with Benjamin. They finally arrived in Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph.

¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household,

"These men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside the palace. Then go slaughter an animal, and prepare a big feast." ¹⁷ So the man did as Joseph told him and took them into Joseph's palace.

¹⁸ The brothers were terrified when they saw that they were being taken into Joseph's house. "It's because of the money someone put in our sacks last time we were here," they said. "He plans to pretend that we stole it. Then he will seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys."

A Feast at Joseph's Palace

¹⁹ The brothers approached the manager of Joseph's household and spoke to him at the entrance to the palace. ²⁰ "Sir," they said, "we came to Egypt once before to buy food. ²¹ But as we were returning home, we stopped for the night and opened our sacks. Then we discovered that each man's money—the exact amount paid—was in the top of his sack! Here it is; we have brought it back with us. ²² We also have additional money to buy more food. We have no idea who put our money in our sacks."

²³ "Relax. Don't be afraid," the household manager told them. "Your God, the God of your father, must have put this treasure into your sacks. I know I received your payment." Then he released Simeon and brought him out to them.

²⁴ The manager then led the men into Joseph's palace. He gave them water to wash their feet and provided food for their donkeys. ²⁵ They were told they would be eating there, so they prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon.

²⁶ When Joseph came home, they gave him the gifts they had brought him, then bowed low to the ground before him. ²⁷ After greeting them, he asked, "How is your father, the old man you spoke about? Is he still alive?"

²⁸ "Yes," they replied. "Our father, your servant, is alive and well." And they bowed low again.

²⁹ Then Joseph looked at his brother Benjamin, the son of his own mother. "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" Joseph asked. "May God be gracious to you, my son."³⁰ Then Joseph hurried from the room because he was overcome with emotion for his brother. He went into his private room, where he broke down and wept.³¹ After washing his face, he came back out, keeping himself under control. Then he ordered, "Bring out the food!"

³² The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them.³³ Joseph told each of his brothers where to sit, and to their amazement, he seated them according to age, from oldest to youngest.³⁴ And Joseph filled their plates with food from his own table, giving Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

Joseph's Silver Cup

44 When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to his palace manager: "Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man's money back into his sack.² Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest brother's sack, along with the money for his grain." So the manager did as Joseph instructed him.

³ The brothers were up at dawn and were sent on their journey with their loaded donkeys.⁴ But when they had gone only a short distance and were barely out of the city, Joseph said to his palace manager, "Chase after them and stop them. When you catch up with them, ask them, 'Why have you repaid my kindness with such evil?'⁵ Why have you stolen my master's silver cup,* which he uses to predict the future? What a wicked thing you have done!"

⁶ When the palace manager caught up with the men, he spoke to them as he had been instructed.

⁷ "What are you talking about?" the brothers responded. "We are your servants and would never do such a thing!"⁸ Didn't we return the money we found in our sacks? We brought it back all the way from the land of Canaan. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house?⁹ If you find his cup with any one of us, let that man die. And all the rest of us, my lord, will be your slaves."

¹⁰ "That's fair," the man replied. "But only the one who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go free."

¹¹ They all quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them.¹² The palace manager searched the brothers' sacks, from the oldest to the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack!¹³ When the brothers saw this, they tore their clothing in despair. Then they loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city.

¹⁴ Joseph was still in his palace when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him.¹⁵ "What have you done?" Joseph demanded. "Don't you know that a man like me can predict the future?"

¹⁶ Judah answered, "Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we explain this? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—all of us, not just our brother who had your cup in his sack."

¹⁷ "No," Joseph said. "I would never do such a thing! Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go back to your father in peace."

Judah Speaks for His Brothers

¹⁸ Then Judah stepped forward and said, "Please, my lord, let your servant say just one word to you. Please, do not be angry with me, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself.

¹⁹ “My lord, previously you asked us, your servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ ²⁰ And we responded, ‘Yes, my lord, we have a father who is an old man, and his youngest son is a child of his old age. His full brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him very much.’

²¹ “And you said to us, ‘Bring him here so I can see him with my own eyes.’ ²² But we said to you, ‘My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.’ ²³ But you told us, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes with you, you will never see my face again.’

²⁴ “So we returned to your servant, our father, and told him what you had said. ²⁵ Later, when he said, ‘Go back again and buy us more food,’ ²⁶ we replied, ‘We can’t go unless you let our youngest brother go with us. We’ll never get to see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’

²⁷ “Then my father said to us, ‘As you know, my wife had two sons, ²⁸ and one of them went away and never returned.

Doubtless he was torn to pieces by some wild animal. I have never seen him since. ²⁹ Now if you take his brother away from me, and any harm comes to him, you will send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.*”

³⁰ “And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father’s life is bound up in the boy’s life. ³¹ If he sees that the boy is not with us, our father will die. We, your servants, will indeed be responsible for sending that grieving, white-haired man to his grave. ³² My lord, I guaranteed to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, ‘If I don’t bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.’

³³ “So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. ³⁴ For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn’t bear to see the anguish this would cause my father!”

Joseph Reveals His Identity

45 Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. ² Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

³ “I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. ⁴ “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵ But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. ⁶ This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

J. REFRAMING JESUS

GENESIS 44:33—JESUS VOLUNTEERS HIS LIFE

Judah, in an act of love intended for his father and his little brother, offers his own life as a substitutionary atonement. The impact of his selfless offering will be expanded later through his descendant, Jesus. For it was out of his love for his Father, and his love for humankind, that Jesus volunteered his life on the cross so that God’s other children might be saved. The stories are similar, but the motivations are different—how do Judah and Jesus vary in the way they offer their lives?

J. GENESIS 44:30-34—Jesus is born through the line of Judah, who guarantees his father that he would take care of Benjamin. Later, in his “High Priestly Prayer,” Jesus guarantees his father that he would guard and take care of us (John 17).

⁷ God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.* ⁸ So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser* to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

⁹ “Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately!’ ¹⁰ You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. ¹¹ I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.”

¹² Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! ¹³ Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.” ¹⁴ Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. ¹⁵ Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

Pharaoh Invites Jacob to Egypt

¹⁶ The news soon reached Pharaoh's palace: “Joseph's brothers have arrived!” Pharaoh and his officials were all delighted to hear this.

¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘This is what you must do: Load your pack animals, and hurry back to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸ Then get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces.’”

¹⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Take wagons from the

land of Egypt to carry your little children and your wives, and bring your father here. ²⁰ Don't worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

²¹ So the sons of Jacob* did as they were told. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey. ²² And he gave each of them new clothes—but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothes and 300 pieces* of silver. ²³ He also sent his father ten male donkeys loaded with the finest products of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other supplies he would need on his journey.

²⁴ So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, “Don't quarrel about all this along the way!” ²⁵ And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan.

²⁶ “Joseph is still alive!” they told him. “And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!” Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn't believe it. ²⁷ But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father's spirits revived.

²⁸ Then Jacob exclaimed, “It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die.”

Jacob's Journey to Egypt

46 So Jacob* set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. ² During the night God spoke to him in a vision. “Jacob! Jacob!” he called.

“Here I am,” Jacob replied.

³ “I am God,* the God of your father,” the voice said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation. ⁴ I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring you back

45:7 Or *and to save you with an extraordinary rescue*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 45:8 Hebrew *a father*. 45:21 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 45:28. See note on 35:21. 45:22 Hebrew *300 [shekels]*, about 7.5 pounds or 3.4 kilograms in weight. 46:1 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 46:29, 30. See note on 35:21. 46:3 Hebrew *I am El*.

again. You will die in Egypt, but Joseph will be with you to close your eyes."

⁵ So Jacob left Beersheba, and his sons took him to Egypt. They carried him and their little ones and their wives in the wagons Pharaoh had provided for them. ⁶ They also took all their livestock and all the personal belongings they had acquired in the land of Canaan. So Jacob and his entire family went to Egypt—⁷ sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters—all his descendants.

⁸ These are the names of the descendants of Israel—the sons of Jacob—who went to Egypt:

Reuben was Jacob's oldest son. ⁹ The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁰ The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. (Shaul's mother was a Canaanite woman.)

¹¹ The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹² The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (though Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

¹³ The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah,* Jashub,* and Shimron.

¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

¹⁵ These were the sons of Leah and Jacob who were born in Paddan-aram, in addition to their daughter, Dinah. The number of Jacob's descendants (male and female) through Leah was thirty-three.

¹⁶ The sons of Gad were Zephon,* Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

¹⁷ The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was Serah. Beriah's sons were Heber and Malkiel.

¹⁸ These were the sons of Zilpah, the servant given to Leah by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Zilpah was sixteen.

¹⁹ The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰ Joseph's sons, born in the land of Egypt, were Manasseh and Ephraim. Their mother was Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.*

²¹ Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

²² These were the sons of Rachel and Jacob. The number of Jacob's descendants through Rachel was fourteen.

²³ The son of Dan was Hushim.

²⁴ The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillel.

²⁵ These were the sons of Bilhah, the servant given to Rachel by her father, Laban. The number of Jacob's descendants through Bilhah was seven.

²⁶ The total number of Jacob's direct descendants who went with him to Egypt, not counting his sons' wives, was sixty-six. ²⁷ In addition, Joseph had two sons* who were born in Egypt. So altogether, there were seventy* members of Jacob's family in the land of Egypt.

Jacob's Family Arrives in Goshen

²⁸ As they neared their destination, Jacob sent Judah ahead to meet Joseph and get directions to the region of Goshen. And when they finally arrived there, ²⁹ Joseph prepared his chariot and traveled to Goshen to meet his father, Jacob. When Joseph arrived, he embraced his father and wept, holding him for a long time. ³⁰ Finally, Jacob said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen your face again and know you are still alive."

46:13a As in Syriac version and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also 1 Chr 7:1); Hebrew reads *Puvah*. 46:13b As in some Greek manuscripts and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Num 26:24; 1 Chr 7:1); Hebrew reads *Iob*. 46:16 As in Greek version and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Num 26:15); Hebrew reads *Ziphion*. 46:20 Greek version reads *of Heliopolis*. 46:27a Greek version reads *nine sons*, probably including Joseph's grandsons through Ephraim and Manasseh (see 1 Chr 7:14-20). 46:27b Greek version reads *seventy-five*; see note on Exod 1:5.

³¹And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's entire family, "I will go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'My brothers and my father's entire family have come to me from the land of Canaan. ³²These men are shepherds, and they raise livestock. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.'"

³³Then he said, "When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, ³⁴you must tell him, 'We, your servants, have raised livestock all our lives, as our ancestors have always done.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the region of Goshen, for the Egyptians despise shepherds."

Jacob Blesses Pharaoh

47 Then Joseph went to see Pharaoh and told him, "My father and my brothers have arrived from the land of Canaan. They have come with all their flocks and herds and possessions, and they are now in the region of Goshen."

² Joseph took five of his brothers with him and presented them to Pharaoh. ³And Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?"

They replied, "We, your servants, are shepherds, just like our ancestors. ⁴We have come to live here in Egypt for a while, for there is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine is very severe there. So please, we request permission to live in the region of Goshen."

⁵Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Now that your father and brothers have joined you here, ⁶choose any place in the entire land of Egypt for them to live. Give them the best land of Egypt. Let them live in the region of Goshen. And if any of them have special skills, put them in charge of my livestock, too."

⁷Then Joseph brought in his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

⁸"How old are you?" Pharaoh asked him.

⁹Jacob replied, "I have traveled this earth for 130 hard years. But my life has

been short compared to the lives of my ancestors."¹⁰ Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before leaving his court.

¹¹So Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt—the region of Rameses—to his father and his brothers, and he settled them there, just as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹²And Joseph provided food for his father and his brothers in amounts appropriate to the number of their dependents, including the smallest children.

Joseph's Leadership in the Famine

¹³Meanwhile, the famine became so severe that all the food was used up, and people were starving throughout the lands of Egypt and Canaan. ¹⁴By selling grain to the people, Joseph eventually collected all the money in Egypt and Canaan, and he put the money in Pharaoh's treasury. ¹⁵When the people of Egypt and Canaan ran out of money, all the Egyptians came to Joseph. "Our money is gone!" they cried. "But please give us food, or we will die before your very eyes!"

¹⁶Joseph replied, "Since your money is gone, bring me your livestock. I will give you food in exchange for your livestock."¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph in exchange for food. In exchange for their horses, flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and donkeys, Joseph provided them with food for another year.

¹⁸But that year ended, and the next year they came again and said, "We cannot hide the truth from you, my lord. Our money is gone, and all our livestock and cattle are yours. We have nothing left to give but our bodies and our land. ¹⁹Why should we die before your very eyes? Buy us and our land in exchange for food; we offer our land and ourselves as slaves for Pharaoh. Just give us grain so we may live and not die, and so the land does not become empty and desolate."

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold him their fields because the famine was so

severe, and soon all the land belonged to Pharaoh. ²¹As for the people, he made them all slaves,* from one end of Egypt to the other. ²²The only land he did not buy was the land belonging to the priests. They received an allotment of food directly from Pharaoh, so they didn't need to sell their land.

²³Then Joseph said to the people, "Look, today I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. I will provide you with seed so you can plant the fields. ²⁴Then when you harvest it, one-fifth of your crop will belong to Pharaoh. You may keep the remaining four-fifths as seed for your fields and as food for you, your households, and your little ones."

²⁵"You have saved our lives!" they exclaimed. "May it please you, my lord, to let us be Pharaoh's servants." ²⁶Joseph then issued a decree still in effect in the land of Egypt, that Pharaoh should receive one-fifth of all the crops grown on his land. Only the land belonging to the priests was not given to Pharaoh.

²⁷Meanwhile, the people of Israel settled in the region of Goshen in Egypt. There they acquired property, and they were fruitful, and their population grew rapidly. ²⁸Jacob lived for seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, so he lived 147 years in all.

²⁹As the time of his death drew near, Jacob* called for his son Joseph and said to him, "Please do me this favor. Put your hand under my thigh and swear that you will treat me with unfailing love by honoring this last request: Do not bury me in Egypt. ³⁰When I die, please take my body out of Egypt and bury me with my ancestors."

So Joseph promised, "I will do as you ask."

³¹"Swear that you will do it," Jacob insisted. So Joseph gave his oath, and Jacob bowed humbly at the head of his bed.*

Jacob Blesses Manasseh and Ephraim

48 One day not long after this, word came to Joseph, "Your father is failing rapidly." So Joseph went to visit his father, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

²When Joseph arrived, Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to see you." So Jacob* gathered his strength and sat up in his bed.

³Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty* appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. ⁴He said to me, 'I will make you fruitful, and I will multiply your descendants. I will make you a multitude of nations. And I will give this land of Canaan to your descendants* after you as an everlasting possession.'

⁵"Now I am claiming as my own sons these two boys of yours, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born here in the land of Egypt before I arrived. They will be my sons, just as Reuben and Simeon are. ⁶But any children born to you in the future will be your own, and they will inherit land within the territories of their brothers Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷"Long ago, as I was returning from Paddan-aram,* Rachel died in the land of Canaan. We were still on the way, some distance from Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). So with great sorrow I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath."

⁸Then Jacob looked over at the two boys. "Are these your sons?" he asked.

⁹"Yes," Joseph told him, "these are the sons God has given me here in Egypt."

And Jacob said, "Bring them closer to me, so I can bless them."

¹⁰Jacob was half blind because of his age and could hardly see. So Joseph brought the boys close to him, and Jacob kissed and embraced them. ¹¹Then Jacob said to Joseph, "I never thought I would see your face again, but now God has let me see your children, too!"

47:21 As in Greek version and Samaritan Pentateuch; Hebrew reads *he moved them all into the towns*.

47:29 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 47:31b. See note on 35:21. 47:31 Greek version reads *and Israel bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff*. Compare Heb 11:21. 48:2 Hebrew *Israel*; also in 48:8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 21. See note on 35:21.

48:3 Hebrew *El-Shaddai*. 48:4 Hebrew *seed*; also in 48:19. 48:7 Hebrew *Paddan*, referring to Paddan-aram; compare Gen 35:9.

¹² Joseph moved the boys, who were at their grandfather's knees, and he bowed with his face to the ground. ¹³ Then he positioned the boys in front of Jacob. With his right hand he directed Ephraim toward Jacob's left hand, and with his left hand he put Manasseh at Jacob's right hand. ¹⁴ But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys' heads. He put his right hand on the head of Ephraim, though he was the younger boy, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, though he was the firstborn. ¹⁵ Then he blessed Joseph and said,

"May the God before whom my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac, walked—the God who has been my shepherd all my life, to this very day,
¹⁶ the Angel who has redeemed me from all harm—
 may he bless these boys.
 May they preserve my name and the names of Abraham and Isaac.
 And may their descendants multiply greatly throughout the earth."

¹⁷ But Joseph was upset when he saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim's head. So Joseph lifted it to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ "No, my father," he said. "This one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head."

¹⁹ But his father refused. "I know, my son; I know," he replied. "Manasseh will also become a great people, but his younger brother will become even greater. And his descendants will become a multitude of nations."

²⁰ So Jacob blessed the boys that day with this blessing: "The people of Israel will use your names when they give a blessing. They will say, 'May God make you as prosperous as Ephraim

and Manasseh.'" In this way, Jacob put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "Look, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will take you back to Canaan, the land of your ancestors. ²² And beyond what I have given your brothers, I am giving you an extra portion of the land* that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow."

Jacob's Last Words to His Sons

49 Then Jacob called together all his sons and said, "Gather around me, and I will tell you what will happen to each of you in the days to come.

² "Come and listen, you sons of Jacob; listen to Israel, your father.

³ "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength, the child of my vigorous youth. You are first in rank and first in power.

⁴ But you are as unruly as a flood, and you will be first no longer. For you went to bed with my wife; you defiled my marriage couch.

⁵ "Simeon and Levi are two of a kind; their weapons are instruments of violence.

⁶ May I never join in their meetings; may I never be a party to their plans. For in their anger they murdered men, and they crippled oxen just for sport.

⁷ A curse on their anger, for it is fierce; a curse on their wrath, for it is cruel.

I will scatter them among the descendants of Jacob; I will disperse them throughout Israel.

⁸ "Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will grasp your enemies by the neck.

- All your relatives will bow
before you.
- ⁹ Judah, my son, is a young lion
that has finished eating its prey.
Like a lion he crouches
and lies down;
like a lioness—who dares
to rouse him?
- ¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from
Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from his
descendants,*
until the coming of the one to whom
it belongs,*
the one whom all nations
will honor.
- ¹¹ He ties his foal to a grapevine,
the colt of his donkey to
a choice vine.
He washes his clothes in wine,
his robes in the blood of grapes.
- ¹² His eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth are whiter than milk.
- ¹³ "Zebulun will settle by the seashore
and will be a harbor for ships;
his borders will extend to Sidon.
- ¹⁴ "Issachar is a sturdy donkey,
resting between two saddlepacks.*
- ¹⁵ When he sees how good the
countryside is
and how pleasant the land,
he will bend his shoulder to the load
and submit himself to hard labor.
- ¹⁶ "Dan will govern his people,
like any other tribe in Israel.
- ¹⁷ Dan will be a snake beside the road,
a poisonous viper along the path
that bites the horse's hooves
so its rider is thrown off.
- ¹⁸ I trust in you for salvation, O LORD!
- ¹⁹ "Gad will be attacked by marauding
bands,
but he will attack them when they
retreat.
- ²⁰ "Asher will dine on rich foods
and produce food fit for kings.
- ²¹ "Naphtali is a doe set free
that bears beautiful fawns.
- ²² "Joseph is the foal of a wild donkey,
the foal of a wild donkey
at a spring—
one of the wild donkeys on
the ridge.*
- ²³ Archers attacked him savagely;
they shot at him and harassed him.
- ²⁴ But his bow remained taut,
and his arms were strengthened
by the hands of the Mighty One
of Jacob,
by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.
- ²⁵ May the God of your father help you;
may the Almighty bless you
with the blessings of
the heavens above,
and blessings of the watery
depths below,
and blessings of the breasts
and womb.
- ²⁶ May my fatherly blessings on you
surpass the blessings of my
ancestors,*
reaching to the heights of
the eternal hills.
May these blessings rest on the head
of Joseph,
who is a prince among his brothers.
- ²⁷ "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,
devouring his enemies in
the morning
and dividing his plunder in
the evening."

J. GENESIS 49:9-10—Jesus is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," "the heir to David's throne" (Revelation 5:5).

49:10a Hebrew *from between his feet*. **49:10b** Or *until tribute is brought to him and the peoples obey*; traditionally rendered *until Shiloh comes*. **49:14** Or *sheepfolds*, or *hearths*. **49:22** Or *Joseph is a fruitful tree, / a fruitful tree beside a spring. / His branches reach over the wall*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. **49:26** Or *of the ancient mountains*.

²⁸ These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said as he told his sons good-bye. He blessed each one with an appropriate message.

Jacob's Death and Burial

²⁹ Then Jacob instructed them, "Soon I will die and join my ancestors. Bury me with my father and grandfather in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite.

³⁰ This is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a permanent burial site. ³¹ There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried. There Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, are buried. And there I buried Leah. ³² It is the plot of land and the cave that my grandfather Abraham bought from the Hittites."

³³ When Jacob had finished this charge to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and joined his ancestors in death.

50 Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. ² Then Joseph told the physicians who served him to embalm his father's body; so Jacob* was embalmed. ³ The embalming process took the usual forty days. And the Egyptians mourned his death for seventy days.

⁴ When the period of mourning was over, Joseph approached Pharaoh's advisers and said, "Please do me this favor and speak to Pharaoh on my behalf. ⁵ Tell him that my father made me swear an oath. He said to me, 'Listen, I am about to die. Take my body back to the land of Canaan, and bury me in the tomb I prepared for myself.' So please allow me to go and bury my father. After his burial, I will return without delay."

⁶ Pharaoh agreed to Joseph's request. "Go and bury your father, as he made you promise," he said. ⁷ So Joseph went up to bury his father. He was accompanied by all of Pharaoh's officials, all the senior members of Pharaoh's household, and

all the senior officers of Egypt. ⁸ Joseph also took his entire household and his brothers and their households. But they left their little children and flocks and herds in the land of Goshen. ⁹ A great number of chariots and charioteers accompanied Joseph.

¹⁰ When they arrived at the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan River, they held a very great and solemn memorial service, with a seven-day period of mourning for Joseph's father. ¹¹ The local residents, the Canaanites, watched them mourning at the threshing floor of Atad. Then they renamed that place (which is near the Jordan) Abel-mizraim,* for they said, "This is a place of deep mourning for these Egyptians."

¹² So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them. ¹³ They carried his body to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre. This is the cave that Abraham had bought as a permanent burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

¹⁴ After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. ¹⁵ But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said.

¹⁶ So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us ¹⁷ to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin."

1. GENESIS 49:33—Here Jacob is both looking back and looking forward, tracking God's plan of salvation through the generations. Jesus also looks back to the thread of salvation through the generations, and forward into us (Luke 24:44-48).

When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept.¹⁸ Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you?"

²⁰ *You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.*²¹ No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

J. GENESIS 50:20—Here Joseph reveals something central to the heart of Jesus: He makes beautiful things out of ugly things. He takes harmful motivations and weaves something redemptive in their midst (Romans 8:28).

The Death of Joseph

²² So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt. Joseph lived to the age of 110.²³ He lived to see three generations of descendants of his son Ephraim, and he lived to see the birth of the children of Manasseh's son Makir, whom he claimed as his own.*

²⁴ "Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, "When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you."²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of 110. The Egyptians embalmed him, and his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

50:23 Hebrew *who were born on Joseph's knees*.

JESUS *in the* NEW TESTAMENT

To truly understand the New Testament, you and I need to take a walk—a seven-mile journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, just like two of Jesus' earliest disciples. Our metaphorical walk from Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, to Emmaus, where he met his disciples on the road after his resurrection, is really a walk through the "meta-narrative" of Scripture. Authors Frank Viola and Leonard Sweet say: "The Bible is the greatest storybook, not just because it is full of wonderful stories, but because it tells of the great story, the story of Jesus."

As these two disciples walk the road to Emmaus, their "hearts burn" because they're discovering that Jesus is the focus of all Scripture (Luke 24:13-35). Like them, we won't be able to understand the Bible as a whole unless we recognize that Jesus is the key to unlocking its interpretation. If we are going to understand the New Testament, we must read it Christo-centrally. Luke affirms this truth when he writes: "Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

In the Gospels we find the manifestation of Jesus the Messiah. In Acts we find the propagation of Jesus the Messiah. In the Epistles we find the interpretation of Jesus the Messiah. And in Revelation we find the consummation of Jesus the Messiah.

In our contemporary age, most readers search the New Testament for principles of truth, not Truth itself. **That Truth is named Jesus, and he wants to live his life through his people, transforming us through his presence, embedding his principles from the inside out.** In the treasure box whose name is Jesus, all of humanity's purpose and hope are locked away (Romans 5:12-21). He lived a perfect life on our behalf, because we could not do it on our own. He died our death on the cross to forgive our sins and

justify us, because we could not do it on our own—and he rose from the dead to give us his eternal life, because we could not do it on our own. The Father and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us, and Jesus now functions as our “great High Priest,” advocating on our behalf.

If we don't understand that the core theme of the New Testament, and all of the Bible, is the pursuit of Jesus, we'll miss his epic work of grace on our behalf.

As you read the New Testament, my hope is that your journey morphs from a search for principles into a passionate pursuit of a Person—may your heart burn just as it did for those two Emmaus disciples. As strange as it sounds, it's very possible to read the Bible, yet miss Jesus. This is what happened to the Pharisees: “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life” (John 5:39-40).

Read the New Testament prayerfully and slowly, asking the Spirit of Jesus to reveal himself to you. Ask for a “total immersion” in the heart, soul, and mind of Christ. The New Testament is not about you or me—it's the story of God's redemptive activity channeled through Jesus. When you lose yourself in Jesus' story, you will find the life you were created to live. In every verse of the New Testament, there is a road that leads to Jesus. Enjoy your seven-mile walk, and keep your heart open to be transformed.

—Derwin Gray

JESUS in MATTHEW

The Bible tells a big, sprawling story of sin and redemption, of death and resurrection. It takes us from Creation to New Creation—from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem. Along the way, the plot sometimes feels lost and the story seems...stalled. But when we turn the page from Malachi to Matthew, the twisting plot of the Story God is telling is about to come into sharp focus. We're about to meet the central character of the Story—his name is Jesus!

A few years ago I read the Bible straight through like you would any other book. I was trying to read it as if I'd never heard the Story. There were moments of elation, but also times when I felt the pain of the Hebrew prophets as they nearly despaired. Would the promises God had made to Abraham and his seed ever come true? Would the longed-for reign of the Messiah ever arrive? The wintery day I ended my reading of Malachi and turned the page to begin Matthew was during the season of Advent. I was sitting by a woodstove with a warm fire. Music played quietly in the background. As I read the first words of Matthew 1:18, "This is how Jesus the Messiah was born," the radio began to play the familiar carol "What Child Is This?" Tears filled my eyes. The Story was back on track, and God was keeping his promise!

Matthew opens his Gospel (his telling of God's redemptive Story) not with the birth of Jesus, but with a long genealogy tracing Jesus' lineage all the way back to Abraham. Matthew wants us to understand that even though God is doing a new thing with Jesus, that new thing is in continuity with what we have read in the Hebrew Scriptures. When we go from the Old to the New Testament, it's not that God has abandoned what he was doing with Israel from Genesis to Malachi—rather, God is bringing into fulfillment the promises he made to David and Abraham. So Matthew opens the New Testament with these words: "This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). God had promised David that a son of his would sit upon an eternal throne. God had promised Abraham that his seed would bless the nations. These promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

In writing his Gospel, Matthew is careful to remind us that this Jesus we call Lord is the Jewish Messiah spoken of by the prophets. The New Testament is not God's "Plan B"—it's the revelation of his "Plan A." From the wise men who seek the king of the Jews, to Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount, to the post-resurrection appearance when Jesus says, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18), Matthew is joyfully announcing the good news—King Jesus has come, and he has brought with him the reign of God!

—Brian Zahnd

MATTHEW

The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham*:

- ² Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.
- ³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar). Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram.*
- ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
- ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse.
- ⁶ Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
- ⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa.*
- ⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.*
- Jehoram was the father* of Uzziah.

- ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
- ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon.* Amon was the father of Josiah.
- ¹¹ Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin* and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).
- ¹² After the Babylonian exile: Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
- ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor.
- ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud.
- ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob.
- ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

HOW WOULD JESUS
INTERACT WITH SOCIAL
MEDIA IF HE HAD BEEN BORN
INTO OUR TIME?

¹⁷ All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

1:1 Greek *Jesus the Messiah, Son of David and son of Abraham*. 1:3 Greek *Aram*, a variant spelling of Ram; also in 1:4. See 1 Chr 2:9-10. 1:7 Greek *Asaph*, a variant spelling of Asa; also in 1:8. See 1 Chr 3:10. 1:8a Greek *Joram*, a variant spelling of Jehoram; also in 1:8b. See 1 Kgs 22:50 and note at 1 Chr 3:11. 1:8b Or *ancestor*; also in 1:11. 1:10 Greek *Amos*, a variant spelling of Amon; also in 1:10b. See 1 Chr 3:14. 1:11 Greek *Jecooniah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiachin; also in 1:12. See 2 Kgs 24:6 and note at 1 Chr 3:16.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement* quietly.

²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,* for he will save his people from their sins."

²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

²³ "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel,* which means 'God is with us.'"

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Visitors from the East

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ² "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,* and we have come to worship him."

³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in

Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities* of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'"

⁷ Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

⁹ After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³ After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said.

DO YOU THINK JESUS KNEW
HE WAS THE SON OF GOD WHEN
HE WAS A YOUNG BOY? WHY OR
WHY NOT?
(MATTHEW 2:13-15)

"Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴ That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵ and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."*

¹⁶ Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. ¹⁷ Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ "A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead."*

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰ "Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

²¹ So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. ²² But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. ²³ So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, ² "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for

the Kingdom of Heaven is near.*" ³ The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

"He is a voice shouting in
the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the
LORD's coming!
Clear the road for him!'"*

⁴ John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. ⁶ And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷ But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize,* he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath?"

⁸ Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

⁹ Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. ¹⁰ Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize with* water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* ¹² He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³ Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

¹⁵ But Jesus said, "**It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.***"
So John agreed to baptize him.

¹⁶ After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened* and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ² For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³ During that time the devil* came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴ But Jesus told him, "**No! The Scriptures say,**

**'People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes
from the mouth of God.'***"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶ and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

**'He will order his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you up
with their hands
so you won't even hurt your
foot on a stone.'***"

⁷ Jesus responded, "**The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'***"

⁸ Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him

all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

¹⁰ "**Get out of here, Satan,**" Jesus told him. "**For the Scriptures say,**

**'You must worship the LORD your God
and serve only him.'***"

¹¹ Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

The Ministry of Jesus Begins

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ¹³ He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ "In the land of Zebulun
and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond
the Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many
Gentiles live,

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light.
And for those who lived in the land
where death casts its shadow,
a light has shined."*

¹⁷ From then on Jesus began to preach, "**Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.***"

The First Disciples

¹⁸ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, "**Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!**"

²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him.

3:15 Or for we must fulfill all righteousness. 3:16 Some manuscripts read *opened to him*. 4:3 Greek *the tempter*.

4:4 Deut 8:3. 4:6 Ps 91:11-12. 4:7 Deut 6:16. 4:10 Deut 6:13. 4:15-16 Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version). 4:17 Or *has come*, or *is coming soon*.

²¹A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²²They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Crowds Follow Jesus

²³ Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ²⁴News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns,* Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

The Sermon on the Mount

5 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

³ “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,* for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

⁴ God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,* for they will be satisfied.

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

⁹ God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹² Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Teaching about Salt and Light

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.

¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰ “But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness

of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Teaching about Anger

²¹ “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’” ²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone,* you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot,* you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone,* you are in danger of the fires of hell.*

²³ “So if you are presenting a sacrifice* at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

²⁵ “When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.*

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’” ²⁸ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ So if your eye—even your good eye*—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your hand—even your stronger hand*—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Teaching about Divorce

³¹ “You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’” ³² But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

Teaching about Vows

³³ “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your

^{5:21} Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17. ^{5:22a} Some manuscripts add *without cause*. ^{5:22b} Greek uses an Aramaic term of contempt: *If you say to your brother, ‘Raca.’* ^{5:22c} Greek *if you say, ‘You fool.’* ^{5:22d} Greek *Gehenna*; also in 5:29, 30. ^{5:23} Greek *gift*; also in 5:24. ^{5:26} Greek *the last kodrantes* [i.e., quadrans]. ^{5:27} Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18. ^{5:29} Greek *your right eye*. ^{5:30} Greek *your right hand*. ^{5:31} Deut 24:1.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE’S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 5:17-20—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG?

The Pharisees have supercharged the quest for “what is right and wrong” and made it into a kind of extreme competition. They have taken the basics of the “law” that God delivered to them—ways of relating to him and to each other—and exploded that simple outline into hundreds and hundreds of tiny rules and regulations designed to guarantee “righteousness.” And here Jesus says that “unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” And then, through the rest of Matthew 5, he drives home his point by comparing common standards for what’s right and wrong to the standard he’s set. He’s saying it’s essentially impossible to live a “righteous” life by working harder at it—our solitary hope for living righteously is to allow the only Righteous Presence in the universe to live in us, to live through us. We will know right and wrong not when we try harder to meet God’s standards of righteousness, but when we yield ourselves to Jesus, who will help us to live righteously from the inside out.

vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.*³⁴ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne.³⁵ And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King.³⁶ Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black.³⁷ Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

³⁸ "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'*³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also.⁴⁰ If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too.⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,* carry it two miles.⁴² Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³ "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor'* and hate your enemy.⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies!* Pray for those who persecute you!⁴⁵ In that way,

you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends,* how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

6 "Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven.² When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get.³ But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵ "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on

5:33 Num 30:2. 5:38 Greek *the law that says: 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21. 5:41 Greek *milion* [4,854 feet or 1,478 meters]. 5:43 Lev 19:18. 5:44 Some manuscripts add *Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Compare Luke 6:27-28.* 5:47 Greek *your brothers.*

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 6:1-6—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: IS GOD REAL?

Here Jesus urges his listeners to do "good deeds" in secret, without drawing attention to ourselves. He's urging us to not grab attention or reward or recognition for the intrinsically good things we do, because we don't need to—God is real and can see all the secret things we do, and God is eager to "reward" us for those things. When we do good things in order to be rewarded by those around us, we're essentially saying that the only real reward we'll get is from the people we can see—it's an act of disbelief in God's realness. And Jesus is here simply reminding us: *Hey, God is real—you don't have to scrape and hoard and guarantee your reward for doing good, because God can see what you do in secret. So do things in secret so the only source of your reward can come from God. When you do that, you proclaim the truth—that God is real.*

street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷ “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹ Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.

¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today the food we need,*

¹² and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those
who sin against us.

¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation,*
but rescue us from the evil one.*

J. REFRAMING JESUS

MATTHEW 6:5-16—JESUS TEACHES LIFE-CHANGING TRUTHS

Who’s been your favorite teacher? Was it your third-grade teacher who always told great jokes? Or was it a history teacher who brought boring dates and facts to life? Here in Matthew’s Gospel, we encounter many moments when Jesus powerfully teaches the people around him. Crowds mob around him to hear him speak; his words and stories are unusual, amazing, and challenging. They’re the kind of things you’d never forget. As you read through this specific passage—and others throughout this Gospel—imagine you’re there, in the crowd, listening to Jesus’ life-changing words. What is he teaching you? How will you respond?

¹⁴ “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶ “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair* and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Money and Possessions

¹⁹ “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²² “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are?

6:11 Or Give us today our food for the day; or Give us today our food for tomorrow. 6:13a Or And keep us from being tested. 6:13b Or from evil. Some manuscripts add For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. 6:17 Greek anoint your head.

²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God* above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Do Not Judge Others

7 "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ² For you will be treated as you treat others.* The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*

³ "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye* when you have a log in your own? ⁴ How can you think of saying to your friend,* 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

⁶ "Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy.* Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Effective Prayer

⁷ "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the

door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

The Golden Rule

¹² "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

The Narrow Gate

¹³ "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell* is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

²¹ "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.

6:33 Some manuscripts do not include *of God*. 7:2a Or *For God will judge you as you judge others*. 7:2b Or *The measure you give will be the measure you get back*. 7:3 Greek *your brother's eye*; also in 7:5. 7:4 Greek *your brother*. 7:6 Greek *Don't give the sacred to dogs*. 7:13 Greek *The road that leads to destruction*.

²² On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' ²³ But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

Building on a Solid Foundation

²⁴ "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

8 Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. ² Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. "Lord," the man

said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean."

³ Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him, "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy.* This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

The Faith of a Roman Officer

⁵ When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer* came and pleaded with him, ⁶ "Lord, my young servant* lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain."

⁷ Jesus said, "I will come and heal him."

⁸ But the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, "I tell you the truth,

8:4 See Lev 14:2-32. 8:5 Greek *a centurion*; similarly in 8:8, 13. 8:6 Or *child*; also in 8:13.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 7:24-27—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

In this short parable Jesus pinpoints two primary sources for the bad things we experience in life. First, we all experience "rains" and "floodwaters" and "torrents" and "wind" in our life—they "beat against" our metaphorical "house." No matter what sort of foundation we've built for our "house," or our life, we're still going to experience hard things. That's because hard things happen to everyone—we live in a broken world, and things won't be right until we're finally in the presence of God in heaven. But Jesus points to a second source of the hard things we experience in life: Sometimes we build a poor foundation for our life, a foundation that ignores what Jesus says and does. We build on whatever seems right to us, and it probably looks good from a distance, but when a hard storm comes our "house" falls down. When we hear—really hear—what Jesus is saying, and do what he says, we build a strong foundation for our life that can withstand the "storms."

I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!¹¹ And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven.¹² But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

¹³ Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, “Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened.” And the young servant was healed that same hour.

Jesus Heals Many People

¹⁴ When Jesus arrived at Peter's house, Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever.¹⁵ But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for him.

¹⁶ That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick.¹⁷ This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said,

“He took our sicknesses
and removed our diseases.”*

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he instructed his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake.

¹⁹ Then one of the teachers of religious law said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

²⁰ But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man* has no place even to lay his head.”

²¹ Another of his disciples said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.”

²² But Jesus told him, “Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead.”**

Jesus Calms the Storm

²³ Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples.²⁴ Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.²⁵ The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Lord, save us! We're going to drown!”

²⁶ Jesus responded, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!” Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.

²⁷ The disciples were amazed. “Who is this man?” they asked. “Even the winds and waves obey him!”

Jesus Heals Two Demon-Possessed Men

²⁸ When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes,* two men who were possessed by demons met him. They came out of the tombs and were so violent that no one could go through that area.

²⁹ They began screaming at him, “Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God's appointed time?”

³⁰ There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance.³¹ So the demons begged, “If you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs.”

³² “All right, go!” Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.

³³ The herdsmen fled to the nearby town, telling everyone what happened to the demon-possessed men.³⁴ Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus, but they begged him to go away and leave them alone.

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

9 Jesus climbed into a boat and went back across the lake to his own town.

² Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus

8:17 Isa 53:4. 8:20 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 8:22 Greek *Let the dead bury their own dead.*

8:28 Other manuscripts read *Gerasenes*; still others read *Gergesenes*. Compare Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26.

said to the paralyzed man, “Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven.”

³ But some of the teachers of religious law said to themselves, “That’s blasphemy! Does he think he’s God?”

⁴ Jesus knew* what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you have such evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵ Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? ⁶ So I will prove to you that the Son of Man* has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

⁷ And the man jumped up and went home! ⁸ Fear swept through the crowd as they saw this happen. And they praised God for giving humans such authority.

Jesus Calls Matthew

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹ But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?”

¹² When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” ¹³ Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.*’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

A Discussion about Fasting

¹⁴ One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, “Why don’t your disciples fast* like we do and the Pharisees do?”

¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom?

Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

¹⁶ “Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.

¹⁷ “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved.”

Jesus Heals in Response to Faith

¹⁸ As Jesus was saying this, the leader of a synagogue came and knelt before him. “My daughter has just died,” he said, “but you can bring her back to life again if you just come and lay your hand on her.”

¹⁹ So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. ²⁰ Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, ²¹ for she thought, “If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.”

²² Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, “Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³ When Jesus arrived at the official’s home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. ²⁴ “Get out!” he told them. “The girl isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.” But the crowd laughed at him. ²⁵ After the crowd was put outside, however, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she stood up! ²⁶ The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside.

Jesus Heals the Blind

²⁷ After Jesus left the girl’s home, two blind men followed along behind him, shouting, “Son of David, have mercy on us!”

²⁸ They went right into the house where he was staying, and Jesus asked them, “Do you believe I can make you see?”

“Yes, Lord,” they told him, “we do.”

²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, “Because of your faith, it will happen.”

³⁰ Then their eyes were opened, and they could see! Jesus sternly warned them, “Don’t tell anyone about this.” ³¹ But instead, they went out and spread his fame all over the region.

³² When they left, a demon-possessed man who couldn’t speak was brought to Jesus. ³³ So Jesus cast out the demon, and then the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed. “Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!” they exclaimed.

³⁴ But the Pharisees said, “He can cast out demons because he is empowered by the prince of demons.”

The Need for Workers

³⁵ Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

10 Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil* spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. ² Here are the names of the twelve apostles:

first, Simon (also called Peter),
then Andrew (Peter’s brother),
James (son of Zebedee),
John (James’s brother),

³ Philip,

Bartholomew,

Thomas,

Matthew (the tax collector),

James (son of Alphaeus),

Thaddaeus,*

⁴ Simon (the zealot*),

Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

⁵ Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: “Don’t go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, ⁶ but only to the people of Israel—God’s lost sheep. ⁷ Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.* ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!

⁹ “Don’t take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins. ¹⁰ Don’t carry a traveler’s bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don’t hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed.

¹¹ “Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town. ¹² When you enter the home, give it your blessing. ¹³ If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing. ¹⁴ If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.

¹⁶ “Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. ¹⁸ You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me.* ¹⁹ When you are

10:1 Greek *unclean*. 10:3 Other manuscripts read *Lebbaeus*; still others read *Lebbaeus who is called Thaddaeus*.

10:4 Greek *the Cananean*, an Aramaic term for Jewish nationalists. 10:7 Or *has come*, or *is coming soon*.

10:18 Or *But this will be your testimony against the rulers and other unbelievers*.

arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. ²⁰For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹"A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. ²²And all nations will hate you because you are my followers.* But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man* will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.

²⁴"Students* are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. ²⁵Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons,* the members of my household will be called by even worse names!

²⁶"But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. ²⁷What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when

daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

²⁸"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* ²⁹What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin*? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

³²"Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴"Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵ 'I have come to set a man
against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against
her mother-in-law.

³⁶ Your enemies will be right in
your own household!*

10:22 Greek *on account of my name*. 10:23 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 10:24 Or *Disciples*.

10:25 Greek *Beelzeboul*; other manuscripts read *Beezeboul*; Latin version reads *Beelzebub*. 10:28 Greek *Gehenna*.

10:29 Greek *one assarion* [i.e., one "as," a Roman coin equal to 1/16 of a denarius]. 10:35-36 Mic 7:6.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 10:25-28—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WILL EVERYTHING BE OK?

Jesus is no mere optimist—he doesn't try to pump us up with empty promises or sunny predictions about the future. He always tells it like it is, never shying away from hard realities. If he were always trying to "spin" reality for us, we'd quickly descend into fear because mere optimism has no real power to change our reality. And here he is painting a picture of reality for his disciples. They will face hard things as they go out in his name to bring his message of hope and redemption to people who need it, but they are to move in boldness, not fear. Everything, he says, will be exposed to the light in the end, and if the worst someone can do to us is kill our body, then we have nothing to worry about. If we believe we will live forever with him, then nothing—not even our physical death—can really destroy us.

³⁷ "If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine." ³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

⁴⁰ "Anyone who receives you receives me, and anyone who receives me receives the Father who sent me." ⁴¹ If you receive a prophet as one who speaks for God,* you will be given the same reward as a prophet. And if you receive righteous people because of their righteousness, you will be given a reward like theirs. ⁴² And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."

Jesus and John the Baptist

11 When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.

² John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, ³ "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting,* or should we keep looking for someone else?"

⁴ Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—⁵ the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor." ⁶ And he added, "God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.*"

⁷ As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. "What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? ⁸ Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with

expensive clothes live in palaces. ⁹ Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. ¹⁰ John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you.'*

¹¹ "I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is! ¹² And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing,* and violent people are attacking it. ¹³ For before John came, all the prophets and the law of Moses looked forward to this present time. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come.* ¹⁵ Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

¹⁶ "To what can I compare this generation? It is like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends,

¹⁷ 'We played wedding songs, and you didn't dance, so we played funeral songs, and you didn't mourn.'

¹⁸ For John didn't spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, 'He's possessed by a demon.' ¹⁹ The Son of Man,* on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!' But wisdom is shown to be right by its results."

Judgment for the Unbelievers

²⁰ Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his

10:41 Greek receive a prophet in the name of a prophet. 11:3 Greek Are you the one who is coming? 11:6 Or who are not offended by me. 11:10 Mal 3:1. 11:12 Or the Kingdom of Heaven has suffered from violence. 11:14 See Mal 4:5. 11:19 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

miracles, because they hadn't repented of their sins and turned to God. ²¹ "What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. ²² I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you.

²³ "And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead.* For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today. ²⁴ I tell you, even Sodom will be better off on judgment day than you."

Jesus' Prayer of Thanksgiving

²⁵ At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. ²⁶ Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

²⁷ "My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

²⁸ Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because

I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

A Discussion about the Sabbath

12 At about that time Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating them. ² But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, "Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath."

³ Jesus said to them, "Haven't you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. ⁵ And haven't you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath? ⁶ I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! ⁷ But you would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.'* ⁸ For the Son of Man* is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

⁹ Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, ¹⁰ where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked

11:23 Greek to Hades. 12:7 Hos 6:6 (Greek version). 12:8 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

J JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 11:28-30—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS LOVE?

The core definition of love is embedded in Jesus' invitation here—he's extending his arms to us when he says, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." At the core of Jesus' heart is a passionate determination to give those he loves a kind of rest that allows us to *fully relax*. Have you ever experienced unadulterated love from someone in your life? If you have, you know the kind of "rest" Jesus is talking about: fully accepted, fully enjoyed, and fully seen for who we are. Perfect love brings perfect rest, because we have nothing to fear and nothing to strive for.

Jesus, "Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?" (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.)

¹¹And he answered, "If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn't you work to pull it out? Of course you would. ¹²And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath."

¹³Then he said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored, just like the other one! ¹⁴Then the Pharisees called a meeting to plot how to kill Jesus.

Jesus, God's Chosen Servant

¹⁵But Jesus knew what they were planning. So he left that area, and many people followed him. He healed all the sick among them, ¹⁶but he warned them not to reveal who he was. ¹⁷This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him:

- ¹⁸ "Look at my Servant, whom
I have chosen.
He is my Beloved, who pleases me.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim
justice to the nations.
¹⁹ He will not fight or shout
or raise his voice in public.
²⁰ He will not crush the weakest reed
or put out a flickering candle.
Finally he will cause justice
to be victorious.
²¹ And his name will be the hope
of all the world."*

Jesus and the Prince of Demons

²²Then a demon-possessed man, who was blind and couldn't speak, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see. ²³The crowd was amazed and asked, "Could it be that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah?"

²⁴But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, "No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan,* the prince of demons."

²⁵Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, "Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. ²⁶And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided and fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive. ²⁷And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. ²⁸But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. ²⁹For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.

³⁰"Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me.

³¹"So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven—except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. ³²Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.

³³"A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad. ³⁴You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. ³⁵A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. ³⁶And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. ³⁷The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you."

The Sign of Jonah

³⁸ One day some teachers of religious law and Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove your authority."

³⁹ But Jesus replied, "Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah."

⁴⁰ For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

⁴¹ "The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent. ⁴² The queen of Sheba* will also stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here—but you refuse to listen."

⁴³ "When an evil* spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, seeking rest but finding none. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to the person I came from.' So it returns and finds its former home empty, swept, and in order. ⁴⁵ Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before. That will be the experience of this evil generation."

The True Family of Jesus

⁴⁶ As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, and they want to speak to you."*

⁴⁸ Jesus asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. ⁵⁰ Anyone who

does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"

Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed

13 Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. ² A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. ³ He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

"Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴ As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹ Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

¹⁰ His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"

¹¹ He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets* of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. ¹² To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. ¹³ That is why I use these parables,

For they look, but they
don't really see.

They hear, but they don't really
listen or understand.

¹⁴ This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says,

'When you hear what I say,
you will not understand.
When you see what I do,
you will not comprehend.

¹⁵ For the hearts of these
people are hardened,
and their ears cannot hear,
and they have closed their eyes—
so their eyes cannot see,
and their ears cannot hear,
and their hearts cannot
understand,
and they cannot turn to me
and let me heal them.*

¹⁶ "But blessed are your eyes, because
they see; and your ears, because they
hear. ¹⁷ I tell you the truth, many prophets
and righteous people longed to see what
you see, but they didn't see it. And they
longed to hear what you hear, but they
didn't hear it.

¹⁸ "Now listen to the explanation of
the parable about the farmer planting
seeds: ¹⁹ The seed that fell on the footpath
represents those who hear the message
about the Kingdom and don't understand
it. Then the evil one comes and snatches
away the seed that was planted in their
hearts. ²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil rep-
resents those who hear the message and
immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But
since they don't have deep roots, they
don't last long. They fall away as soon
as they have problems or are persecuted

for believing God's word. ²² The seed that
fell among the thorns represents those
who hear God's word, but all too quickly
the message is crowded out by the wor-
ries of this life and the lure of wealth,
so no fruit is produced. ²³ The seed that
fell on good soil represents those who
truly hear and understand God's word
and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or
even a hundred times as much as had
been planted!"

Parable of the Wheat and Weeds

²⁴ Here is another story Jesus told: "The
Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who
planted good seed in his field. ²⁵ But that
night as the workers slept, his enemy
came and planted weeds among the
wheat, then slipped away. ²⁶ When the
crop began to grow and produce grain,
the weeds also grew.

²⁷ "The farmer's workers went to him
and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted
that good seed is full of weeds! Where
did they come from?'

²⁸ "An enemy has done this!" the farmer
exclaimed.

"Should we pull out the weeds?" they
asked.

²⁹ "No," he replied, 'you'll uproot the
wheat if you do. ³⁰ Let both grow together
until the harvest. Then I will tell the har-
vesters to sort out the weeds, tie them
into bundles, and burn them, and to put
the wheat in the barn."

13:14-15 Isa 6:9-10 (Greek version).

J JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 13:24-30—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Here Jesus describes our life's reality: God has created a world full of goodness, but humankind has allowed sin to enter into that beautiful world and produce bad things (weeds) that grow up side by side with good things (wheat). Jesus tells us that bad things will surround us naturally, because he has decided to allow them to grow in the midst of good things. The reason: If we try to "pull out the weeds" ourselves, we will damage and destroy the "wheat" he's planted. Instead of focusing on the weeds, Jesus says, trust him to separate the ugly from the beautiful, and to save the beautiful for us. We cannot escape a world that produces bad things in our lives, but we can trust God to protect the beauty he's planted in our lives, and to nourish us with it.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

³¹ Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. ³² It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."

Parable of the Yeast

³³ Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."

³⁴ Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. ³⁵ This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet:

"I will speak to you in parables.
I will explain things hidden since
the creation of the world.*"

Parable of the Wheat and Weeds Explained

³⁶ Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, "Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field."

³⁷ Jesus replied, "The Son of Man* is the farmer who plants the good seed. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. ³⁹ The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world,* and the harvesters are the angels.

⁴⁰ "Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!"

Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

⁴⁴ "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. ⁴⁶ When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!"

Parable of the Fishing Net

⁴⁷ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. ⁴⁹ That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, ⁵⁰ throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ Do you understand all these things?"

"Yes," they said, "we do."

⁵² Then he added, "Every teacher of religious law who becomes a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven is like a homeowner who brings from his storeroom new gems of truth as well as old."

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

⁵³ When Jesus had finished telling these stories and illustrations, he left that part of the country. ⁵⁴ He returned to Nazareth, his hometown. When he taught there in the synagogue, everyone was amazed and said, "Where does he get this wisdom and the power to do miracles?" ⁵⁵ Then they scoffed, "He's just the carpenter's

13:35 Some manuscripts do not include *of the world*. Ps 78:2. 13:37 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.
13:39 Or *the age*; also in 13:40, 49.

son, and we know Mary, his mother, and his brothers—James, Joseph,* Simon, and Judas.⁵⁶ All his sisters live right here among us. Where did he learn all these things?”⁵⁷ And they were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

Then Jesus told them, **“A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family.”**

⁵⁸ And so he did only a few miracles there because of their unbelief.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 When Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee,* heard about Jesus,² he said to his advisers, “This must be John the Baptist raised from the dead! That is why he can do such miracles.”

³ For Herod had arrested and imprisoned John as a favor to his wife Herodias (the former wife of Herod’s brother Philip).⁴ John had been telling Herod, “It is against God’s law for you to marry her.”⁵ Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of a riot, because all the people believed John was a prophet.

⁶ But at a birthday party for Herod, Herodias’s daughter performed a dance that greatly pleased him,⁷ so he promised with a vow to give her anything she wanted.⁸ At her mother’s urging, the girl said, “I want the head of John the Baptist on a tray!”⁹ Then the king regretted what he had said; but because of the vow he had made in front of his guests, he issued the necessary orders.¹⁰ So John was beheaded in the prison,¹¹ and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother.¹² Later, John’s disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

¹³ As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns.

¹⁴ Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ That evening the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.”

¹⁶ But Jesus said, **“That isn’t necessary—you feed them.”**

¹⁷ “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!” they answered.

¹⁸ **“Bring them here,”** he said.¹⁹ Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave the bread to the disciples, who distributed it to the people.²⁰ They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers.²¹ About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

Jesus Walks on Water

²² Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home.²³ After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

²⁴ Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves.²⁵ About three o’clock in the morning* Jesus came toward them, walking on the water.²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, “It’s a ghost!”

²⁷ But Jesus spoke to them at once. **“Don’t be afraid,”** he said. **“Take courage. I am here!”***

²⁸ Then Peter called to him, “Lord, if it’s really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.”

13:55 Other manuscripts read *Jesus*; still others read *John*. 14:1 Greek *Herod the tetrarch*. Herod Antipas was a son of King Herod and was ruler over Galilee. 14:25 Greek *In the fourth watch of the night*. 14:27 Or *The ‘I AM’ is here*; Greek reads *I am*. See Exod 3:14.

²⁹ “Yes, come,” Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw the strong* wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. “Save me, Lord!” he shouted.

³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. “You have so little faith,” Jesus said. “Why did you doubt me?”

³² When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³ Then the

disciples worshiped him. “You really are the Son of God!” they exclaimed.

³⁴ After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ When the people recognized Jesus, the news of his arrival spread quickly throughout the whole area, and soon people were bringing all their sick to be healed. ³⁶ They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

J. REFRAMING JESUS

MATTHEW 14:13-18—FROM LIMITED TO UNLIMITED

We don’t always feel like we have what it takes in life—often, we’re trying to make the little we have go a long way. We work within the limitations of our resources and do our best. But when Jesus is forced to “work within the limitations of his resources,” we get one of the greatest miracles in the history of the world: the feeding of five thousand men, plus women and children.

First Jesus challenges his disciples to feed the massive crowd that has come to hear him. That’s like asking us, on the spur of the moment, to show up at a high school stadium and feed everyone there—somehow. The disciples are confused and anxious. How can they obey an impossible request?

And then Jesus takes the two fish and five loaves and multiplies them into a feast—everyone eats until they are full. Jesus makes our insufficiencies beyond sufficient. When we give him our limitations and our insufficiencies, he multiplies them into a feast. In the end, there were a dozen baskets of leftovers collected—one for each of the disciples, who didn’t think it was possible when they started. That’s the sly humor of Jesus showing itself.

When we face challenges that expose our limitations, Jesus wants us to remember that he gives sufficiency out of his own “good treasure”—he’s rich with it.

Jesus Teaches about Inner Purity

15 Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, ² “Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.”

³ Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? ⁴ For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’* and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’* ⁵ But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ ⁶ In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents.* And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote,

⁸ “These people honor me
with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
⁹ Their worship is a farce,
for they teach man-made ideas
as commands from God.”*

¹⁰ Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. ¹¹ It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you

14:30 Some manuscripts do not include *strong*. 15:4a Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16. 15:4b Exod 21:17 (Greek version); Lev 20:9 (Greek version). 15:6 Greek *their father*; other manuscripts read *their father or their mother*. 15:8-9 Isa 29:13 (Greek version).

are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth."

¹² Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?"

¹³ Jesus replied, "Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted, ¹⁴ so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch."

¹⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, "Explain to us the parable that says people aren't defiled by what they eat."

¹⁶ "Don't you understand yet?" Jesus asked. ¹⁷ "Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. ¹⁸ But the words you speak come from the heart—that's what defiles you.

¹⁹ For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. ²⁰ These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you."

The Faith of a Gentile Woman

²¹ Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Gentile* woman who lived there came to him, pleading, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely."

²³ But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. "Tell her to go away," they said. "She is bothering us with all her begging."

²⁴ Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel."

²⁵ But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, "Lord, help me!"

²⁶ Jesus responded, "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

²⁷ She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table."

²⁸ "Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "your faith is great. Your request is granted." And her daughter was instantly healed.

Jesus Heals Many People

²⁹ Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee and climbed a hill and sat down. ³⁰ A vast crowd brought to him people who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn't speak, and many others. They laid them before Jesus, and he healed them all. ³¹ The crowd was amazed! Those who hadn't been able to speak were talking, the crippled were made well, the lame were walking, and the blind could see again! And they praised the God of Israel.

Jesus Feeds Four Thousand

³² Then Jesus called his disciples and told them, "I feel sorry for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, or they will faint along the way."

³³ The disciples replied, "Where would we get enough food here in the wilderness for such a huge crowd?"

³⁴ Jesus asked, "How much bread do you have?"

They replied, "Seven loaves, and a few small fish."

³⁵ So Jesus told all the people to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He gave them to the disciples, who distributed the food to the crowd.

³⁷ They all ate as much as they wanted. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven large baskets of leftover food. ³⁸ There were 4,000 men who were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children.

WHY DID JESUS TREAT
THE DESPERATE CANAANITE
WOMAN SO HARSHLY, AND WHY
DID HE CHANGE HIS MIND?

(MATTHEW 15:21-28)

³⁹ Then Jesus sent the people home, and he got into a boat and crossed over to the region of Magadan.

Leaders Demand a Miraculous Sign

16 One day the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, demanding that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority.

² He replied, **"You know the saying, 'Red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow; ³ red sky in the morning means foul weather all day.' You know how to interpret the weather signs in the sky, but you don't know how to interpret the signs of the times!"** ⁴ Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign, but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁵ Then Jesus left them and went away.

Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

⁵ Later, after they crossed to the other side of the lake, the disciples discovered they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ **"Watch out!"** Jesus warned them. **"Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."**

⁷ At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn't brought any bread. ⁸ Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, **"You have so little faith! Why are you arguing with each other about having no bread?"** ⁹ Don't you understand even yet? Don't you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up? ¹⁰ Or the 4,000 I fed with seven loaves, and the large baskets of leftovers you picked up? ¹¹ Why can't you understand that I'm not talking about bread? So again I say, **"Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."**

¹² Then at last they understood that he wasn't speaking about the yeast in bread,

but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, **"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"***

¹⁴ "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

¹⁵ Then he asked them, **"But who do you say I am?"**

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,* the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, **"You are blessed, Simon son of John,* because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being."** ¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'),* and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell* will not conquer it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid* on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit* on earth will be permitted in heaven."

²⁰ Then he sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹ From then on Jesus* began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

²² But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him* for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned to Peter and said, **"Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous**

16:2-3 Several manuscripts do not include any of the words in 16:2-3 after *He replied*. 16:4 Greek *the sign of Jonah*. 16:13 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 16:16 Or *the Christ*. *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean "anointed one." 16:17 Greek *Simon bar-Jonah*; see John 1:42; 21:15-17.

16:18a Greek *that you are Peter*. 16:18b Greek *and the gates of Hades*. 16:19a Or *bind*, or *lock*. 16:19b Or *loose*, or *open*. 16:21 Some manuscripts read *Jesus the Messiah*. 16:22 Or *began to correct him*.

trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. ²⁸ And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom."

The Transfiguration

17 Six days later Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. ² As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. ³ Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I'll make three shelters as memorials*—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

⁵ But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him." ⁶ The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground.

⁷ Then Jesus came over and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." ⁸ And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

⁹ As they went back down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Don't tell

anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man* has been raised from the dead."

¹⁰ Then his disciples asked him, "Why do the teachers of religious law insist that Elijah must return before the Messiah comes?*"

¹¹ Jesus replied, "Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, but he wasn't recognized, and they chose to abuse him. And in the same way they will also make the Son of Man suffer."

¹³ Then the disciples realized he was talking about John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

¹⁴ At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, ¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

¹⁷ Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." ¹⁸ Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well.

¹⁹ Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?"

²⁰ "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.*"

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

²² After they gathered again in Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. ²³ He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead." And the disciples were filled with grief.

16:26 Or *your self*? also in 16:26b. 17:4 Greek *three tabernacles*. 17:9 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 17:10 Greek *that Elijah must come first*? 17:20 Some manuscripts add verse 21, *But this kind of demon won't leave except by prayer and fasting*. Compare Mark 9:29.

Payment of the Temple Tax

²⁴ On their arrival in Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax* came to Peter and asked him, "Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?"

²⁵ "Yes, he does," Peter replied. Then he went into the house.

But before he had a chance to speak, Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Peter?* Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered?*"

²⁶ "They tax the people they have conquered," Peter replied.

"Well, then," Jesus said, "the citizens are free! ²⁷ However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a large silver coin.* Take it and pay the tax for both of us."

The Greatest in the Kingdom

18 About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"

² Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. ³ Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. ⁴ So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁵ "And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf* is welcoming me. ⁶ But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.

⁷ "What sorrow awaits the world, because it tempts people to sin. Temptations are inevitable, but what sorrow

awaits the person who does the tempting. ⁸ So if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand or one foot than to be thrown into eternal fire with both of your hands and feet. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.*

¹⁰ "Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.*

Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹² "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do?

Won't he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost? ¹³ And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he will rejoice over it more than over the ninety-nine that didn't wander away! ¹⁴ In the same way, it is not my heavenly Father's will that even one of these little ones should perish.

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN
WHEN HE TOLD HIS DISCIPLES
THAT THEY SHOULD "BECOME
LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN"?

(MATTHEW 18:3)

Correcting Another Believer

¹⁵ "If another believer* sins against you,* go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. ¹⁶ But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

17:24 Greek *the two-drachma [tax]*; also in 17:24b. See Exod 30:13-16; Neh 10:32-33. 17:25a Greek *Simon?*

17:25b Greek *their sons or others?* 17:27 Greek *a stater* [a Greek coin equivalent to four drachmas]. 18:5 Greek *in my name*. 18:9 Greek *the Gehenna of fire*. 18:10 Some manuscripts add verse 11, *And the Son of Man came to save those who are lost*. Compare Luke 19:10. 18:15a Greek *If your brother*. 18:15b Some manuscripts do not include *against you*.

¹⁸ "I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid* on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit* on earth will be permitted in heaven.

¹⁹ "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. ²⁰ For where two or three gather together as my followers,* I am there among them."

Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor

²¹ Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone* who sins against me? Seven times?"

²² "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

²³ "Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. ²⁴ In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars.* ²⁵ He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

²⁶ "But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' ²⁷ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

²⁸ "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars.* He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

²⁹ "His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. ³⁰ But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

³¹ "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went

to the king and told him everything that had happened. ³² Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me.

³³ Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?'

³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

³⁵ "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters* from your heart."

Discussion about Divorce and Marriage

19 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went down to the region of Judea east of the Jordan River. ² Large crowds followed him there, and he healed their sick.

³ Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

⁴ "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'*" ⁵ And he said, "'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.'* ⁶ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."

⁷ "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?"* they asked.

⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended. ⁹ And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.*"

¹⁰ Jesus' disciples then said to him, "If this is the case, it is better not to marry!"

18:18a Or *bind*, or *lock*. 18:18b Or *loose*, or *open*. 18:20 Greek *gather together in my name*. 18:21 Greek *my brother*. 18:22 Or *seventy-seven times*. 18:24 Greek *10,000 talents* [375 tons or 340 metric tons of silver]. 18:28 Greek *100 denarii*. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer's full day's wage. 18:35 Greek *your brother*. 19:4 Gen 1:27; 5:2. 19:5 Gen 2:24. 19:7 See Deut 24:1. 19:9 Some manuscripts add *And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*. Compare Matt 5:32.

¹¹ “Not everyone can accept this statement,” Jesus said. “Only those whom God helps. ¹² Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry* for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.”

Jesus Blesses the Children

¹³ One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

¹⁴ But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.” ¹⁵ And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.

The Rich Man

¹⁶ Someone came to Jesus with this question: “Teacher,* what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

¹⁷ “Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep* the commandments.”

¹⁸ “Which ones?” the man asked.

And Jesus replied: “‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁰ “I’ve obeyed all these commandments,” the young man replied. “What else must I do?”

²¹ Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²² But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁴ I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

²⁵ The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked.

²⁶ Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”

²⁷ Then Peter said to him, “We’ve given up everything to follow you. What will we get?”

²⁸ Jesus replied, “I assure you that when the world is made new* and the Son of Man* sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.*

JESUS SAID IT WAS
VERY HARD FOR RICH PEOPLE
TO ENTER GOD’S KINGDOM,
BUT HE SOMETIMES LET PEOPLE
SPEND VAST SUMS OF MONEY ON
HIM—WHY?

(MATTHEW 19:16-30)

Parable of the Vineyard Workers

20 “For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay the normal daily wage* and sent them out to work.

³ At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing

19:12 Greek and some make themselves eunuchs. 19:16 Some manuscripts read *Good Teacher*.

19:17 Some manuscripts read *continue to keep*. 19:18-19 Exod 20:12-16; Deut 5:16-20; Lev 19:18. 19:28a Or *in the regeneration*. 19:28b “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 19:30 Greek *But many who are first will be last; and the last, first*. 20:2 Greek *a denarius*, the payment for a full day’s labor; similarly in 20:9, 10, 13.

nothing.⁴ So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day.⁵ So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.

⁶“At five o'clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’

⁷“They replied, ‘Because no one hired us.’

“The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’

⁸“That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first.⁹ When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day’s wage.¹⁰ When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day’s wage.¹¹ When they received their pay, they protested to the owner.¹² ‘Those people worked only one hour, and yet you’ve paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.’

¹³“He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage?’¹⁴ Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you.¹⁵ Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’

¹⁶“So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.”

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

¹⁷As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him.¹⁸ “Listen,” he said, “we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man* will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die.¹⁹ Then they will hand him over to the Romans* to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead.”

Jesus Teaches about Serving Others

²⁰Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor.²¹ “What is your request?” he asked.

She replied, “In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.”

²²But Jesus answered by saying to them, “You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?”

“Oh yes,” they replied, “we are able!”

²³Jesus told them, “You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no

20:18 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 20:19 Greek *the Gentiles*.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE’S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 20:1-16—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS LOVE?

We are a people driven by fairness—nothing irks us more than unfair treatment. We demand it, and we’ll go to war to make sure we get it. And here Jesus tells a parable that has at its core a great unfairness. A landowner pays laborers who’ve worked all day the same wage as those who’ve worked only one hour. *That’s so unfair*, complain those who’ve put in a full day’s work. And they’re right—grace is inherently unfair. But it is also the common currency of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is describing the near-indescribable love of God—it is shockingly generous. “Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?” For those who understand they deserve nothing, the grace of God is the greatest kindness they’ve ever experienced. For those who feel entitled to God’s love, his grace is a repulsive and infuriating unfairness.

right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen."

²⁴ When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. ²⁵ But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

²⁹ As Jesus and the disciples left the town of Jericho, a large crowd followed behind. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹ "Be quiet!" the crowd yelled at them.

But they only shouted louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³² When Jesus heard them, he stopped and called, "What do you want me to do for you?"

³³ "Lord," they said, "we want to see!"

³⁴ Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.

Jesus' Triumphant Entry

21 As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead.

² "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone asks what you are doing, just

say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them."

⁴ This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,

⁵ "Tell the people of Jerusalem,*

'Look, your King is coming to you.

He is humble, riding on a donkey—
riding on a donkey's colt.'"^{*}

⁶ The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it.*

⁸ Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting,

"Praise God* for the Son of David!

Blessings on the one who comes
in the name of the LORD!

Praise God in highest heaven!"^{*}

¹⁰ The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. "Who is this?" they asked.

¹¹ And the crowds replied, "It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹² Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves.

¹³ He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves!"^{*}

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them.

¹⁵ The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children

21:5a Greek *Tell the daughter of Zion*. Isa 62:11. 21:5b Zech 9:9. 21:7 Greek *over them, and he sat on them*.

21:9a Greek *Hosanna*, an exclamation of praise that literally means "save now"; also in 21:9b, 15.

21:9b Pss 118:25-26; 148:1. 21:13 Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11.

in the Temple shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David."

But the leaders were indignant. ¹⁶ They asked Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"

"Yes," Jesus replied. "Haven't you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, 'You have taught children and infants to give you praise.'"¹⁷ Then he returned to Bethany, where he stayed overnight.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹⁸ In the morning, as Jesus was returning to Jerusalem, he was hungry, ¹⁹ and he noticed a fig tree beside the road. He went over to see if there were any figs, but there were only leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" And immediately the fig tree withered up.

²⁰ The disciples were amazed when they saw this and asked, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?"

²¹ Then Jesus told them, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don't doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. ²² You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it."

The Authority of Jesus Challenged

²³ When Jesus returned to the Temple and began teaching, the leading priests and elders came up to him. They demanded,

"By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?"

²⁴ "I'll tell you by what authority I do these things if you answer one question," Jesus replied. ²⁵ "Did John's authority to baptize come from heaven, or was it merely human?"

They talked it over among themselves. "If we say it was from heaven, he will ask us why we didn't believe John. ²⁶ But if we say it was merely human, we'll be mobbed because the people believe John was a prophet." ²⁷ So they finally replied, "We don't know."

And Jesus responded, "Then I won't tell you by what authority I do these things."

Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ "But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ The son answered, 'No, I won't go,' but later he changed his mind and went anyway. ³⁰ Then the father told the other son, 'You go,' and he said, 'Yes, sir, I will.' But he didn't go.

³¹ "Which of the two obeyed his father?" They replied, "The first."^{**}

Then Jesus explained his meaning: "I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. ³² For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn't believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did."

21:16 Ps 8:2 (Greek version). 21:29-31 Other manuscripts read "The second." In still other manuscripts the first son says "Yes" but does nothing, the second son says "No" but then repents and goes, and the answer to Jesus' question is that the second son obeyed his father.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 21:28-32—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG?

In Jesus' parable of the two sons, he explores the dividing line between what is right and what is wrong. Those who *talk about* obeying God's will have little currency with him; but those who *actually do* right things, no matter what they've said they'll do or how they've lived their life, are the "true believers." In the Kingdom of God, actions really do speak louder than words. Right and wrong are determined by how we live our lives, not by talking a good game.

And even when you saw this happening, you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.

Parable of the Evil Farmers

³³ “Now listen to another story. A certain landowner planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. ³⁴ At the time of the grape harvest, he sent his servants to collect his share of the crop. ³⁵ But the farmers grabbed his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶ So the landowner sent a larger group of his servants to collect for him, but the results were the same.

³⁷ “Finally, the owner sent his son, thinking, ‘Surely they will respect my son.’

³⁸ “But when the tenant farmers saw his son coming, they said to one another, ‘Here comes the heir to this estate. Come on, let’s kill him and get the estate for ourselves!’ ³⁹ So they grabbed him, dragged him out of the vineyard, and murdered him.

⁴⁰ “When the owner of the vineyard returns,” Jesus asked, “what do you think he will do to those farmers?”

⁴¹ The religious leaders replied, “He will put the wicked men to a horrible death and lease the vineyard to others who will give him his share of the crop after each harvest.”

⁴² Then Jesus asked them, “Didn’t you ever read this in the Scriptures?

‘The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing, and it is wonderful to see.’*

⁴³ I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit.

⁴⁴ Anyone who stumbles over that stone

will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone it falls on.*”

⁴⁵ When the leading priests and Pharisees heard this parable, they realized he was telling the story against them—they were the wicked farmers. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowds, who considered Jesus to be a prophet.

Parable of the Great Feast

22 Jesus also told them other parables. He said, ² “The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. ³ When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come!

⁴ “So he sent other servants to tell them, ‘The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet!’

⁵ But the guests he had invited ignored them and went their own way, one to his farm, another to his business. ⁶ Others seized his messengers and insulted them and killed them.

⁷ “The king was furious, and he sent out his army to destroy the murderers and burn their town. ⁸ And he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren’t worthy of the honor. ⁹ Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.’ ¹⁰ So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ “But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn’t wearing the proper clothes for a wedding. ¹² ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?’ But the man had no reply. ¹³ Then the king said to his aides, ‘Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴ “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Taxes for Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees met together to plot how to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. ¹⁶ They sent some of their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to meet with him. "Teacher," they said, "we know how honest you are. You teach the way of God truthfully. You are impartial and don't play favorites. ¹⁷ Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

¹⁸ But Jesus knew their evil motives. "You hypocrites!" he said. "Why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Here, show me the coin used for the tax." When they handed him a Roman coin,* ²⁰ he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"

²¹ "Caesar's," they replied.

"Well, then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

²² His reply amazed them, and they went away.

Discussion about Resurrection

²³ That same day Jesus was approached by some Sadducees—religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They posed this question:

²⁴ "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies without children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother's name.'*

²⁵ Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children, so his brother married the widow. ²⁶ But the second brother also died, and the third brother married her. This continued with all seven of them. ²⁷ Last of all, the woman also died. ²⁸ So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her."

²⁹ Jesus replied, "Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God. ³⁰ For when the dead rise, they will neither

marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven.

³¹ "But now, as to whether there will be a resurrection of the dead—haven't you ever read about this in the Scriptures? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said,* ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'* So he is the God of the living, not the dead."

³³ When the crowds heard him, they were astounded at his teaching.

The Most Important Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"

³⁷ Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.'* ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

⁴¹ Then, surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question: ⁴² "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"

They replied, "He is the son of David."

⁴³ Jesus responded, "Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah 'my Lord'? For David said,

⁴⁴ "The LORD said to my Lord,
Sit in the place of honor
at my right hand
until I humble your enemies
beneath your feet.'*

⁴⁵ Since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord,’ how can the Messiah be his son?”

⁴⁶ No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Jesus Criticizes the Religious Leaders

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses.*

³ So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach.

⁴ They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

⁵ “Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels.*

⁶ And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. ⁷ They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’*

⁸ “Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters.* ⁹ And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your Father. ¹⁰ And don’t let anyone call you ‘Teacher,’ for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you must be a servant. ¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

¹³ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either.*

¹⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell* you yourselves are!

¹⁶ “Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you! For you say that it means nothing to swear ‘by God’s Temple,’ but that it

23:2 Greek and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses. 23:5 Greek They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. 23:7 Rabbi, from Aramaic, means “master” or “teacher.” 23:8 Greek brothers. 23:13 Some manuscripts add verse 14, What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, you will be severely punished. Compare Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47. 23:15 Greek of Gehenna; also in 23:33.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE’S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 23:1-36—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG?

What must have seemed to the Pharisees like a very long diatribe translates to a pinpoint listing of common “rights” that Jesus exposes as “wrongs.” They include:

- Saying one thing but doing the opposite
- Burdening others with unreasonable expectations
- Doing good things only to be noticed by others
- Seeking and even fighting for honors
- Thinking that greatness is defined by position and authority instead of humble service
- Using religiosity as a cover for victimizing the poor and needy
- Venerating earthly riches, and what they can buy, over the treasure of a relationship with God
- Giving the appearance of generosity and kindness while simultaneously neglecting “justice, mercy, and faith”
- Pointing out others’ minor flaws while ignoring your own major flaws
- Paying inordinate attention to your outer beauty while neglecting your inner beauty
- Proclaiming your innocence in the face of your obvious guilt

is binding to swear 'by the gold in the Temple.'¹⁷ Blind fools! Which is more important—the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred?¹⁸ And you say that to swear 'by the altar' is not binding, but to swear 'by the gifts on the altar' is binding.¹⁹ How blind! For which is more important—the gift on the altar or the altar that makes the gift sacred?²⁰ When you swear 'by the altar,' you are swearing by it and by everything on it.²¹ And when you swear 'by the Temple,' you are swearing by it and by God, who lives in it.²² And when you swear 'by heaven,' you are swearing by the throne of God and by God, who sits on the throne.

²³ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens,* but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!*

²⁵ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence!²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish,* and then the outside will become clean, too.

²⁷ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity.²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people,

but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build tombs for the prophets your ancestors killed, and you decorate the monuments of the godly people your ancestors destroyed.³⁰ Then you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would never have joined them in killing the prophets.'

³¹ "But in saying that, you testify against yourselves that you are indeed the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.³² Go ahead and finish what your ancestors started.³³ Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?

³⁴ "Therefore, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers of religious law. But you will kill some by crucifixion, and you will flog others with whips in your synagogues, chasing them from city to city.

³⁵ As a result, you will be held responsible for the murder of all godly people of all time—from the murder of righteous Abel to the murder of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you killed in the Temple between the sanctuary and the altar.³⁶ I tell you the truth, this judgment will fall on this very generation.

Jesus Grieves over Jerusalem

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.³⁸ And now, look, your house is abandoned and desolate.*³⁹ For I tell you this, you will never see me again until you say, 'Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

JESUS CALLED THE
PHARISEES "SNAKES,"
"WHITWASHED TOMBS," AND
"HYPOCRITES"—WHY WOULD HE
USE SUCH UNKIND NAMES?
(MATTHEW 23:1-33)

23:23 Greek *tithe the mint, the dill, and the cumin*. 23:24 See Lev 11:4, 23, where gnats and camels are both forbidden as food. 23:26 Some manuscripts do not include *and the dish*. 23:38 Some manuscripts do not include *and desolate*. 23:39 Ps 118:26.

Jesus Speaks about the Future

24 As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings.

² But he responded, “Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!”

³ Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, “Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?*

⁴ Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, ⁵ for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately. ⁷ Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

⁹ “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers.* ¹⁰ And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. ¹¹ And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. ¹² Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations* will hear it; and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration* standing in the Holy Place.” (Reader, pay attention!) ¹⁶ “Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. ¹⁷ A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. ¹⁸ A person out

in the field must not return even to get a coat. ¹⁹ How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. ²⁰ And pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. ²² In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones.

²³ “Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. ²⁵ See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it! ²⁷ For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man* comes. ²⁸ Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.*

²⁹ “Immediately after the anguish of those days,

the sun will be darkened,
the moon will give no light,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers in the
heavens will be shaken.*

³⁰ And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

³¹ And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the

24:3 Or the age? 24:9 Greek on account of my name. 24:14 Or all peoples. 24:15 Greek the abomination of desolation. See Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. 24:27 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 24:28 Greek Wherever the carcass is, the vultures gather. 24:29 See Isa 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10. 24:30 See Dan 7:13.

world*—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

³² “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ³³ In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door. ³⁴ I tell you the truth, this generation* will not pass from the scene until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

³⁶ “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself.* Only the Father knows.

³⁷ “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. ³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. ³⁹ People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

⁴⁰ “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

⁴² “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into.

⁴⁴ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

⁴⁵ “A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. ⁴⁶ If the master returns and finds that the servant

has done a good job, there will be a reward. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. ⁴⁸ But what if the servant is evil and thinks, ‘My master won’t be back for a while,’ ⁴⁹ and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? ⁵⁰ The master will return unannounced and unexpected, ⁵¹ and he will cut the servant to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

25 “Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids* who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ The five who were foolish didn’t take enough olive oil for their lamps, ⁴ but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. ⁵ When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ “At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’

⁷ “All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. ⁸ Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’

⁹ “But the others replied, ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ “But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked.

¹¹ Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’

¹² “But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’

IF JESUS WERE A GRAFFITI
ARTIST, WHAT MESSAGE
WOULD HE PAINT FOR OTHERS
TO SEE? EXPLAIN.

¹³ “So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

Parable of the Three Servants

¹⁴ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver* to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

¹⁶ “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

²¹ “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’*

²² “The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

²³ “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops

you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

The Final Judgment

³¹ “But when the Son of Man* comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations* will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

³⁷ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give

25:15 Greek *talents*; also throughout the story. A talent is equal to 75 pounds or 34 kilograms. 25:21 Greek *Enter into the joy of your master* [or *your Lord*]; also in 25:23. 25:31 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 25:32 Or *peoples*.

you clothing?³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?"

⁴⁰"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters,* you were doing it to me!'

⁴¹"Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.*'⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink.⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

⁴⁴"Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'

⁴⁵"And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'

⁴⁶"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

26 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ²"As you know, Passover begins in two days, and the Son of Man* will be handed over to be crucified."

³At that same time the leading priests and elders were meeting at the residence

of Caiaphas, the high priest, ⁴plotting how to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. ⁵"But not during the Passover celebration," they agreed, "or the people may riot."

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

⁶Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. ⁷While he was eating,* a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume and poured it over his head.

⁸The disciples were indignant when they saw this. "What a waste!" they said. ⁹"It could have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor."

¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, replied, "Why criticize this woman for doing such a good thing to me?¹¹ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me. ¹²She has poured this perfume on me to prepare my body for burial. ¹³I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

¹⁴Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests ¹⁵and asked, "How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?" And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

25:40 Greek *my brothers*. 25:41 Greek *his angels*. 26:2 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 26:7 Or *reclining*.

J. JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 25:31-46—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

Jesus establishes the ground rules for what really matters in life—what our life is really all about—by describing the standards he will use to invite some into his kingdom while denying admission to others: When we feed the hungry or give a drink to the thirsty or invite a stranger into our home or give clothing to the needy or visit the sick or imprisoned, we are not only caring for those who need help, but we are also literally caring for Jesus. What we do for the "least of these" defines our life.

The Last Supper

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal for you?"

¹⁸ "As you go into the city," he told them, "you will see a certain man. Tell him, 'The Teacher says: My time has come, and I will eat the Passover meal with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus told them and prepared the Passover meal there.

²⁰ When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table* with the Twelve. ²¹ While they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

²² Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one, Lord?"

²³ He replied, "One of you who has just eaten from this bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!"

²⁵ Judas, the one who would betray him, also asked, "Rabbi, am I the one?"

And Jesus told him, "You have said it."

²⁶ As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it, for this is my body."

²⁷ And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, ²⁸ for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant* between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many. ²⁹ Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."

³⁰ Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹ On the way, Jesus told them, "Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say,

'God will strike* the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

³² But after I have been raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there."

³³ Peter declared, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you."

³⁴ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me."

³⁵ "No!" Peter insisted. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, "Sit here while I go over there to pray." ³⁷ He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and he became anguished and distressed. ³⁸ He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹ He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

⁴⁰ Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!"

⁴² Then Jesus left them a second time and prayed, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away* unless I drink it, your will be done." ⁴³ When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open.

⁴⁴ So he went to pray a third time, saying the same things again. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said, "Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But look—the time

has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!"

Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested

⁴⁷ And even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸ The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss." ⁴⁹ So Judas came straight to Jesus. "Greetings, Rabbi!" he exclaimed and gave him the kiss.

⁵⁰ Jesus said, "My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for."

Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹ But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.

⁵² "Put away your sword," Jesus told him. "Those who use the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands* of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? ⁵⁴ But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?"

⁵⁵ Then Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there teaching every day. ⁵⁶ But this is all happening to fulfill the words of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures." At that point, all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus before the Council

⁵⁷ Then the people who had arrested Jesus led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of religious law and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and came to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and sat with the guards and waited to see how it would all end.

⁵⁹ Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council* were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death. ⁶⁰ But even though they found many who agreed to give false witness, they could not use anyone's testimony. Finally, two men came forward ⁶¹ who declared, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God—tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

⁶⁴ Jesus replied, "You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand* and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Blasphemy! Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your verdict?"

"Guilty!" they shouted. "He deserves to die!"

⁶⁷ Then they began to spit in Jesus' face and beat him with their fists. And some slapped him, ⁶⁸ jeering, "Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who hit you that time?"

Peter Denies Jesus

⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came over and said to him, "You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean."

⁷⁰ But Peter denied it in front of everyone. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

⁷¹ Later, out by the gate, another servant girl noticed him and said to those standing around, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."*

26:53 Greek twelve legions. 26:59 Greek the Sanhedrin. 26:64a Greek seated at the right hand of the power. See Ps 110:1. 26:64b See Dan 7:13. 26:71 Or Jesus the Nazarene.

⁷²Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath. "I don't even know the man," he said.

⁷³A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, "You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent."

⁷⁴Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know the man!" And immediately the rooster crowed.

⁷⁵Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "**Before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me.**" And he went away, weeping bitterly.

Judas Hangs Himself

27 Very early in the morning the leading priests and the elders of the people met again to lay plans for putting Jesus to death. ² Then they bound him, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

³ When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. ⁴ "I have sinned," he declared, "for I have betrayed an innocent man."

"What do we care?" they retorted. "That's your problem."

⁵ Then Judas threw the silver coins down in the Temple and went out and hanged himself.

⁶ The leading priests picked up the coins. "It wouldn't be right to put this money in the Temple treasury," they said, "since it was payment for murder."⁷ After some discussion they finally decided to buy the potter's field, and they made it into a cemetery for foreigners. ⁸ That is why the field is still called the Field of Blood. ⁹ This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah that says,

"They took* the thirty pieces of silver—

the price at which he was valued by the people of Israel,

¹⁰ and purchased the potter's field, as the LORD directed.*"

Jesus' Trial before Pilate

¹¹ Now Jesus was standing before Pilate, the Roman governor. "Are you the king of the Jews?" the governor asked him.

Jesus replied, "**You have said it.**"

¹² But when the leading priests and the elders made their accusations against him, Jesus remained silent. ¹³ "Don't you hear all these charges they are bringing against you?" Pilate demanded. ¹⁴ But Jesus made no response to any of the charges, much to the governor's surprise.

¹⁵ Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner to the crowd—anyone they wanted. ¹⁶ This year there was a notorious prisoner, a man named Barabbas.* ¹⁷ As the crowds gathered before Pilate's house that morning, he asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸ (He knew very well that the religious leaders had arrested Jesus out of envy.)

¹⁹ Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: "Leave that innocent man alone. I suffered through a terrible nightmare about him last night."

²⁰ Meanwhile, the leading priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. ²¹ So the governor asked again, "Which of these two do you want me to release to you?"

The crowd shouted back, "Barabbas!"

²² Pilate responded, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

²³ "Why?" Pilate demanded. "What crime has he committed?"

But the mob roared even louder, "Crucify him!"

²⁴ Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. The responsibility is yours!"

²⁵ And all the people yelled back, "We will take responsibility for his death—we and our children!"*

²⁶ So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

²⁷ Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters* and called out the entire regiment. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. ²⁹ They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" ³⁰ And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. ³¹ When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

³² Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene,* and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. ³³ And they went out to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull"). ³⁴ The soldiers gave Jesus wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it.

³⁵ After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.* ³⁶ Then they sat around and kept guard as he hung there. ³⁷ A sign was fastened above Jesus' head, announcing the charge against him. It

read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

³⁸ Two revolutionaries* were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

³⁹ The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. ⁴⁰ "Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

⁴¹ The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. ⁴² "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him!" ⁴³ He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, "I am the Son of God." ⁴⁴ Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. ⁴⁶ At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, * lema sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"*

⁴⁷ Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ⁴⁸ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. ⁴⁹ But the rest said, "Wait! Let's see whether Elijah comes to save him."*

⁵⁰ Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, ⁵² and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. ⁵³ They

27:25 Greek "His blood be on us and on our children." 27:27 Or into the Praetorium. 27:32 Cyrene was a city in northern Africa. 27:35 Greek by casting lots. A few late manuscripts add *This fulfilled the word of the prophet: "They divided my garments among themselves and cast lots for my robe."* See Ps 22:18. 27:38 Or criminals; also in 27:44. 27:46a Some manuscripts read *Eloi, Eloi*. 27:46b Ps 22:1. 27:49 Some manuscripts add *And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out flowed water and blood*. Compare John 19:34.

left the cemetery after Jesus' resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴ The Roman officer* and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵ And many women who had come from Galilee with Jesus to care for him were watching from a distance. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), and the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁷ As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus,

⁵⁸ went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And Pilate issued an order to release it to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a long sheet of clean linen cloth. ⁶⁰ He placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left. ⁶¹ Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb and watching.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶² The next day, on the Sabbath,* the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. ⁶³ They told him, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise from the dead.' ⁶⁴ So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we'll be worse off than we were at first."

⁶⁵ Pilate replied, "Take guards and secure it the best you can." ⁶⁶ So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it.

The Resurrection

28 Early on Sunday morning,* as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

² Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. ³ His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

⁵ Then the angel spoke to the women.

"Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He isn't here!

He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. ⁷ And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.

Remember what I have told you."

⁸ The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. ⁹ And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "**Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.**"

The Report of the Guard

¹¹ As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened.

¹² A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a

WOMEN DIDN'T ENJOY
THE SAME SOCIAL STATUS
AS MEN IN JESUS' TIME—SO
WHY DID HE FIRST APPEAR
TO TWO WOMEN AFTER HIS
RESURRECTION?

(MATTHEW 28:1-10)

large bribe.¹³ They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.'" ¹⁴ If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble."¹⁵ So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

The Great Commission

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus

had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, * baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

28:19 Or *all peoples*.

J JESUS ANSWERS LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 28:18-20—ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT'S MY PURPOSE IN LIFE?

Our purpose in life is summed up here by Jesus: We are to move in the authority Jesus has given us and invite others into a "disciple" relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching people to understand and obey the heart of Jesus' commands. And, he reminds us, we cannot do this on our own—he will be with us, no matter what.



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