

100 Stories of God

Introduction

These one hundred stories of God are presented chronologically, beginning in Genesis and laying the foundation of Creation, Adam and Eve, the Fall, etc. The stories in this book are central to the Biblical narrative that represent the Bible's main themes of redemption, restoration, and reconciliation and mission.

Many of the Old Testament stories here have been shortened so they can be told orally. For example the story of Noah is three chapters long in the Bible but here they are squeezed down to less than a page. It is then possible to tell the story of Noah in great detail. Also in making the text to be reproduced orally, pronouns have often been exchanged to the nouns they represent such as changing 'He' to 'Jesus,' or changing 'they' to 'the disciples,' etc. This helps explain exactly who is doing what when telling the story orally. This is a part of what is called 'crafting,' for clear understanding.

A few of the stories in the New Testament are compilations of the accounts given in the four gospels. Such is the story of Jesus' baptism where only Luke gives the dialogue between John and the people coming to be baptized, while only Matthew sets the overall context of Jesus coming out of Galilee to be baptized, and only in John 1:29 do we hear, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In this way oral learners receive a more complete picture of the story.

This set of one hundred stories is large enough to give an overview of the Scriptures from beginning to the end while short enough to let Christians or an oral learners catch a view of God's plan and purpose for themselves and for all the peoples of the world.

How to Use This Book

Jesus said, “You are truly my disciples if you continue in my word.” This book contains 100 Stories of God’s word and the purpose of this book is to help people learn the word of God by providing an overview of the most central stories of the Bible from beginning to end.

The book is created to be used in small groups such as men’s group, women’s groups, youth groups, or a family. A good number for a small group is four to six. If there are twelve people in your larger group, then it may be best to divide the group into two groups of six or three groups of four. This gives everyone more of an opportunity to join in the discussion.

One person reads or tells the story before the whole group. The stories have been prepared so that they can be told, remembered and retold orally. If the story is told, the storyteller should tell the story two times. Then one or two people retell the story in their own words. And then in the smaller groups they begin to discuss the story.

The way to discuss a story is by asking questions such as,

- Did you like the story?
- What did you like about the story?
- Was there anything in the story you didn’t like?
- Was there anything in the story you didn’t understand?
- What was the significance of *this* ?
- What was the meaning of *that* ?
- What was the purpose of *the other* ?
- What do we learn about God in this story?
- What do we learn about people in this story?
- What are the spiritual truths in the story we need to learn?
- What does the story say we ought to do?
- Who else do we know who should hear this story?

In discussing the story, if someone begins to stray from the text, the leader might ask, “Where did you see that in the story?” Try to keep the conversation to the story just told.

For discipleship, learning the stories chronologically is the best way. Then you can also draw from information in a previous story. You can always look back but it is better not to look ahead. This way everyone can participate in the discussion.

Application is the key to growing. The Bible says in 2 Peter 1:10, “For if you do these things, you will never fall.” Sanctification comes by doing, not just by knowing, but by obeying what God says to do.

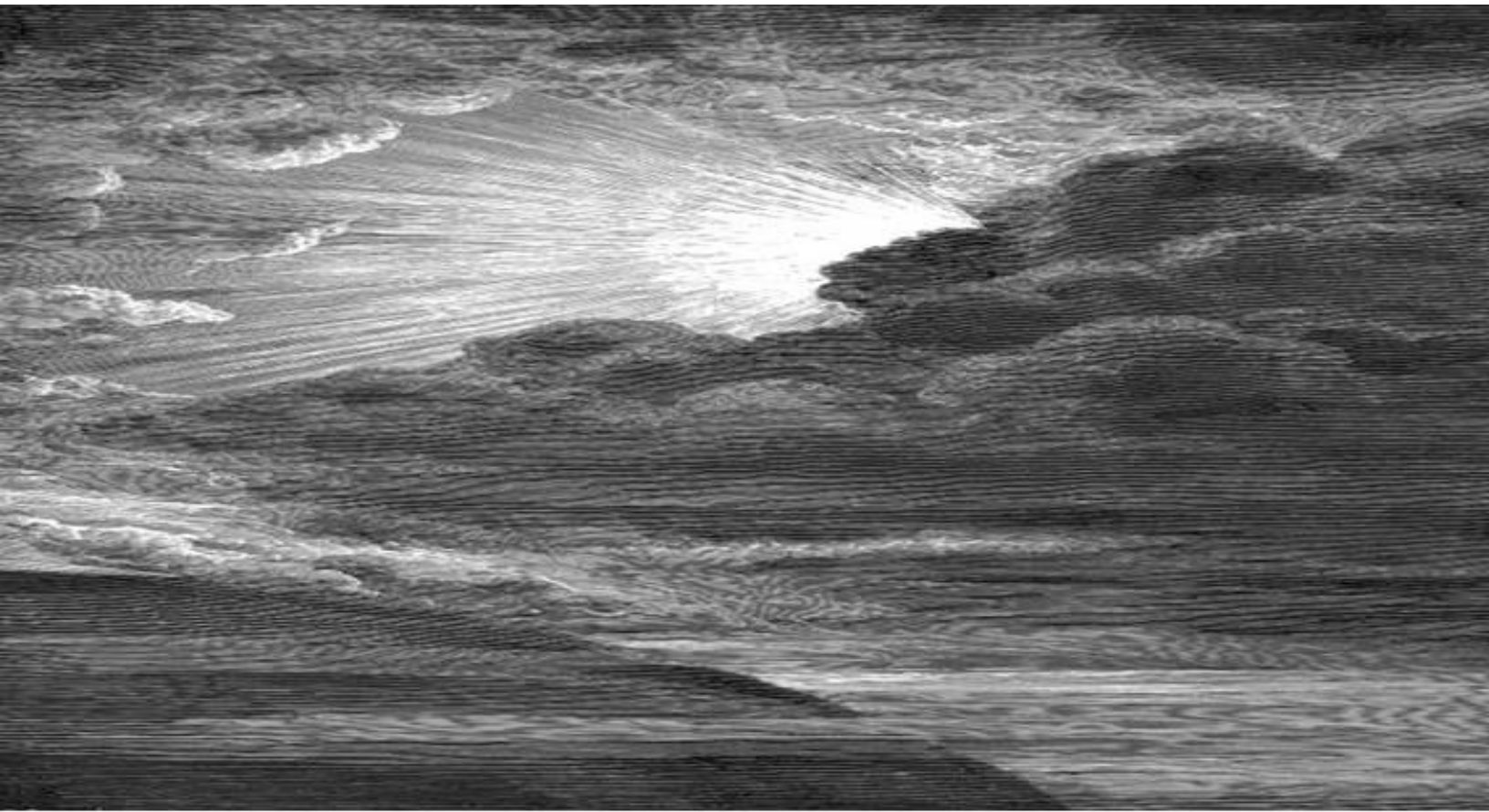
The leader is not to be the answer book for the group. He or she simply gets the conversation going by asking the various questions. Dig deep and learn to look to the word of God and the Holy Spirit for the answers to the questions... and then do what God says to do.

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Creation

Genesis 1

Introduction- The Bible begins with God introducing Himself to people by telling us how He made the world. So as we listen to this story we begin to learn what God is like by looking at the world He created.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was empty and without form, and darkness covered the waters, and the Spirit of God was moving over the waters. ³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵The light he called day and the darkness he called night.

⁶And God created the sky, ⁹and separated the sky from the waters under the sky. Then God separated the waters from the dry land and ¹¹God said, "Let the land produce vegetation- plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with the seed in it according to its kind." ¹²And God saw that it was good.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶God created the sun, the moon and the stars to be for light and for signs and seasons. ²⁰He created the fish according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. ²¹And God saw it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."

²⁵And God created the animals, each according to its kind and it was so. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the animals and over all the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and develop it."

²⁹Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air I give every green plant for food." ³¹And it was so. God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. And He finished the creation in six days.

Adam and Eve

Genesis 2

Introduction- This story looks more closely at the creation of man, and that God put man in a garden. What does this tell us about God? God also gave man a wife so we get a picture in this story of God's thinking about marriage.

And so the heavens and the earth were completed and on the seventh day God rested from all His work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. ⁷When God made the heavens and the earth He formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸⁻¹⁴Then God planted a garden called Eden with sweet smells and plants and trees and gold. And God made four rivers to flow from the garden and in the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵Then God took the man and put him in the garden to take care of it. ¹⁶And God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if you eat of it you will surely die." ¹⁸God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a help mate suitable for him." ¹⁹Then God brought all the animals to the man and whatever the man called the animal, that was its name. ²⁰But for the man, Adam, no companion was found.

²¹So God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, ²²God took one of the man's ribs and made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and He brought the woman to the man. ²³And the man said, "At last, this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." ²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. ²⁵The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

The Fall of Man

Genesis 3

Introduction- In this story we see the relationship between God and the man and the woman is broken and the world that God created is changed.

Now the serpent was more clever than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴"You will not die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and would make one wise, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But God called to the man, "Where are you?" The man answered, "I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid myself." ¹¹And God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹²The man said, "The woman You gave to be with me gave me some of the fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So God said to the serpent, "Cursed are you, on your belly you will crawl and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵And I will put hatred between your seed and the seed of the woman. He will crush your head, and you will bruise his heel."

¹⁶To the woman God said, "I will greatly increase your pains in child bearing and your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." ¹⁷To the man God said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you. It will bring forth both thorns and

thistles and through painful toil and by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, for you were taken from dust and to dust you will return.”

²⁰Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²²And God said, “The man now knows good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” ²³So God put the man and woman out of the garden and placed an angel with a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4

Now Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. ²Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³⁻⁵In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to God and Abel brought an offering from his flock. God looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. ⁶Then God said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door and it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

⁸Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then God said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” replied Cain. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Then God said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. ¹¹Now you are under a curse and must become a restless wanderer on the earth.” ¹³Cain said, “My punishment is too great to bear! Whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan and the Spirit World

Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28

Introduction- This story tells how Lucifer became Satan, the enemy of God and man.

O Lucifer, son of the morning, how you are fallen from heaven! ¹³For you said in your heart: ‘I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; ¹⁴I will be like the Most High.’ ¹⁵But in truth you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.” ^{Ez. 28:12}“You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God, on the day you were created. ¹⁴You were anointed as the guardian cherub. ¹⁵You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. ¹⁷Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom, so I threw you to the earth; I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God. Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this the one who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities?’ ¹⁹All tribes who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.”

Noah

Genesis 6, 7, 8, 9

Introduction- Sin began to spread throughout the earth bringing violence and death.

Men began to increase on the earth ⁵and the Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will remove mankind from the face of the earth - men and animals and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of God. Noah was a righteous man and Noah walked with God. ¹³So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. ¹⁴Make a boat, an ark, four hundred and fifty feet long. ¹⁶Make a roof for it and put a door in the side. ¹⁹"Two of every kind of creature will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹Take food and store it away for you and for the animals."

^{7:1-4}Then the LORD said, "Go into the boat, you and your whole family, and all the pairs of animals and also seven pairs of every kind of clean animal and bird, to keep them alive." ⁵Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, Noah entered the boat ¹⁶and God closed the door. ¹⁷For forty days it rained and the fountains of the deep burst open ¹⁹and all the highest mountains were covered by the water. ²³Every living thing that moved on the earth perished. Only Noah and those with him were left. ²⁴The waters covered the earth for a hundred and fifty days. ^{8:1}Then in Noah's six hundred and first year, the water dried up from the earth and ¹⁵God said to Noah, "Come out of the boat, you and all with you." ¹⁸So Noah and his wife and his sons and their wives, and all the animals came out of the boat. ²⁰Then Noah built an altar and taking some of the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings to the LORD.

^{8:21}Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, increase in number and fill the earth. Never again will I destroy all living creatures with a flood. ²²As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, day and night will never cease. ^{9:12}This is the sign I make, ¹⁶Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures on the earth."

Abram

Genesis 12, 13, 15

Introduction- After Noah and his sons and their wives came out of the boat, they began life again, and their descendants were scattered throughout the earth. Then God appeared to a man named Abram.

The LORD said to Abram, "Go, leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ²And I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and so you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and through you all the peoples on earth will be blessed."

⁴So Abram left just as the LORD had told him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran and his nephew Lot went with him. ⁵He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the servants they had acquired and they set out for the land of Canaan. ⁷And God appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ^{13:2}Then Abram became very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. ⁵Lot also had flocks and herds and tents so that the land could not support them while they stayed together. ⁸So Abram said, "Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." ¹⁰Lot saw the valley of the Jordan River was well watered, so Lot chose to go to the Jordan.

¹⁴After Lot had parted, the LORD said to Abram, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." ^{15:5}God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶And Abram believed God, and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness.

Sarai and Hagar

Genesis 16

Now Abram and Sarai had no children, and Sarai had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. You may sleep with my maid and perhaps I will obtain children through her.” So Abram slept with Hagar, and she conceived; and when Hagar realized that she had conceived, she looked down on her mistress, and Sarai was despised in her sight. So Sarai treated Hagar harshly, and Hagar ran away.

⁷Now the angel of the LORD found Hagar by a spring of water in the desert. ⁸And the angel said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.” ⁹Then the angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority. Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, for the LORD has heard your cries.” So Hagar called the Lord, ‘El Roi,’ which mean, ‘God sees.’ ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

The Promise and Birth of Isaac

Genesis 17, 18, 21

Introduction- After waiting twenty-five years Abraham’s life and the world are changed. Things have started to move.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless. ⁴My covenant is with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham. ⁶I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁸The land of Canaan I give to your descendants, and I will be their God. ¹⁰Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹It will be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.”

^{17:19}Then God said, “As for your wife, her name shall now be Sarah and she will be the mother of nations for she will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.” ^{18:18}“Abraham will become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹For I have chosen him, so that he will teach his children and his people to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, and the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He promised.”

^{21:1}Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as He had said, and ²Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age. ³Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁷Sarah said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22

Introduction- After some time, Abraham sent Ishmael away to establish his own lineage, leaving Abraham with his only son, named Isaac, the son of promise.

There came a time that God tested Abraham and said, “Abraham!” and he replied, “Here I am.” ²Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will show you.”

³Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. Abraham took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. ⁴On the third day Abraham saw the mountain and said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go up on the mountain. We will worship and then come back. As Abraham and Isaac went on together, ⁷Isaac said, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ⁸Abraham answered, “God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”

⁹When they reached the place God had told him, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on the altar. ¹⁰He reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham! ¹²Do not lay a hand on the boy, do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son.” ¹³Abraham looked up and in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide.

¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time and said, ¹⁶“By Myself I have sworn,” declares the LORD, “because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸and through your descendants all the nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Jacob and the Birthright

Genesis 25

Introduction- Isaac had two sons, one named Jacob which means “cheater,” and one named Esau.

Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca to be his wife. ²¹Because Rebecca was barren Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife and the LORD answered him and Rebecca conceived. ²³Then the LORD said to Rebecca, “Two nations are in your womb. One people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.” ²⁴When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, ²⁵the first child came out red and hairy; and they named him Esau. ²⁶Then his brother came out holding on to Esau’s heel, so they named him Jacob; Isaac was sixty years old when Rebecca gave birth.

²⁷Esau became a skillful hunter, but Jacob was a peaceful man who stayed at home. ²⁸Esau was Isaac’s favorite because he liked to eat the meat that Esau hunted, but Rebecca loved Jacob. ²⁹One day Esau came in from the field, and Jacob was boiling some soup, and Esau said to Jacob, “Give me some of that red soup, for I am hungry!” ³¹Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” ³²Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” So Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for one bowl of soup. ³⁴Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Jacob and the Stolen Blessing

Genesis 27, 28

When Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, ²“My son, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. ³Now then, please go out to hunt ⁴and prepare a meal for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat it and bless you before I die.” ⁵ Rebecca was listening while Isaac spoke to Esau and when Esau had gone, she said to Jacob, ⁹“Go now to the flock and bring me two young goats that I may prepare them for your father. Then you shall bring it to your father, ¹⁰so that he may bless you before his death.”

¹⁵Then Rebecca took the best garments of Esau her elder son, and put them on Jacob. ¹⁶And she put the skins of young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob. ¹⁸Then Jacob came to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” ¹⁹Jacob said, “I am Esau your firstborn. Please, sit and eat that you may bless me.” ²²Isaac said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. ²⁴Are you really my son Esau?” And Jacob said, “I am.” ²⁶So Isaac said, “Please come close and kiss me, my son.” ²⁷And when Isaac smelled Jacob’s clothes, he blessed Jacob and said, “The smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. ²⁸Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine; ²⁹may peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you.”

³⁰Now as soon as Isaac had finished the blessing and Jacob had gone out, Esau came in from hunting and brought the food to Isaac; saying, ³¹“My father, arise and eat that you may bless me.” ³²Isaac said, “Who are you?” And Esau said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.” ³³Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, “Who then brought me food, and I ate of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.” ³⁴Then Esau cried out with a great and bitter cry, and said, “Bless me also, O my father!” ³⁵Isaac said, “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.”

⁴¹So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because his father had blessed him; and Esau said, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” ⁴²Now the words of Esau were reported to Rebecca. ^{28:5} So Isaac sent Jacob away to live with Rebecca’s brother Laban.

Jacob’s Dream

Genesis 28

Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and as the sun had set took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹²He had a dream, and there was a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were going up and down on it. ¹³And the LORD stood above and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.”

Jacob in Haran

Genesis 29, 30, 31

Jacob journeyed until he arrived at Haran. ¹³As soon as his uncle Laban heard the news, he ran to meet Jacob and embraced him. ¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters, Leah, who was older had weak eyes, and Rachel, who was beautiful. ¹⁸Jacob loved Rachel and ¹⁹agreed to serve Laban seven years for Rachel. Because of his love, they seemed to him but a few days. ²¹Jacob said, “My time is completed. Give me my wife.” ²²So Laban gathered the people and made a feast. ²³But that night he brought his daughter Leah to Jacob. In the morning, behold it was Leah! And Jacob said, “Why did you deceive me?” ²⁶Laban replied, “In our country, it is not done to give the younger before the older. ²⁷But agree to serve me another seven years and I will give you Rachel as well.” ²⁸So Jacob took Rachel also. But he loved Rachel more than Leah.

³¹Then the Lord opened Leah’s womb but Rachel was barren. ³⁵ And Leah conceived again and bore a fourth son, and said, “This time I will praise the Lord,” and she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing. ²⁰In all Leah bore Jacob six sons and ²¹one daughter.

^{30:1}Rachel became jealous of her sister ⁴and gave her maid to Jacob and her maid bore him two sons. ¹⁰Then Leah gave her maid to Jacob and she bore two sons. ²²And then God remembered Rachel and opened her womb and she bore a son and called him Joseph. ²⁵When Joseph was born, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me home.” ²⁷But Laban replied, “The Lord has blessed me because of you. Stay with me and name your wages.”

^{31:4}After some time, Jacob spoke with Leah and Rachel, “You know I have served your father faithfully, yet he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. The angel of God has appeared to me saying, ‘Arise and return home.’” ¹⁶His wives replied, “Do whatever God has said to you.” ¹⁷So Jacob took his wives and his children, herds and possessions, and they left while Laban was away shearing his sheep.

Jacob and Esau Reconciled

Gen 32

Introduction - Jacob lived with his uncle Laban for twenty years. This is the story of his return. He now had two wives, their two maids, eleven sons and one daughter.

Now Jacob returned from living with his Uncle Laban, and sent messengers to his brother Esau to say; ⁴ “Your servant Jacob sends a message to my lord that I am returning that I may find favor in your sight.” ⁶And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you with four hundred men.”

⁷Then Jacob was greatly afraid and he prayed, “O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and truth which You have shown unto me; for with only my staff I left home and passed over this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray from the hand of my brother Esau for I fear that he will come and attack me, and the mothers with their children. You said You will surely do me good, and make my descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered.”

¹³Then Jacob sent a gift to his brother Esau of hundreds of animals, sheep and goats, camels, cows, and donkeys. ²³That night, Jacob sent his wives and children over the Jabbok River. ²⁴And Jacob was left alone. ²⁵And there came a man who wrestled with Jacob until the break of the day. When the man saw that he did not overpower Jacob, he touched Jacob’s hip and knocked the hip out of joint. ²⁶And the man said, “Let me go, for the day breaks.” And Jacob said, “I will not let you go, except you bless me.” ²⁷And the man said, “What is your name?” And he said, Jacob. ²⁸Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but you will be called Israel: for you have strength like a prince with God and with men.” And the man blessed Jacob there. ³⁰And Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face, and yet I am alive.” ³¹And as Jacob passed over the river the sun rose upon him, and he was limping because of his hip.

^{33:1}Then Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw Esau coming with four hundred men. ³And Jacob bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. ⁴And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. ⁵And Esau lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, “Who are these with you?” And Jacob said, “The children which God has graciously given your servant.”

⁸And Esau said, “What is the meaning of all these animals you sent?” And Jacob said, “These are to find favor in your sight my lord.” ⁹And Esau said “Brother I have plenty, keep what you have.” ¹⁰But Jacob said, “No, if I have found favor in your sight, please receive this gift from my hand for when I saw your face it was as though I had seen the face of God because you were pleased with me.” ¹¹And so Jacob urged him and Esau took the gift. ¹⁶And Esau returned to his home.

Joseph the Dreamer

Genesis 37

Introduction- At the time of this story Jacob now has twelve sons, but he favors one over the others.

When Jacob’s son Joseph was seventeen years of age he was pasturing the flock with his brothers and Joseph brought back a bad report to their father about his brothers. ³Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all his sons and had gave him a many-colored robe. ⁴When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than them, they hated Joseph and could not speak a kind word to him.

⁵Then Joseph had a dream and said to his brothers, “Listen to this dream I had: ⁷We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.” ⁸His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us?”

⁹Then Joseph had another dream and he said, “This time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

¹⁰His father said, “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?”

¹¹So Joseph’s brothers were jealous of Joseph but his father remembered the matter.

¹⁸One day Joseph's brothers saw him coming in the distance and said, ¹⁹"Here comes that dreamer! ²⁰Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these water holes and say a ferocious animal ate him." ²⁴So they took Joseph and threw him into a dry water hole.

²⁵As the brothers sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of traders coming and their camels were loaded, for they were on their way to Egypt. ²⁷One of the brothers said, "Come, let's sell Joseph to the traders and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. ²⁸So when the traders came, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the traders, and the traders took him to Egypt.

Joseph the Righteous Prisoner

Genesis 39

Introduction- Joseph's own brothers had sold him into slavery, but God was with Joseph.

In Egypt the traders sold Joseph to Potiphar, the captain of the guard of the King of Egypt. ²But God was with Joseph and prospered Joseph. ³When Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in Potiphar's eyes. ⁵Then Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his household, and entrusted everything he owned into his care. And then God blessed the household of Potiphar, the Egyptian, because of Joseph. ⁶Now Joseph was handsome, and Potiphar's wife said, "Come to bed with me!" ⁸But Joseph refused and said, "How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" ¹⁰But day after day Potiphar's wife spoke to Joseph.

¹¹One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and Potiphar's wife caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me." But Joseph ran out of the house leaving his cloak in her hand. ¹⁶She kept his cloak beside her until Potiphar came home. ¹⁷Then she told Potiphar this story: "That Hebrew slave tried to have sex with me. ¹⁸But I screamed for help, so he left his cloak and ran out of the house." ¹⁹When Potiphar heard the story his wife told him he burned with anger.

²⁰So Potiphar took Joseph and put him in prison. ²¹But while Joseph was in the prison, God was with him; and showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²²So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison. ²³Joseph was in charge of all that was done in the prison because God was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Joseph Becomes Governor

Genesis 41

Sometime later the King of Egypt, the Pharaoh, had a dream: He dreamed he was standing by the Nile River when suddenly out of the river came seven fat cows. ³After the fat cows seven ugly, skinny cows also came out of the river. ⁴And the thin ugly cows ate the seven fat cows and yet they still were ugly and thin. This startled Pharaoh and he woke up. ⁵Then Pharaoh had a second dream: This time seven healthy heads of grain were growing on a single stalk. Then seven thin heads of grain sprouted and the thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy heads. Then Pharaoh woke up. It was a dream. ⁸In the morning Pharaoh sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt and told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. ⁹⁻¹³Then Pharaoh was told by the chief cupbearer that a young Hebrew slave was in prison who could interpret dreams.

¹⁴⁻²⁴So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams and Joseph said, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what God is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are also seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain. ²⁸God has shown Pharaoh what he is

about to do. ²⁹Seven years of great abundance are coming to the land of Egypt, but they will be followed by seven years of famine.³³⁻³⁷ “And now let Pharaoh look for a wise man to put in charge of the land of Egypt to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. This food should be held in reserve to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt. ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so wise as you.” ⁴¹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” ⁴²Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck and had Joseph ride in a chariot. Thus the Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the whole land of Egypt. ⁴⁶Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Moses and the Burning Bush

Exodus 3, 7, 8, 9

Introduction - Joseph brought his father and their families to Egypt where there was food. Israel would stay in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. A new Pharaoh who did not know about Joseph came to power and began to oppress the children of Israel. One Israelite named Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s house but fled from Pharaoh into the wilderness.

Now Moses was taking care of a flock of sheep and he came to a mountain. ²The angel of God suddenly appeared to him from a burning bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.” ⁴Then God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” ⁵And God said, “Do not come any closer, take off your shoes, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I have seen the misery of My people and I have come down to rescue them and bring them into a good land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people out of Egypt.”

^{7:6} So Moses returned to Egypt and took his brother Aaron and went to Pharaoh and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and it became a serpent. ¹¹Then the magicians of Egypt threw down their staffs and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up the staffs of Pharaoh’s magicians. ¹³Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to Moses. ^{7:16} Moses said to Pharaoh, “The LORD says: Let my people go, that they may worship me.” ¹⁹Then Aaron raised his staff and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. ²¹The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad the Egyptians could not drink it. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

^{9:13} Then the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and say to Pharaoh, ‘Let my people go or I will send the full force of my plagues against you. ¹⁵For by now I could have stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. ¹⁶ But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you My power and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’”

The Passover and Exodus

Exodus 11, 12, 13

Introduction - The Lord brought ten plagues on the Egyptians. This story begins with the tenth plague.

The LORD said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt.” ^{12:21}Moses said to the elders of Israel, “Go and select an animal for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. ²²Put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. No one shall go out the door of his house until morning. ²³When the LORD strikes down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on your door and pass over your houses and not strike you down. ²⁴And you shall observe this Passover forever.”

²⁹At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt ³⁰and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. ³¹During the night Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people. Go, worship the LORD as you have requested.”

³⁷Now there were about six hundred thousand men of Israel on foot, besides women and children. ⁴⁰The Israelite people had lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. ^{13:21}And the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and night.

Crossing the Red Sea

Exodus 14

Introduction- Through one of history's greatest miracles, God destroyed the most powerful army in the world.

Then the LORD said to Moses, ²“Tell the Israelites to turn and camp by the Red Sea. ³Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around in confusion.” ^{14:5}Then the king of Egypt and his officials changed their minds and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!” ⁶So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. ⁷Pharaoh took six hundred chariots and pursued the Israelites, and overtook them as they camped by the Red Sea. ¹⁰The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹³Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you’ll see the salvation the LORD. The Egyptians you see today you’ll never see again.”

¹⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹⁶“Raise your staff and stretch your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.” ²¹So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind so the waters were divided, ²²and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

²³Then the Egyptians pursued them, and Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. ²⁶And the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” ²⁷And the water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen – the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

Bread from Heaven

Exodus 16, 17

Israel came into the wilderness on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. ²And the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, ³“Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day. ¹³That evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning ¹⁴there was a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶Morning by morning gather as much as you can eat. ³¹Now the house of Israel called its name manna. The taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put some of the manna in it, and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations.” ^{17:1}But there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink. Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵And the Lord said to Moses, “Take the staff with which you struck the Nile, and strike the rock at Horeb, and water will come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 19, 20

Introduction- Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt around 1446 B.C. Having been delivered out of Egypt the children of Israel have a new life and God now tells them the way they should live.

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt they came to the Desert of Sinai. Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain of Sinai. ³Then Moses went up the mountain to God, and the LORD said, "This is what you are to say to the people of Israel: ⁴"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you as if on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession and you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

⁷So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and told them all the LORD had commanded him to say. ⁸The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer to the LORD.

⁹Then God said to Moses, "In three days I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear Me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you. ¹⁰Go to the people and have them prepare themselves today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day I will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹²Put a boundary around the mountain. ¹³Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain."

¹⁴So Moses went down the mountain and spoke to the people, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵Then Moses said to the people, "Prepare your mind and heart for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."

¹⁶On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁹Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. So Moses went up and God said to him, "Go down and warn the people not to cross the boundary, not to force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish." So Moses went down and told the people.

^{20:1} And then God spoke all these words: ²"I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, your God, am a jealous God.

⁷"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

⁸"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall work but on the seventh day you shall rest.

¹²"Honor your father and your mother.

¹³"You shall not murder.

¹⁴"You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵"You shall not steal.

¹⁶"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

²²Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this: You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: ²³Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold and I will bless you."

The Spies

Numbers 13, 14

Introduction- The Israelites stayed at the mountain for one year receiving instruction concerning the tabernacle and living holy lives. Then God guided them toward the Promised Land.

The LORD said to Moses, “Send some men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.” So Moses sent one man from each tribe. ²⁵At the end of forty days the men returned from exploring the land and came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community in the desert. ²⁷They gave this account: “The land to which you sent us does flow with milk and honey! ²⁸But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of the giant Anak there.”

³⁰Then one of the men named Caleb said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” But the other men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” So they gave a bad report about the land they had explored saying, “All the people we saw there are of great size. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

^{14:1}That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! ³Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as captives.” ⁴And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” ⁶But Joshua and Caleb said, “If the LORD is pleased with us, he will give the land to us. ⁹Only do not rebel against the LORD.” ¹⁰But the whole assembly talked about stoning Joshua and Caleb.

God’s Answer

Numbers 14

Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. ¹¹The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat Me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in Me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? ¹²I will strike them down and I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.”

But Moses said to the LORD, ¹⁷“Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, for the LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished. ¹⁹According to your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”

²⁰The LORD replied, “I have forgiven them as you asked. ²²Nevertheless, none of the men who saw My glory and the miracles I performed in Egypt and in the desert ²³will enter the land I promised to their forefathers. ³¹But their children whom they said would be taken captive, I will bring their children to enjoy the land they have rejected. ³⁴But first for forty years – one year for each of the forty days they explored the land, their children will suffer in the desert because of their parent’s sins. ³⁸Only Caleb and Joshua will enter the land.”

Israel Crosses the Jordan

Joshua 1, 3, 4

Introduction- Israel remained in the desert for forty years. When Moses died he commissioned Joshua to lead the people to the Promised Land. The ark of the covenant the priests carried represented the presence of God. It was a gold plated box (45"x27"x 27"). In it were the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod which had blossomed, and a bowl of manna.

After the death of Moses, the LORD said to Joshua, ²"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River." ^{3:5}So Joshua told the people, "Prepare yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."

¹⁴The next day the priests carried the ark of the covenant ahead of the people to the Jordan River and as soon as the priests' feet touched the water's edge, ¹⁶the water from upstream stopped flowing and the water flowing down to the Salt Sea was completely cut off. ¹⁷So the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by on dry ground.

^{4:1}Then the LORD said to Joshua, ²"Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, ³and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight." ¹⁵Then the LORD said to Joshua, ¹⁶"Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to come up out of the Jordan." ¹⁸No sooner had the priests carrying the ark set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place as before.

²⁰And Joshua set up the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan at Gilgal. ²¹He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your children ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?' ²²tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' ²³The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what He had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over. ²⁴He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

Jericho

Joshua 2, 6

Then Joshua sent two spies to look over the city of Jericho. They entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab who ⁴hid them. Rahab said to them, ¹⁰"We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. ¹²Promise you will be kind to my family." ¹⁴The two spies assured her "our lives for your lives."

^{6:1}Now the city of Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. ²The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³March around the city with all the armed men. Do this for six days." ⁶So Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it. ⁷Advance! March around the city, with the armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD." And Joshua commanded the people, ¹⁰"Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout." ¹⁵On the seventh day, the Israelites marched around the city seven times and ²⁰ when the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and the wall of Jericho collapsed so every man charged straight ahead, and they took the city. ²¹They burned everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. ²²Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." ²⁷And the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

Israel Worships Idols

Judges 2, 3

Introduction- After the time of Joshua the people of Israel fell from following the Lord and began to worship the idols of the nations around them. This began a very confusing time in the history of Israel.

After Joshua died ¹⁰ and all his generation were gathered to their fathers, another generation arose who did not know the Lord. ¹¹ And the people of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the idol Baal. ¹² They abandoned the Lord who had brought them out of Egypt and went after other gods of the peoples around them, and bowed down to them. They provoked the LORD to anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. ¹⁴ and in his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist.

¹⁶ But the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning and He raised up judges to deliver them out of the hand of their enemies who plundered them. ¹⁹ But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them.

^{3:1}So the Lord left Canaanites in the land to test Israel, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord. ⁵And the people of Israel lived among these nations ⁶and took their daughters for wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and they served their gods. ⁷So the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the idols of Baal and the Asheroth.

Samuel the Prophet of God

1 Samuel 1,2,3,7,8,10

Introduction- Many years passed during the time of the Judges and Israel went up and down in their effort to remain true to God and follow His commandments. They were far from being a kingdom of priests telling the world about the true God. But the last Judge named Samuel was also a prophet, and he began to lead Israel back to God.

A man named Elkanah ² had two wives, one was named Hannah, and she had no children. ⁷So Hannah wept before the LORD and made a vow saying, "O LORD of hosts, if you will give your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life." ¹⁹And the LORD remembered Hannah²⁰ and she conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel. ²⁴ When she had weaned him, she took him up to the house of the LORD at Shiloh and brought her child to Eli the priest. ^{2:19} And his mother used to make a little robe for him and brought it to him at the yearly sacrifice.

^{3:19}And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground ²⁰and all Israel knew that Samuel was established as a prophet. ^{7:15} Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places.

^{8:1} When Samuel became old, ⁴ all the elders of Israel gathered together ⁵ and said to him, "Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel and he prayed to the LORD ⁷ and the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

^{10:1} Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on the head of Saul the son of Kish and kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies.

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17

Introduction- Saul became Israel's first king. But he was disobedient to God and when faced in battle by a giant over nine feet tall didn't know what to do. Then a young man named David stepped forward.

The Philistine army gathered their forces for war and ²Saul and the Israelites drew up their battle line to meet the them. ⁴Then a champion named Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. Goliath was a giant over nine feet tall and ⁸he stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Choose a man and have him come down to me and let us fight each other. I defy the ranks of Israel!" ¹¹Hearing these words Saul and all of his men were terrified.

¹²Now David was the youngest son of a man named Jesse and ¹⁵tended his father's sheep at Bethlehem. ¹⁷Jesse said to David, "Take these ten loaves of bread to your brothers who are fighting against the Philistines." ²³As David met his brothers, Goliath stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance. ²⁶So David said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" ³²David said to Saul, "Your servant will go fight this Philistine." ³³Saul replied, "You are only a boy." ³⁶But David said to Saul, "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear and this Philistine will be like them, because he has defied the armies of the living God."

⁴⁰Then David chose five smooth stones from the stream and with his sling he came toward the Philistine. ⁴²When Goliath saw that David was only a boy, he cursed David by his gods and said "Come here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air!" ⁴⁵David answered and said to the Philistine, "You come against me with a sword and a spear, but I come against you in the name of the LORD whom you have defied. ⁴⁶This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike off your head. Today the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel and God will give all of your army into our hands."

⁴⁸As the Philistine moved closer, David ⁴⁹reached into his bag and took a stone and slung it and struck Goliath on the forehead and he fell face down on the ground. ⁵¹Then David stood over the Philistine and took hold of Goliath's sword and cut off the giant's head. When the Philistines saw their hero was dead, they turned and ran. ⁵²Then the men of Israel shouted and pursued the Philistines and when Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, ⁵³they plundered their camp.

David Spares Saul's Life

1 Samuel 24

Introduction- As David's fame spread among the people, Saul became jealous and wanted to kill David.

Saul took three thousand chosen men and set out to look for David and his men in the wilderness. ³Saul came to a cave and went in to relieve himself not knowing that David and his men were in the back of the cave.

⁴David's men said to him, "This day the LORD has given your enemy into your hands." Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁶But David said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should lift my hand against Saul for he is the Lord's anointed." ⁷With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And so Saul left the cave and went his way.

⁸Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down to the ground. ⁹He said to Saul, "Why do you listen to men who say, 'David is trying to harm you?' ¹⁰This day the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave and some of my men wanted me to kill you. But I said, 'I will not lift my hand against the LORD's anointed.' ¹¹See, my father, look at this piece of your robe I cut off, but I did not kill you. See that I am not guilty of any wrong doing or rebellion."

¹⁶When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And Saul wept aloud. ¹⁷He said, "You are more righteous than I. You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. ¹⁸You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. ¹⁹May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. ²⁰I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. ²¹Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." ²²So David gave his oath and Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to their stronghold.

David and Psalm 23

Psalm 23

Introduction- David was a shepherd, a warrior, a king, and a poet known as the sweet Psalmist of God.

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters, ³He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Elijah and the Fire of God

1 Kings 18

Introduction- After David the kingdom became divided into Judah and Israel. There was a bad king over Israel named Ahab who married Jezebel daughter of the king of the Sidonians and encouraged the people to worship idols. So the Lord did not send rain for three years and then sent the prophet Elijah to confront Ahab.

When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" ¹⁸"I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you have by abandoning the LORD's commands and have followed the idol Baal. ¹⁹Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who eat at Jezebel's table."

²¹When the people were gathered together Elijah said to the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions?"

²⁶So the prophets of the idol Baal prepared their sacrifice and called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response. ²⁸So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. But there was no response, no one answered.

³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me," and they came to him and he repaired the altar of the LORD. Elijah ³¹took twelve stones and built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it.

³³He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to the people, "Fill four large water pots and pour the water on the offering and on the wood." ³⁴"Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. ³⁶At the time of sacrifice, Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷Answer me O LORD so these people will know that you are the one true God." ³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and even licked up the water in the trench. ³⁹When the people saw this, they fell to the ground and cried, "Yahweh! He is Elohim! Yahweh! He is Elohim!"

The Widow's Oil

2 Kings 4

Introduction- When Elijah was taken to heaven his authority went to Elisha, who started a school for prophets.

The wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that my husband feared the LORD and now the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."²Elisha said, "What do you have in the house?" And she said, "I have nothing in the house except a jar of oil."³Then he said, "Go, borrow large vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels; do not borrow just a few."⁴ Then go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour into all these vessels the oil you have, and set aside what is full."⁵So her sons brought the vessels to her and she shut the door and poured the oil. ⁶When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And her sons said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. ⁷Then the woman came and told the man of God, and Elisha said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest."

The Axe Head

2 Kings 6

The school of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. ²Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to live." And Elisha said, "Go."³Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?" "I will," Elisha replied. ⁴And he went with them. ⁵As one of the men was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water. "Oh, my lord," he cried out, "it was borrowed!" ⁶Elisha asked, "Where did it fall?" The man showed him the place, and Elisha cut a stick and threw it where the axe head had fallen, and the axe head floated to the top. ⁷"Lift it out," Elisha said, and the man reached out his hand and took it.

Naaman

2 Kings 5

Now Naaman was the commander of the army of Syria, and the king of Syria liked Naaman for he had given much victory to Syria. But Naaman had leprosy. ²Now a band of Syrians had taken a young girl from Israel captive, and gave her to Naaman's wife. ³The girl said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵"By all means, go," the king of Syria replied.

So Naaman took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothes. ⁹Naaman came to the house of Elisha the man of God. ¹⁰And Elisha sent a messenger to say to Naaman, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." ¹¹But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. ¹²Are not the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

¹³Naaman's servants went to him and said, "Master, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, when he tells you, wash and be clean." ¹⁴So Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became like that of a young child.

¹⁵Then Naaman with all his men went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant." ¹⁶Elisha the prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." ¹⁷"Then please let me be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD." ¹⁹"Go in peace," Elisha said.

Jonah

Jonah 1-4

The word of the LORD came to Jonah. ²“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” ³But Jonah ran away from the LORD and sailed for Tarshish. ⁴The LORD sent such a violent storm that the ship threatened to break up. ⁶The captain said to Jonah, “Get up and call on your god!” Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship Yahweh who made the sea and the land.”

¹⁰This terrified the men and they asked Jonah, “What should we do to make the sea calm?” ¹²Jonah said, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.” ¹⁵Then they threw Jonah overboard, and the raging sea became calm. ¹⁶At this the men greatly feared the LORD and offered sacrifices and made vows to him. ¹⁷But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

^{2:1}From inside the fish Jonah prayed ⁷“LORD, when my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, for salvation comes from the LORD.” ¹⁰And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

^{3:1}Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ²“Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim the message I give you,” ³and Jonah obeyed. Now Nineveh was a very important city ⁴and on the first day, Jonah proclaimed: “Forty days and Nineveh will be overturned.” ⁵The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. ⁶The king rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷Then he issued a proclamation, “Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. ⁹Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” ¹⁰God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, and had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened.

^{4:1}But Jonah became angry. ²He prayed, “O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” ⁴But the LORD replied, “Have you any right to be angry? ¹¹Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?”

Daniel in Babylon

Daniel 1

Introduction- Because Judah along with Israel continued to worship idols, God raised up Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon to take them captive. Daniel was taken captive and lived the rest of his life in exile, but was selected to serve in the court of four Kings.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ³And the king ordered some of the sons of Israel be brought in, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ⁴ youths who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

⁵ The king appointed a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. ⁶ Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

⁸ But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. The commander said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should the king see your faces looking more haggard than the other

youths? Then you would make me forfeit my head." ¹¹ But Daniel said ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

¹⁴ So the commander listened to them ¹⁵ and at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. ¹⁶ So the overseer continued giving them vegetables. ¹⁸At the time which the king had specified the commander presented Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; before Nebuchadnezzar ¹⁹ and out of all the youths not one was found like them, so they entered the king's personal service. ²¹ And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Daniel 6

Now Daniel so distinguished himself by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴The administrators and other leaders tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel but they could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and not negligent. ⁵Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." ⁶So they went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷The King's commissioners agree the king should issue an edict that anyone who prays to any god for thirty days, except to you, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ⁸Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered - in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing. ¹⁰Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home and prayed three times a day just as he had always done. ¹¹Then these administrators went and found Daniel praying. ¹²So they said to the king, "Did you not say for thirty days anyone who prays to any god except to you would be thrown into the lions' den?" ¹³Then they said to the king, "Daniel pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." ¹⁴When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. ¹⁵Then the administrators said to Darius, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."

⁶So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" ¹⁷A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.

¹⁸The king could not sleep that night, ¹⁹and at the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel has your God whom you serve been able to rescue you from the lions?" ²¹Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! ²²God sent his angel to shut the mouths of the lions and they have not hurt me."

²³The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the lion's den. No wound was found on Daniel, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴At the king's command, the men who had accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den and the lions overpowered them.

²⁵Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples of every language throughout the land: ²⁶ "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must reverence the God of Daniel for he is the living God and endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed and his dominion will never end. ²⁷He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in heaven and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

Grace Grace

Zachariah 4

Introduction: After seventy years in captivity, God had a king named Cyrus return Israel to their land. They came back in three groups. Zerubbabel led the first group and began to rebuild the temple. But after fourteen years the job was still not finished. So God gave the prophet Zechariah a vision to encourage Zerubbabel.

An angel awakened me, ²and said, “What do you see Zechariah?” I answered, “I see a gold lampstand and a bowl on top of it with seven pipes leading to seven lamps. ³Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” ⁴ And I asked the angel who talked with me, “What are these?” ⁵He answered, “Do you not know what these are?” “No, my lord,” I replied. ⁶So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty. ⁷‘What are you O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain. And he will bring forth the capstone with shoutings of, “Grace, grace to it!” ⁹The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. ¹⁰Do not despise the day of small beginnings, for the eyes of the Lord rejoice to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.”

Nehemiah

Nehemiah. 2, 4, 6

Introduction- The final phase of the exiles returning took place in the year 444 B.C. but the wall of Jerusalem was still in ruins. At this time the Persian ruler Artaxerxes appointed Nehemiah the governor over Jerusalem..

In the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, ⁶it pleased the king to send me to Jerusalem. ⁹After arriving in Jerusalem ¹³I began at night to examine the walls of Jerusalem which had been broken down, and its gates. ¹⁶No one knew where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or officials or any others. ¹⁷Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in- Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” ¹⁸They replied, “Let us rebuild,” and they began this good work.

¹⁹But when certain men of the surrounding nations, named Sanballat and Tobiah, heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us saying, ^{4:2}“What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? ³What they are building? If even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!” ⁴I prayed, “Hear us, O God, for we are despised. ⁶So the people worked with all their heart and rebuilt the wall till it reached half its height.

^{6:2}Then Sanballat sent me a message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages.” But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down.” ⁴Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer. ⁹And I prayed, “O Lord, now strengthen my hands.”

¹⁰One day a man said to me, “Let us go into the house of God and close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you.” ¹¹But I said, “Should a man like me run away? I will not go!” ¹²For I realized that God had not sent this man, but that Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him to intimidate me. Then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

¹⁵So the wall was completed in fifty-two days. ¹⁶When our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

New Testament

Gabriel's Announcements

Luke 1, Matthew 1

Introduction- The prophets had once foretold the birth of the seed of the woman, who came to be called the Messiah. More than four hundred years have passed since the time of Nehemiah, and no prophets have spoken since then.

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the Kingship of his father David, ³³and of the increase of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. ³⁷For nothing is impossible with God."

³⁹ Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

Mt. 1:18 Before Joseph and Mary came together, she was found to be with child. ²⁰Then an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2

Introduction- The Roman Empire had replaced the Persians as rulers over Israel. God now uses the emperor of Rome to fulfill His Word and bring about one of the most important days in history.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world ³and everyone went to the town of his ancestors to register. ⁴So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the city of David, because he belonged to the line of David. ⁵He went there with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶The time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸And there were shepherds out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ²⁰Then the shepherds glorified and praised God for all the things they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

The Baptism of Jesus

Luke 3, Matthew 3, John 1

When Pontius Pilate became governor of Judea, ²the Word of God came to a man named John. ³John began preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins ⁴as written in the book of Isaiah the prophet,

“PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.
²⁵EVERY VALLEY SHALL BE LIFTED UP, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN WILL BE BROUGHT LOW;
THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS MADE SMOOTH;
⁶AND ALL PEOPLES WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.”

^{3:4}John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan, and ⁶confessing their sins, they were baptized by John in the Jordan River. ⁷But when John saw Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You serpents, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Do not say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰And the crowds were asking John, ‘What shall we do?’ ¹¹And he would answer, ‘The man who has two sets of clothes is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do the same.’ ¹²And some tax collectors also came to be baptized and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ ¹³And John said to them, ‘Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.’ ¹⁴Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, ‘And what about us, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.’

¹⁵The people were waiting expectantly and wondering in their hearts if John the Baptist might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶John answered them, ‘I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.’

Mt. 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to prevent him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so for now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented and Jesus was baptized and the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove and a voice came from heaven, ‘This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.’ Jn.1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and John cried out, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’

The First Disciples

Mark 1

Introduction- Jesus was thirty years old when he began ministry. He began by calling men whom He would disciple.

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” ¹⁸At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹When he’d gone a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰He called them, and immediately they left their father Zebedee in the boat and followed him. ²¹They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²²The people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority and not as the teachers of the law. ²³Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!” ²⁵“Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶The evil spirit shook the man violently and with a shriek it came out of him. ²⁷The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey Him.” ³²That evening at sundown they brought to Jesus those who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³⁴He healed many who were sick and cast out many demons. ³⁹Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, casting out demons, healing the sick, and proclaiming the kingdom of God. Mt. 4:23

Healing the Paralytic

Mark 2

When Jesus again entered the town of Capernaum, so many people gathered that there was no room remaining in the house. ³Some men came, bringing to Jesus a paralytic carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get the paralyzed man to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus, and after digging through it, lowered the mat with the paralyzed man lying on it. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸Immediately Jesus knew in His spirit that this was what they were thinking, and He said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Get up and walk?’

¹⁰“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” Jesus turned to the paralytic and said, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹²Then the man who had been paralyzed got up, took up his mat and walked. The people were amazed and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

An Eye and a Rock

Matthew 5, 7

Introduction- The Old Testament teaches if someone breaks a man’s tooth, the victim may break the other’s tooth as a form of justice. Now Jesus begins to teach that men should not take vengeance when wronged.

You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,’ ³⁹but I say to you, whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰If anyone wants to take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴²Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. ⁴³You have heard it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

^{7:1}“Do not judge others so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged. ³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

^{7:12}“In everything therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you.

^{Mt 7:24}“Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

²⁶“But everyone who does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell – and great was its fall.” ²⁸When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Thy Kingdom Come

Matthew 6

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ²When you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

⁵When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. I say they have their reward in full. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ⁷And when you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him.

⁹“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Holy is your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily food. ¹²And forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’ ¹⁴“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins.”

A Roman Centurion

Mt. 8

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." ⁷ Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." ⁸ The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.

The Sower

Matthew 13

One day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ²Such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³Then He told them many things in parables, saying, "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants and they bore no fruit. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear."

Jesus Stills the Storm

Mark 4

Introduction - The story begins after Jesus had been teaching all day.

That evening Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' ³⁶Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along in the boat. ³⁷A furious storm came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it nearly turned over. ³⁸Jesus was in the boat, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up and cried out to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰Jesus said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Have you no faith?" ⁴¹The disciples were greatly afraid and asked, "Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him!"

The Gerasene Demoniac

Mark 5

Introduction – Jesus delivers a man possessed by demons. After people are healed they can serve, even Gentiles.

Jesus and his disciples went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ²When Jesus got out of the boat a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³This man lived in the tombs and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to control him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. ⁶When he saw Jesus he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!” ⁸For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!” ⁹Then Jesus asked, “What is your name?” ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’

¹¹A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside and the demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” ¹³He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd of about two thousand in number rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

¹⁴Then those tending the pigs ran and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶Those who had seen it told the people what happened to the demon-possessed man and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷The people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸As Jesus was getting into the boat the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.” ²⁰So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him. And the people were amazed.

A Touch of Faith

Luke 8:40-48/ Mt. 9:20-21

Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him. ⁴¹ Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴² for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds were pressing him. ^{Mt. 9:20} Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹ She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." ^{Lu 8:45} And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You." ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me."

⁴⁷ When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the whole truth why she had touched Him, and how she was immediately healed.

⁴⁸ And Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Feeding the 5000

Mark 6

The apostles came to Jesus and ³²together they went in a boat to a secluded place to be by themselves. ³³But people saw them going and many ran ahead of them on foot.

³⁴When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

³⁵When it was late, the disciples said, ³⁶“Send the people away so they may go buy something to eat.” ³⁷But Jesus answered, “You give them something to eat!” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?” ³⁸He said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Five loaves, and two fish.”

³⁹And He ordered them all to sit down on the green grass. ⁴⁰They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to divide among them all. ⁴²Everybody ate and were satisfied ⁴³and twelve baskets of the broken pieces were picked up. ⁴⁴There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

⁴⁶After bidding the crowd farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees

Matt 15:1-20

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" ³ Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' ⁵ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' ⁶ he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied about you: ⁸ "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'"

¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'"

¹⁵ Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, ¹⁷ "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? ¹⁸ But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰ These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10

Introduction- The Samaritan people and the Jews had a bad relationship as the Jews looked down on Samaritans.

One day an expert in the Jewish law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷The expert answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus said. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹But wanting to justify himself, the religious expert asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A Jewish priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²And a Levite, he too came to the place and saw him, but passed by on the other side.

³³"But a Samaritan traveling by came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after this man," he said, "and when I return, I will pay you back for any extra expense you may have."

³⁶Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "You go and do the same."

A Man with a Withered Hand

Matthew 12, Mark 2, 3

On a Sabbath day Jesus was going through the grain fields and his disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. ²When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” ⁷Jesus answered, “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”
Mk.2:27

Mt. 12:9 Then Jesus went into their synagogue and saw a man with a withered hand. Looking for an excuse to accuse Jesus they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” Mk. 3:3 So Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” ⁴Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

Mt. 12:11 Jesus said, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold and lift it out? ¹²How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” But they would not answer him a word and ⁵Jesus looked around at them with anger, deeply grieved at their stubborn hearts. ¹³Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched out his hand it was completely restored, just like his other hand. ¹⁴But the Pharisees plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Nicodemus

John 3

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher from God, for no one could perform the miraculous signs You are doing if God were not with Him.”

³“Truly, truly,” Jesus declared, “no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

⁴“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰“Are you Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and you do not understand these things? ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹⁴For just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whosoever believes in Him may have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

The Woman at the Well

John 4

Introduction- The Samaritan people and the Jews had no relationship as the Jews looked down on Samaritans.

Jesus left the region of Judea and went back once more to Galilee. ⁴Now He had to go through Samaria, and ⁶Jacob’s well was there. Jesus was tired from the journey and sat down by the well while his disciples went into the village to buy bread. ⁷It was about noon when a Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?”

⁹The Samaritan woman said to Him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹“Sir,” the woman said, “You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can You get this living water?” ¹³Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will become thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵The woman said, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to come here to draw water.”

¹⁶Jesus told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” ¹⁷“I have no husband,” she replied. “You are right when you say you have no husband,” Jesus said. ¹⁸“The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

¹⁹“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹Jesus declared, “Believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²³But the hour has come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” ²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (He who is called Christ) is coming. When He comes, he will explain everything to us.” ²⁶Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am He.”

²⁷Just then Jesus disciples returned from the town where they had bought food and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. ²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” ³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward Him. ³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”

⁴⁰When the Samaritans came to him they urged him to stay with them, and He stayed two days. And because of Jesus’ words many more became believers. ⁴²They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know this man really is the Savior of the world.”

You Are the Christ

Matthew 16

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say I am?” ¹⁴The disciples replied, “Some say, ‘John the Baptist;’ others say, ‘Elijah;’ and still others, ‘Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’” ¹⁵“But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

²¹From that time Jesus began to explain to his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. ²²Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. “Never, Lord this shall never happen to You!” ²³Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. ²⁶What good would it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his soul?”

Mary and Martha

Luke 10

Now as Jesus and his disciples were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹Martha had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His words. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Jesus and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Tell her to help me." ⁴¹But Jesus answered and said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things, ⁴²but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

The Lost Sheep

Luke 15

Now tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." ³Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

The Prodigal Son

Luke 15

There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the inheritance." So he divided his property between them. ¹³Not long after that, the younger son gathered all he had and set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷When the boy came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'" ²⁰So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." ²²But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

²⁵Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷"Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound."

²⁸The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, "All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

³¹"My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Lazarus and The Rich Man

Luke 16

Introduction- Jesus told this parable to Pharisees who were lovers of money.

Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.” ¹⁴The Pharisees, who loved money, heard this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to them, “You justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but what is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.” ¹⁹So Jesus told them a story. “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

²⁵“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ ²⁷“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, ²⁸for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

²⁹Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the writings of the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ³⁰‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18

To some people who trusted themselves to be righteous, and despised other people, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and one a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men – cheaters, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’

¹³“But the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” ¹⁴Then Jesus said, “I tell you, this tax collector went down to his house justified before God, and not the Pharisee; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Forgiveness

Matthew 18

Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” ²³“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king whose ²⁴servant owed him ten thousand dollars. ²⁵But the servant could not repay the debt and his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell to the ground saying, “Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.” ²⁷The lord of that slave felt compassion and forgave him the debt.

²⁸But that same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him two dollars and seized his fellow servant and began to choke him, saying, “Pay back what you owe.” ²⁹So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to

plead with him, saying, "Have patience with me and I will repay you." ³⁰But he was unwilling and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

³¹When the other slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³²Then calling in the steward, his lord said, "You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?" ³⁴And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵"My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

A Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. ⁴They said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do You say?" ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. ⁷When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁹Those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰Jesus asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹"No one, sir," she said. "Neither do I condemn you," Jesus said. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

The Man Born Blind

John 9

As Jesus left the temple He saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be revealed in him. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶Jesus then spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash at the pool of Siloam." So the blind man went and washed and came back seeing.

¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened the man's eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." ¹⁸So they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes.

²⁴So for the second time the Pharisees called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷The man who had been born blind answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where this man comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴And the Pharisees cast him out. ³⁵Jesus heard they had cast him out, and having found the man he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶The man answered, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is He who is speaking to you." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Him.

The Good Shepherd

Jn. 10

Truly, truly, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "He who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³ and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, ⁴ and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

⁷ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁹ If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved. ¹⁰ "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ¹² "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as my Father knows Me and I know my Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷ "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from my Father."

Raising Lazarus from the Dead

John 11

Now in Bethany, Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was dying. ³The sisters sent to Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." ⁷Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸The disciples said, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You." ¹⁶So Thomas said, "Let us go also, so that we may die with Him."

¹⁷When Jesus came He found Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁹Now many people had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." ²³Jesus said, "Your brother shall rise again." ²⁴Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies. Do you believe this?" Martha said, "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God."

Then when Mary saw Jesus, she fell at His feet, and said to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the people who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶And so the Jews were saying, "Behold how He loved him!"

³⁸Now the tomb was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, by this time there will be a smell, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" ⁴¹And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes and prayed to His Father and then cried out, "Lazarus, come forth." ⁴⁴Then Lazarus, who had died, came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The Rich Young Man

Mark 10, Mathew 19

As Jesus was going on his way, a young man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸“Why do you call me good? No one is good - except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.

²⁰“Teacher,” the young man declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

²¹“One thing you lack,” Jesus said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” ²²At this the young man’s face fell and he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Mt. 19:23 Jesus said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵The disciples were astonished, and said, “Then who then can be saved?”

²⁶Jesus said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

²⁷Then Peter said to Him, “We have left everything and followed You! What then will there be for us.”

Mk 10:29 And Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, everyone who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms for My name’s sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰will receive a hundred times as much in this present age and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.”

Workers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, “You also go work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” ⁵So they went.

He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. ⁶About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day long doing nothing?”

⁷“No one has hired us,” they answered. He said to them, “You also go and work in my vineyard.”

⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.” ⁹The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble at the landowner.

¹²“These men who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.”

¹³But he answered one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what is yours and go. I want to give to this last man the same as I gave to you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?”

¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first, last.

The Kingdom Leader

Matthew 20

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. ²¹"What is it you want?" He asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in your kingdom."

²²"You don't know what you are asking." Jesus asked, "Can you drink the cup I am to drink?"

"We can," they answered. ²³Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from My cup, but to sit at My right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

²⁴When the other ten disciples heard this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

²⁵Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶It is not to be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be servant of all, ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Zacchaeus

Luke 19

Introduction- Zacchaeus comes to know God and is restored to his community.

Jesus was passing through Jericho and there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus but he couldn't because of the crowd, for Zacchaeus was a very short man. ⁴So Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed into a tree to see Jesus. ⁵When Jesus came to the tree, He looked up and saw Zacchaeus, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." ⁶So Zacchaeus quickly came down, and received Jesus with joy. ⁷But when the people saw this, they all murmured and complained, saying, "He's gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

⁸Zacchaeus stopped and said, "Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by cheating, I give it back fourfold." ⁹And Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Bartimaeus

Mark 10

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷When Bartimaeus heard it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸Many of the people were telling him to be quiet, but Bartimaeus shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here."

And the people called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage and get up! He is calling for you." ⁵⁰And casting his cloak aside, he jumped up, and came to Jesus. ⁵¹And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to regain my sight!" ⁵²And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." Immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight with great rejoicing began following Jesus on the road.

The Triumphal Entry

Luke 19, John 12

Introduction- Jesus was not happy with the money changers who were cheating the foreigners and said, "My Father's house is to be a house of prayer for all nations but you have made it a den of thieves."

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, near the village of Bethany, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a young donkey tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" ³²And the two disciples went and found it just as Jesus had told them. ³³As they were untying the donkey, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴They replied, "The Lord needs it," and the owners permitted them to take the donkey. ^{Mk 11:6}³⁵And they brought the donkey to Jesus and put their garments on it; and He sat upon it. ³⁶And many spread their garments in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ³⁷When He came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen and they were crying out, ³⁸"Hosanna. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" ^{Jn.12:15}For it is written- "Behold, your King is coming, meek and sitting on a donkey's colt." ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" ⁴⁰Jesus replied, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, even the stones will cry out." ⁴⁵Then Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling and overturned the tables of the money changers and said to them, ⁴⁶"My Father's house is to be a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves." ⁴⁷And everyday Jesus was teaching in the temple. The chief priest and the teachers of the law were trying to kill Him ⁴⁸but they couldn't, because the people were hanging on every word that Jesus said.

Two Copper Coins

Luke 20

While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁶"Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. ⁴⁷They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers." ^{21:1}As He looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ²He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³"I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

The End of the Age

Matthew 24

As Jesus was leaving the temple the disciples pointed out to Him the beautiful buildings. Jesus said, "Do you see these things? There will not be one stone left upon another which will not be torn down." Later, as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Him, ³"What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" ¹²Jesus answered, "There will be wars and rumors of wars, false prophets, tribulation, famines and earthquakes, nation will rise against nation and lawlessness will increase. ¹⁴Nevertheless, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. ³⁶"Of that day and hour no one knows, not the angels, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰"Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴⁴For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. ⁴⁵"Who then are the faithful servants whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master finds so doing when he comes."

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Mt. 25

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² "Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶ "But at midnight there was a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." ⁷ "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ "The foolish said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." ⁹ "But the wise answered, "No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." ¹⁰ "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." ¹² "But he answered, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." ¹³ "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Mary Anointing Jesus

John 12, Matthew 26

Introduction- The celebration of Passover was near, and the family of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, held a feast in Jesus' honor.

Then six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there. Martha was serving and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?" ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to steal what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Leave this woman alone, she has kept this perfume for my burial. ⁸ The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." ^{Mt.26:13}

Washing the Disciples Feet

Jn. 13:1-15

Now it was just before the Feast of the Passover, and Jesus knowing that His hour had come and that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² As the evening meal was being served the devil prompted Judas to betray Jesus. ³ And knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴ Jesus got up from supper, and laid His garments aside; and taking a towel, He wrapped it around His waist. ⁵ Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel.

⁶ Simon Peter said, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." ⁹ Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹ For Jesus knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹⁴ Now that I have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

The Last Supper

Matthew 26, John 14

Then one of the twelve disciples, Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I hand Jesus over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty silver coins.

¹⁷In the evening of the Passover feast Jesus was at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.” ²²One after the other they said to him, “Surely not I, Lord?” Jesus replied, ²³The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.” ²⁵Then Judas said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.” When Judas took the bread, he went out.

²⁶While the disciples were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is My body.” Do this in remembrance of Me. ²⁷Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

^{Jn. 14:1}“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many places to stay; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And where I go you know, and the way you know.” ⁵The disciple named Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. ²¹Whoever obeys My commands, he is the one who loves Me. ^{15:12}This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ^{16:33} I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart! I have overcome the world. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ^{Mt 26:30}

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Matthew 22, Luke 26

When Jesus and his disciples arrived at the Mount of Olives, He told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of Me, for it is written- “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”

³³Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will.” ³⁴Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” ³⁵But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

⁴⁰Jesus said to them, “Pray that you do not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹Then Jesus withdrew from them a little and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” ⁴⁴And His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

^{Lk. 22:45}When Jesus rose from prayer a crowd came up, and Judas was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked, “Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” ⁵⁴And seizing Jesus, the temple guard and the elders led Him away and took Him into the house of the high priest.

⁵⁵Peter followed at a distance, but when the servants started a fire in the middle of the courtyard, he sat down with them. ⁵⁶A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with Him.” ⁵⁷But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know Him,” he said. ⁵⁸A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” “Man, I am not!” Peter replied. ⁵⁹An hour later another said, “Certainly this fellow was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

⁶⁰Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” As he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly.

⁶⁶At daybreak the council of the elders met together and said to Jesus, ⁶⁷“If You are the Christ, tell us.” Jesus said, “If I tell you, you will not believe Me, ⁶⁸and if I ask you a question, you will not answer.” ⁷⁰They all asked, “Are you the Son of God?” He replied, “You are right in saying I am.” ⁷¹Then they said, “We don’t need any more testimony. We have heard it from his own lips.”

The Crucifixion

Luke 23, John 18

Introduction- That night Jesus was arrested by the Jewish leaders, who then needed to get permission from the Roman government to put Him to death.

When the religious leaders rose from the trial and led Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. They said, "This man opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." ^{18:33}So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ³⁶ "My kingdom is not of this world," Jesus said. ³⁷ "So you are a king," Pilate replied.

"You are right in saying I am a king. For this reason I was born, and came into the world to testify to the truth." ³⁸Pilate said, "What is truth?" And he went out to the Jews, and said, "I find no fault in this man."

^{Lk. 23:21}But the chief priests stirred up the crowd and they shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" And the voices of the chief priests and the crowd prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate granted that Jesus be crucified. ²⁶The soldiers seized a man named Simon from Cyrene, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

³²Two criminals were also led out with Him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified Jesus along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." The soldiers cast lots for his clothing. ³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers laughed at Him. They said, "He saved others; let him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

³⁹Then one of the criminals hurled insults at Jesus: "If you are the Christ save Yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God? We are punished for what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." ⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise." ⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶Then Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," and breathed his last.

⁵⁰A member of the Jewish Council named Joseph of Arimathea, a good man who had not consented to the council's decision, asked Pilate if he could take the body of Jesus down from the cross and bury it. ^{Jn. 19:39}Nicodemus accompanied Joseph and they wrapped Jesus' body in a linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock in which no one had yet been laid. ^{Lk. 23:55}The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee watched where his body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes and rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

The Resurrection

Luke 24, Matthew 28, John 19, 20

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and came to the tomb. ⁴Suddenly two men in clothes that shined like lightning stood beside them and said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" ^{Mt. 28:5}You are looking for Jesus. He is not here; He has risen just as He said." ⁹So the women ran back from the tomb and told all these things to the apostles. ¹¹However the apostles did not believe the women. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb and there he found the linen cloth Jesus' body had been wrapped in, but he did not see the body of Jesus, and Peter went away wondering what had happened.

¹³ Now that same day two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus and ¹⁴ they were talking about the things that had happened. ¹⁵ Then Jesus came and walked along beside them ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. ²⁶ "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and the Prophets, he explained the Scriptures concerning himself. "

²⁸ As they approached the village they urged Jesus strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So Jesus went in with them. ³⁰ and when he was at the table He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and at once He vanished from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³ The two disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and found ³⁵ other disciples and told them what had happened on the road.

Jn. 19:1 That evening Jesus Himself came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Luke 24:37 The disciples were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at My hands and My feet and see that it is Me! Touch Me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones such as you see I have." *Jn. 20:20* Then the disciples rejoiced to see Jesus.

^{24:44} And Jesus said, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. ⁴⁶ The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ And now repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all the nations. *Mt. 28:19* Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. *Lk. 24:49* And I will send you what my Father promised."

Pentecost

Acts 2

Introduction- The church is born fifty days after Jesus was crucified and resurrected.

When the day of Pentecost came, the believers (about 200) were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ The disciples saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now staying in Jerusalem were God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ How is it that each of us hears them in our own native language?" ¹² And the people asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Others thought they were drunk and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the disciples, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. ¹⁶ This is what the prophet Joel foretold. ¹⁷ In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, both men and women; your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams ²¹ and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

²² "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man proven to you by God with miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This Man was handed over to you by the plan and purpose of God; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised Him from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this fact. ³⁶ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The Early Church

Acts 2

The new believers were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Every one kept feeling a sense of awe; and many signs and wonders were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all those who believed were together and had all things in common, ⁴⁵and began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness of heart, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Healing at the Beautiful Gate

Acts 3

Peter and John were going to the temple at the time of prayer in the afternoon. A man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When the crippled man saw Peter and John he asked them for money. Peter looked at the man and said, "Look at us!" So the beggar gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." ⁷And taking the beggar by the right hand, Peter helped him up, and instantly the beggar man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began walking and leaping and praising God.

⁹When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who had sat begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder at what had happened to him. ¹¹While the beggar clung to Peter and John, the people were all amazed and came running. ¹²When Peter saw this, he said, "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you look at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. ¹⁴You handed him over to be killed. You disowned him before Pilate. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead and we are witnesses of his resurrection. ¹⁶By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you now see and know has been made well.

¹⁷Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁹So now repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be forgiven, ²⁰and times of refreshing may come to you from the Lord. ²⁴All the prophets have foretold these days. ²⁵And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with Abraham saying, 'Through your descendants all the nations of the world will be blessed.'

Peter and John on Trial

Acts 4

While Peter and John were speaking ²the priests were greatly disturbed because the apostles were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John and put them in jail until the next day. ⁴But many people believed and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

⁵The next day the high priest and the rulers and elders had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are being asked how he was healed, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you crucified but Whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, and He has become the cornerstone. ¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given by which men must be saved."

¹³As the rulers and elders saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁸Then the rulers commanded Peter and John not to speak in the name of Jesus anymore. ¹⁹But Peter replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than Him? ²⁰We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." ²¹After further threats the rulers let them go because all the people were praising God for what had happened, ²²for the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

²³On their release Peter and John went back to their people and ³³with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴Owners of lands or houses sold them, ³⁵and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet to distribute to anyone in need.

The Stoning of Stephen

Acts 6-8

Now the apostles laid hands on seven men to be deacons, and Stephen, full of God's grace and power, was performing miraculous signs among the people. Then some Jews rose up against Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. ¹¹So they stirred up the elders and instigated false witnesses to say, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴for we have heard him say this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this temple and change the customs that Moses gave to us."

^{7:1}Then the high priest asked, "Are these charges true?" ²Stephen replied, "An angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai, ⁴⁴and our forefathers built the tabernacle in the desert as God directed Moses, ⁴⁷and Solomon built the temple. ⁴⁸Nevertheless, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. For the Lord says, ⁴⁹'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. What kind of house will man build for me? Where will my resting place be? ⁵⁰Has not my hand made all these things?'

⁵¹"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit, ⁵³you who have received the law but have not obeyed it."

⁵⁴When the Jews heard this, they were furious, ⁵⁵but Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and said, ⁵⁶"I see heaven open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

⁵⁷At this they covered their ears and yelling at the top of their voices, they rushed at him. ⁵⁸Then dragging Stephen out of the city, they began to stone him and those stoning Stephen laid their clothes at the feet of a man named Saul.

⁵⁹While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' ⁶⁰and fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them. ^{8:2}On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem,

Philip the Evangelist

Acts 8

Introduction - After the stoning of Stephen persecution broke out against the church and the believers were scattered, among them a disciple named Philip, who went into Samaria.

The believers who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵Philip went to a city in Samaria and ⁶when the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. ⁸So there was great joy in that city.

⁹Now a man named Simon practiced sorcery in the city and boasted that he was someone great. ¹²But as people believed the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the signs and miracles he saw.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵And when Peter and John arrived, they prayed for the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!

²¹You have no part in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

²⁴Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

An Ethiopian Believes in Jesus

Acts 8

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza." So Philip got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. This court official was in charge of the Queen's treasury and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. As he sat in his chariot, ⁹the Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

³⁰So Philip ran up and heard the Ethiopian reading the prophet Isaiah, and Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And the man said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of Scripture which the man was reading was this:

HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT,
SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. AND HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.

³⁴The Ethiopian asked Philip, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this of, himself or of someone else?"

³⁵Then Philip, beginning from this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. ³⁶As they went along the road they came to some water and the Ethiopian said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁷And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And the Ethiopian answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." ³⁸And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized the Ethiopian court official. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and he kept preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

The Road to Damascus

Acts 9

Meanwhile, a Pharisee named Saul was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who had begun to follow Jesus, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he was nearing Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" ⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. ⁶"I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. ⁷Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So the men traveling with Saul led him by the hand into Damascus and ⁹for three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus Jesus said to a disciple named Ananias, ¹¹"Ananias! Go to the street called Straight and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying." ¹³Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard many reports of this man, and he

has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name.” ¹⁵But Jesus said, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.” ¹⁷Ananias went and placed his hands on Saul, saying, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, Who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. ²⁰At once Saul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. ²²Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. ²³The Jews then conspired to kill Saul, ²⁵but the believers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through the wall. ²⁶When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took Saul to the apostles and told them how on his journey to Damascus he had met the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus Saul had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸So Saul, also known as Paul, stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

Cornelius

Acts 10

In the town of Caesarea there was a God-fearing Roman centurion named Cornelius who prayed regularly to God. ³One day an angel of God said to him, “Cornelius!” ⁴“What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon the tanner, by the sea.” ⁹About noon the following day Peter ¹⁰ became hungry and fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw a large sheet being let down from Heaven by its four corners. ¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” ¹⁴“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” ¹⁵The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times and ¹⁷while Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found Simon’s house and called out, asking if Peter was staying there. The Spirit said to Peter, “Three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” ²³The next day Peter and some of the brothers from Joppa arrived at Cornelius’s house in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁷Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸He said to them, “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.” ³⁴Then Peter said, “I now realize that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. ³⁸God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him. ³⁹We are witnesses of everything Jesus did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Jesus by hanging Him on a cross, ⁴⁰but God raised Him from the dead on the third day and caused Him to be seen. ⁴³All the prophets testify that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.” ⁴⁴While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷“Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” ⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul and Barnabas Commissioned

Acts 11, 13

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution of Stephen traveled far, telling the message only to Jews. ²⁰But others went to Antioch and began speaking to Greeks, telling them also the good news about Jesus, and a large number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²²So the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When Barnabas arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them to remain true to the Lord. ²⁵And then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and brought him to Antioch. For a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. ^{13:1}In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, ²and while they were worshiping the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

⁶They traveled to Paphos and met Sergius, the Roman proconsul, an intelligent man, who wanted to hear the Word of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹Then Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked at Elymas and said, ¹⁰"You child of the devil and enemy of everything that is right! You are full of deceit and trickery. ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you and for a time you are going to be blind." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

¹³From Paphos, Paul and his companions put out to sea and came to Pamphylia and then on to Pisidian. ⁴⁴In Pisidian almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord Paul was preaching. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the crowds they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting what Paul was saying. ⁴⁶Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly saying, "We had to speak the word of God to you first, but since you reject the word of God and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For the Lord has commanded us, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and many believed all who were appointed for eternal life. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord spread throughout the region.

The Council at Jerusalem

Acts 15

Some men from Judea came to Antioch and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." [Having returned from their travels,] Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with these men, and so the brethren appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others to go up to Jerusalem to ask the apostles and elders about this issue.

⁴When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

⁷Then Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that by my own mouth the Gentiles heard the word of the gospel and believed. And God gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. We believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, and in the same way they are also."

¹²Then all the people kept silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me, Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those turning to God from among the Gentiles, but write that they abstain from things contaminated by idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood." ²²And so the apostles at the council sent a letter to the brethren in Antioch and chose some of their own men to deliver the letter. When they arrived, they gathered the congregation in Antioch together and read the letter, and the church rejoiced because of its encouragement.

The Philippian Jailer

Acts 16

Paul and his companions traveled from town to town, delivering the decisions reached by the Council in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. ⁹One night Paul had a vision of a man calling to him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰At once they left for Macedonia. ¹³On the Sabbath they went to the river to pray and the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When Lydia and her household were baptized she invited us to her home saying, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." So she persuaded them.

¹⁶Once they were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and earned money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed them shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸Finally Paul turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" And the spirit left her immediately. ¹⁹When the owners of the slave girl realized their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²²The magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten, ²³and thrown into prison. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly a violent earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. The prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷The jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open, and drew his sword to kill himself thinking the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" ²⁹The jailer called for lights and rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household."

³²Then they spoke the word of the Lord to the jailer and all his house and ³³immediately the jailer and his family were baptized. ³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God. ³⁵At daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." ⁴⁰After Paul and Silas came out of prison, they met with the believers and preached to them once more, and then went on their way.

The Unknown God

Acts 17

In Athens, Paul was distressed to see the city full of idols. ¹⁷So Paul reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and in the marketplace with the philosophers. Some of the philosophers asked, "What is this babbler trying to say? He seems to be advocating foreign gods," because Paul was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.

²²Paul then stood up in the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see you are very religious. ²³For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription- 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Now what you worship as unknown I will proclaim to you. ²⁴"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵He is not served by human hands because He Himself gives to men life and breath. ²⁶From one man he made every nation so men would seek Him and find Him, "for He is not far from each one of us, and in Him we live and move and have our being." Even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed His offspring." ²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ²⁹"Therefore we should not think of God being like gold or silver or an image made by man. ³⁰In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people to repent. ³¹For He will judge the world by the man he has appointed by raising Him from the dead." ³²When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again." ³⁴But others believed and became followers of Paul.

Paul the Prisoner

Acts 26

Introduction- Sometime later, when Paul returned to Jerusalem, the Jews caused him to be put in prison. For his own safety Paul was then moved from Jerusalem to Caesarea on the coast. It was there that a highly educated Roman ruler named Agrippa wanted to hear Paul's testimony. The year was around 68 A.D.

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul said, ²"King Agrippa, ⁹I was once convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And on the authority of the chief priests I put many Christians in prison, and was on a journey to Damascus with the authority of the chief priests. ¹³On the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' ¹⁵I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, and it is not good for you fight against Me. ¹⁶Now get up. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a witness to the Gentiles, ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so they may receive forgiveness of sins by faith in me.'

¹⁹"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰I preached that all men everywhere, including Gentiles, should repent and turn to God. ²¹That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²²So I stand here and testify saying nothing more than what Moses and the prophets said would happen, ²³that the Christ would suffer, and as the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

²⁴At this point the Roman governor Festus interrupted Paul's defense and shouted, "Paul, you are out of your mind, your great learning is driving you insane."

²⁵"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," replied Paul. "What I am saying is true and ²⁶the king is familiar with these things for they were not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

²⁸Then Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." Paul replied, "Short time or long, I pray that not only you but all who hear my voice may become as I am, except for these chains."

³⁰The king arose, and with him the governor. ³¹The two left the room and were saying, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." ³²Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free except that he appealed to Caesar."

Revelation

Revelation 1, 4, 5, 7, 20, 21, 22

Introduction- The last book of the Bible was written by the apostle John in the year 96 A.D. Christians were being persecuted by the Roman government at this time and John was a prisoner on the island of Patmos. It was there that John received this vision and wrote this amazing letter to the body of Christ.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon take place. God sent the revelation by signs through an angel to His servant John.

⁸"I am the First and the Last," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Do not be afraid. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

^{4:1}After this I, John, looked, ²and there before me in heaven was one sitting on a throne. ³A rainbow encircled the throne ⁴and there were twenty-four elders seated on thrones. ⁶And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. ^{5:6}Then I saw a Lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing by the throne. ⁹And the elders sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."

^{7:9}And there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God. ⁶Then I heard the multitude shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.” ⁹Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’”

^{20:1}And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, ²and he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and he was thrown into the lake of fire where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. ¹³And the dead were judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. ¹⁵If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

^{21:1}Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, ³and a loud voice saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or crying or pain.” ^{22:1}Then the angel showed me the river of life. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

^{22:16}“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.” ¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Let him who hears come and take the free gift of the water of life.

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.



*Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock,
And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall,
because it had been founded on the rock, Matt 7:24-25*