

Stories to be Told

BibleTelling Seminars

Excerpted from
All the Stories of the Bible
crafted by John Walsh

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DAY #	DEPART-ARRIVE-DAY 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
DATE	April 14-16	April 17	April 18	April 19	April 20	April 21	April 22
DAY	Friday-Sat-Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AM	FRIDAY: Depart Overnight on plane SATURDAY: Arrive Overnight just outside Tel Aviv	Church of the Annunciation Synagogue/Church of the Annunciation	Mt. of Beatitudes, Trail down the Mt., "Eye of God," Tabgha – Primacy of Peter Church	Tel Hazor Tel Dan	Mt. Arbel Jezreel Gideon's Spring	En-gedi Masada	Milk Grotto Olive Wood Shop Church of the Nativity Church of St. Catherine
PM	SUNDAY: Sunday message Aquaducts, Caesarea Tel Megiddo Mt. Carmel April 16-20 Sea of Galilee	Galilee Spice Mill Nazareth Village Precipice Mountain Sea of Galilee	Capernaum Boat ride on Sea of Galilee, Magdala and Valley of the Doves Sea of Galilee	Caesarea Philippi Other side of the Sea of Galilee Yardenit – Jordan River Baptismal site Sea of Galilee	Box Lunch Tel Jericho Elisha's Spring Jericho	Dead Sea swim and float Camel Ride April 21-24 Bethlehem	Connect Café Shepherds Fields Shopping Bethlehem
In-Out HOTEL							
#	8	9	10	11	12	13/Depart/Jordan	14-16/Depart
DATE	April 23	April 24	April 25	April 26	April 27	April 28	April 29-May 1
DAY	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday-Monday
AM	Sunday message Shiloh (guided tour and lunch)	Tel Lachish Valley of Elah (David and Goliath) Box Lunch	Western Wall Temple Mount St. Anne's Church, Pool of Bethesda Ecce Homo Convent (Roof top in Old City)	Temple front steps Temple ruins Ramparts City of David Hezekiah's Tunnel Pool of Siloam Pilgrim's Road	Mount of Olives Tear Drop Church Garden of Gethsemane Upper Room	Leave for Home OR Jordan Extension: Travel to south Israel/ Timna National Park	SATURDAY: Petra Drive to Amman
PM	Sychar (Jacob's Well) Shechem (Tel Balata) Bethel	Beth Shemesh (Samson) Ark of the Covenant Saxon Center Emmaus Trail April 24-28 Jerusalem	FREE AFTERNOON: - Guided Walk: Via Dolorosa, Church of Holy Sepulcher - Or other options, e.g., Western Wall Tunnel Tour, Shopping	FREE AFTERNOON: - BUS RIDES to Israel Museum (w/Dead Sea Scrolls) or Yad Vashem(Holocaust) - Or many other options, e.g., Tower of David Museum	House of Caiaphas and Dungeon Valley of Hinnom Garden Tomb	Cross into Jordan (Rabin/Arava Crossing) Wadi Rum Jeep Ride Bedouin Camp April 28-29 Wadi Rum	SUNDAY: Citadel, Mt. Nebo, Machaerus, Sodom Cross into Israel near Jericho MONDAY: Leave for home April 29-30 – Amman April 30-May 1 Jerusalem
In-Out HOTEL	Bethlehem		Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Jerusalem		

This is a sample calendar for a BibleTelling Seminar in **Israel-Jordan**. It is not practical to visit every site and tell every story listed in this booklet. Each Seminar group determines which stories they tell and where they tell them.

DAY #	Day 1-2	3 Turkey	4	5	6	7	8
DATE	October 9-10	October 11	October 12	October 13	October 14	October 15	October 16
DAY	Monday-Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
AM	Monday Fly to Istanbul, Turkey	Istanbul Tour - Hagia Sophia - Hippodrome Square - Archeological Museum St. Irene Church	Fly to Izmir (Smyrna) Smyrna ruins Drive to Sardis Sardis excavations	Drive to Hierapolis Hierapolis excavations - Theater - Philip's Tomb Drive to Laodicea : - New excavations - Mosaics	Drive to Ephesus Ephesus ruins - Library of Celsus - Amphitheater - Terrace Houses Basilica of St. John Drive to Troas	Drive to Pergamum Pergamum Acropolis Drive to Troas	Ferry to Gallipoli Drive to Greece border - Drive to Neapolis (Kavala)
PM	Tuesday Arrive in Istanbul		Drive to Philadelphia Philadelphia excavations		Drive to Izmir		
In-Out	Boat tour along the Bosphorus						
HOTEL	October 10-12 Istanbul, Turkey		October 12-13 Pamukkale, Turkey	October 13-14 Kusadasi, Turkey	October 14-15 Izmir, Turkey	October 15-16 Canakkale, Turkey	October 16-17 Kavala, Greece
DAY #	9 Greece	10	11	12	13 Rome Extension	14	15-16
DATE	October 17	October 18	October 19	October 20	October 21	October 22	October 23-24
DAY	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday-Tuesday
AM	Egnatia Way at Kavala Drive to Philippi Philippi Ruins: River - Church Mosaic - Ruins - Prison Cell - Forum Theater	Drive to Berea - Synagogue - Paul memorial Return to Thessaloniki	Athens Acropolis - Acropolis: - Propylea - Erechtheum - Parthenon Mars Hill - Agora Berna Judgment seat	Drive to Corinth Corinthian Canal Diolkos Transport Stones Corinth Ruins: - Erastus Stone - Apollo's Temple - Forum	Fly Home OR Fly to Rome, Italy	Rome Vatican Museum Sistine Chapel Basilica of St. Peter - St Peter's Piazza	Monday Rome -St. Peter in Chains - Colosseum - Arch of Titus - Walk through Forum - Mamertine Prison Venezia Piazza
PM	Drive to Thessaloniki : - Old city ramparts - Galerius arch - St. George's Basilica - Agora Archeological Museum	Fly from Thessaloniki to Athens	FREE AFTERNOON	Corinth Acropolis	Christian Catacombs Appian Way Trastevere area where Paul lived	Tour of Rome - Pantheon - Trevi Fountain	Tres Fontane Church of Paul's Martyrdom Church Outside the City --Paul's Burial Tuesday Fly Home
In-Out	October 17-18 Thessaloniki, Greece	October 18-21 Athens, Greece			October 21-24 Rome, Italy		

This is a sample calendar for a BibleTelling Seminar in **Turkey-Greece-Rome**. It is not practical to visit every site and tell every story listed in this booklet. Each Seminar group determines which stories they tell and where they tell them.

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ISRAEL

Lydda (Ben Gurion Airport)

Healing of Aeneas

Acts 9:32-35 #231

Peter traveled from place to place, preaching the Gospel of Christ and encouraging fellow believers. At Lydda, he found Aeneas, a paralyzed man who had been lying on his bed for eight years.

Peter said to him, “The Lord Jesus has healed you, so get up.” Immediately Aeneas was healed and got up. People in that area saw the man and heard what happened, and many of them put their faith in Christ.

Joppa (Joffa)

Healing of Dorcas

Acts 9:36-42 #231

There was a woman named Dorcas who lived near Lydda in the city of Joppa. As a disciple of Jesus, she loved people and did good works for them. She became sick and died.

Her friends prepared her body for burial and placed it in an upstairs room. The disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda, so they sent two men to him. They said, "Please come with us right away." Peter agreed and went with them.

When he arrived in Joppa, they took him to the house where they had laid the body of Dorcas. He went upstairs and found women weeping for her. When they saw him, they showed him the various robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was alive.

Peter sent them out of the room and knelt down and prayed. Turning to the body, he said, "Dorcas, get up!"

With that, she opened her eyes and saw Peter. So she sat up. He helped her up from the bed, and then called for the other women. He presented Dorcas to them—alive.

The news of this spread throughout Joppa, and many put their faith in Jesus.

Caesarea

Paul's journey to Jerusalem

Acts 20:1 – 21:17 #251

At the end of Paul's third missionary journey, he left Corinth to go to Jerusalem.

Eventually his ship docked at Caesarea, the nearest port to Jerusalem. Paul stayed in the home of Philip, one of the original seven deacons. While he was there, a prophet took Paul's belt and tied his own hands and feet. He said, "The Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him to the Gentiles."

Everyone was concerned and begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. He said, "Please stop. Your crying is starting to make me cry! I'm ready to be put in chains for the Lord. I'm ready to die for him."

After a few days, Paul went to Jerusalem. The Christians there received him with joy.

Felix, Festus, and Agrippa

Acts 24 – 26 #254

The religious leader in Jerusalem wanted to kill Paul. So the Roman commander sent him to Caesarea. There, he was put in Herod's palace until he could stand trial.

Felix listened to both sides but didn't pass judgment. He thought Paul might pay him a bribe. Still, the governor gave Paul the privilege of seeing his friends. Felix met with him several times to talk about faith in Christ. Once he trembled and said, "I'm not ready right now. I'll make this decision when it is more convenient."

Two years later, Festus became governor, replacing Felix. He wanted to make the Jewish leaders happy, so he said to Paul, "Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried for these charges?"

Paul said, "I'm willing to die if I am truly worthy of death. But you know that I'm innocent of these charges. Therefore, if you're about to send me to Jerusalem, I appeal to Caesar."

Festus said, "So, you have appealed to Caesar. In that case, to Caesar you will go."

A few days later, King Agrippa and his sister visited the new governor. Festus told them about Paul and the trial. Agrippa said he would like to hear him. So the next day, a large crowd gathered, and Paul was brought before the governor and the king.

When Paul entered the room, he saw his opportunity. He said, "I'm pleased to stand before you, King Agrippa, because you're an expert in Jewish customs.

"Let me be perfectly clear about this. I'm not a stranger to the Jews who live in Israel. They've known me since I was a child. They know that I am a Pharisee and have been very strict concerning the Law. There was a time when I persecuted those following Jesus the Nazarene.

“I was on the way to Damascus when a bright light knocked me to the ground. I heard a voice saying, ‘Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

“I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The voice said, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Get up. You’re now my servant. I’m sending you to be a witness for me – to the Jews and to the Gentiles.’

“King Agrippa, I’ve been true to that calling. I proclaim Jesus as Messiah wherever I go. I tell people to repent and turn to God.

“So why do the Jews want to kill me? They know the Scriptures teach that Christ would suffer, die, and rise from the dead. The good news is that he now brings light to all people including the Gentiles.”

Festus yelled out, “Paul, you’re talking like a fool. All of your education has made you crazy!”

Paul said, “I’m not crazy. I speak the truth, and the king knows these things. King Agrippa, do you believe the Scriptures? I know you believe.”

The king said to Paul, “Do you think you can talk to me for a few minutes and I’ll become a Christian?”

Paul said, “Whether I can or can’t, it’s my desire that all of you listening to me today would be like me, except for these chains.”

Later, King Agrippa and the governor agreed that Paul shouldn’t be in prison. They said, “We’d set him free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar. But he did appeal to Caesar, so that is where we’ll send him.”

Cornelius

Acts 10:1 – 11:18 #232

Cornelius was a military officer in the Roman army. He was a good man who worshiped God.

An angel appeared to him and said, “Cornelius, God has heard your prayers. Send men to Joppa, to the home of Simon the tanner who lives by the sea. There they’ll find a man called Peter and he’ll tell you what to do.” Then the angel disappeared. Immediately Cornelius sent men to Joppa.

On a rooftop in Joppa, God said to Peter, “When God has made something clean, never call it common or unclean.”

While he was there, men arrived at the front gate who were from Caesarea. The Holy Spirit said, “I’ve sent these men to you. Don’t hesitate to go with them.”

Peter went down and greeted the men. They told him about Cornelius, and how an angel said to him, “Send men to Joppa. There they’ll find a man called Peter and he’ll tell you what to do.”

Peter agreed to go with them. In the morning he took several believers and they started on their trip.

They arrived the next day, and Cornelius ran to meet them. He fell down in front of Peter and started to worship him. Peter said, “Stand up! I’m just a man.”

He went into Cornelius’ home and saw that he had invited others to be there so they could hear God’s message. Peter said to the group. “God revealed to me that he has opened the door and is now calling people from other nations to himself. Therefore, I’ll tell you the message that was given to Israel. It is that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.”

He then told them about Jesus and his miracles. He described how the Jewish leaders killed him, but God raised him from the dead. Peter said, “Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus will receive forgiveness of sins.”

As soon as he said those words, the Holy Spirit filled every person in the house. This shocked the Jewish believers when they saw that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles.

Peter turned to them and said, “Is there any reason why we shouldn’t baptize these people?” They all agreed, so the new believers were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

News of this quickly spread to believers throughout the nation. They were amazed and said, “God has given forgiveness of sins and eternal life to the Gentiles.”

Mt. Carmel

Elijah and the prophets of Baal

1 Kings 18 125

God brought a famine on Israel that was severe and lasted for three years. Finally the Lord said to Elijah, "Go tell King Ahab that I am going to send rain to the land."

When the king saw Elijah, he said, "So, here is the man who's destroyed Israel."

The prophet said, "No, it's not me, but you who has destroyed Israel. You've turned your back on the Lord and are serving Baal. Tell Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. Bring the prophets of Baal and Asherah, the ones who eat at Jezebel's table."

So Ahab told the Israelites to gather at Mount Carmel, along with the prophets. Once everyone was there, Elijah said to the people, "How long will you go back and forth? If the Lord is God, follow Him. If Baal is God, follow him." The people didn't say anything, but just looked at the prophet.

He said. "I stand here as only one prophet of the Lord, but look, there are 450 prophets of Baal. Give us two bulls. They'll take one, prepare it for sacrifice, and put it on top of the wood. But they won't put fire on the wood. I'll do the same. They will call on the name of their god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The God who lights the fire, He is God."

The people said. "Yes. That sounds fair."

Elijah said to the prophets of Baal. "You go first."

So they prepared the bull and called on the name of Baal. They prayed all morning until noon. They danced around the altar, but nothing happened.

Finally Elijah built an altar with twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel. He dug a trench around the altar and put the wood on it. He then placed the bull on top of the wood.

He said to the people, "Go get some water and pour it on the sacrifice."

Elijah then walked up to the altar and prayed. "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Let everyone know that you are God, and I'm your servant. Answer me so these people will turn back to you!"

Suddenly, fire fell down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, and the twelve stones. It even licked up the water that was in the trench. The people fell down and shouted, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!"

Elijah ordered, "Grab the prophets of Baal! Don't let any of them escape." The people grabbed the prophets of Baal, and Elijah killed all of them.

He turned to Ahab and said, "Eat something. There's a rainstorm coming."

He then went up to the top of the mountain to pray. He said to his servant, "Look toward the sea. What do you see?"

The servant said, "I don't see anything."

Elijah prayed a second time. He then said to his servant, "Look toward the sea. What do you see?"

The servant said, "I don't see anything."

This happened a total of seven times. Finally the servant said, "I see a small cloud, about the size of a man's hand, coming from the sea."

Elijah said, "Quick, go tell Ahab, 'Rush home as fast as you can so the rain doesn't stop you.'" Ahab got in his chariot and rushed toward home.

In a short time, the sky grew dark and the wind started to blow. Suddenly there was a downpour of rain. The power of God came over Elijah, and he ran faster than Ahab's chariot, and arrived in Jezreel before him.

Megiddo

Shunammite Woman

2 Kings 4:8-37

#135

Elisha traveled to a town called Shunem. A prominent woman provided a meal for him. She then gave him an invitation to eat at their home whenever he was in their town.

Sometime later, the woman said to her husband, “The man who comes here is a holy man. Let’s make a small room for him upstairs. We’ll provide a bed, table, chair, and a lamp. He can stay there whenever he comes to our city.” They prepared the room, and Elisha used it whenever he was in Shunem.

One day, the prophet stopped at the home and went up to his room. He said to Gehazi his servant, “The Shunammite woman has done all of this for us. Go ask her what I can do for her. Possibly she would like me to speak to the king for her, or a commander of the army.

Gehazi went and talked to her, but she said that her family provided for all her needs. Elisha then asked his servant, “Do you have any ideas of what we can do for her?”

“Well, she doesn’t have a son, and her husband is old.”

Elisha said, “Tell her to come and stand in the doorway.”

The woman went up the stairs and stood in the doorway of the prophet’s room. He said to her, “This time next year, you’ll have a son.”

She begged him. “Oh man of God, don’t tell me that unless it’s true.”

A year later, she gave birth to a baby boy, just as Elisha had promised. The child grew and in time was old enough to help his father with the harvest.

One day out in the field, he complained of a severe headache. His father told a servant to take the boy to his mother. The servant took him there and she held her son on her lap. Still, he died around noon. She took him up to Elisha’s room and laid him on the prophet’s bed.

She then sent a message to her husband. “Please send me a donkey and a servant. I need to hurry and go see the man of God. I’ll come back as fast as I can.”

The husband agreed and sent her a donkey and a servant. She said to the servant, “Take me to the man of God at Mount Carmel. Don’t slow down unless I tell you.”

Elisha saw her coming from a distance, but the Lord didn’t tell him why she was coming. He sent Gehazi to ask why, but she wouldn’t tell him.

When she got to the prophet, she ran up, fell down, and grabbed his feet. Gehazi started to pull her away, but the prophet said, “Don’t! She’s deeply troubled and God still hasn’t told me why.”

The woman looked up and yelled, "I told you not to tell me I'd have a son unless it was true!"

The prophet turned to Gehazi. "Run back to her house. Don't talk to anyone along the way. Take this staff and place it on the boy's face."

Gehazi took the staff and left. Elisha then told the woman that she and her servant could go home. She said, "Listen to me carefully. As sure as God is alive, and as sure as you're alive, I'm not leaving you until my son is alive." So Elisha went with them to her house.

Gehazi got there first and placed the staff on the boy's face. Nothing happened. When Elisha arrived, he went into the room alone and locked the door. He prayed to the Lord, and then went over and stretched out over the boy's body with his eyes over the boy's eyes, his mouth over the boy's mouth, and his hands over the boy's hands. Soon the boy's flesh became warm once again, but he didn't start breathing.

The prophet got up and paced back and forth. Then he once again stretched out over the boy's body. Suddenly the boy sneezed ... and then he sneezed again ... and then he sneezed again.

He sneezed a total of seven times. After that, the boy opened his eyes and looked at the prophet.

Elisha got up and called for Gehazi. "Go and get the Shunammite woman."

When she came into the room, the prophet said, "Pick up your son." Without saying a word, she knelt at the feet of the man of God. She then picked up her son and left.

Nazareth

Gabriel talking to Mary

Luke 1:5-80 #177

A young woman named Mary lived in the city of Nazareth. She was engaged to marry Joseph. Both were descendants of David. The angel Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Mary, you're blessed by God." The young woman was startled and didn't know what to say.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid. You've found favor with God. You'll give birth to a son, and you're to call him Jesus. He'll be great, and there'll be no end to his kingdom."

Mary said, "How can this be true? I'm a virgin."

"You'll conceive when the Holy Spirit hovers over you. Therefore, the child will be called the Son of God! Mary, all things are possible with God. Even your cousin Elizabeth is about to have a baby in her old age."

With that, Mary bowed her head and said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen just as you have said."

After the angel left, Mary went to visit her cousin. As soon as Elizabeth heard her voice, her baby jumped inside her, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. She said, "Oh Mary, you're blessed above all women, and that child you're carrying is blessed. How am I worthy to have the mother of my Lord visit me?"

Mary stayed with this wise older woman for three months, learning from her and receiving encouragement. Afterwards, she went home to face her family.

Angel talking to Joseph

Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 2:1-39 #178

Joseph found out Mary was pregnant soon after she got home from her visit with Elizabeth. He knew he wasn't the father. Still, since he was a righteous man, he didn't want to make a public example of her. No, he decided to simply break off the engagement and put her away quietly.

He was deep in thought about this when an angel appeared to him in a dream.

"Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary and make her your wife. The child she's carrying is from the Holy Spirit. When he's born, you're to name him Jesus. He's the Savior. He will save his people from their sins." Joseph didn't hesitate. He immediately made Mary his wife, but he wasn't intimate with her until after the child was born.

Precipice Mountain

Rejected in Nazareth

Matthew 4:13-17, Matthew 13:54-58, Luke 4:14-32, John 4:43-54 #185

After that Jesus went to Nazareth (where he had grown up as a child). He went to the synagogue as he normally did. He stood, and the book of Isaiah was handed to him. He read:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor;
to heal the brokenhearted,
to announce pardon to prisoners,
to recover sight to the blind,
to give liberty to the oppressed,
to preach the acceptable
year of the Lord.”

Once he had read this, he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant. He then sat down. Everyone in the synagogue looked at him. Finally he said, “Today, this Scripture is fulfilled.”

Everyone was amazed. They said, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son who grew up in our town.”

Jesus looked at them and said, “I know what you are thinking. You’re saying, ‘We heard about his miracles in other cities. We want to see some here.’”

“Oh, the saying is true, ‘A prophet will be honored, except in his own town.’ In the great famine during the time of Elijah, there were many widows in Israel, but God provided for a Gentile widow. During the time of Elisha, there were many people in Israel with the disease of leprosy, but God healed a Gentile from Syria.”

The people in the synagogue were furious. They grabbed him and led him out of the city. They headed to the place where they executed people by throwing them off a cliff. When they got there, they realized he wasn’t with them. He had turned, walked through the crowd, and left.

After that time, Jesus no longer lived in Nazareth, but settled in Capernaum

Cana

Jesus turning water into wine

John 1:35-51, John 2:1-11 #182

Jesus and his disciples were invited to join his mother and attend a wedding at Cana. Later in the day, Mary came to Jesus and said, "They've run out of wine."

He looked at her and said, "Why are you bringing this situation to me? You know it isn't my time yet."

She turned to the servants. "Do whatever he tells you to do."

They looked at him waiting for his instructions. He saw six large stone water pots standing nearby. Each could hold about 20 gallons of water.

He said to the servants, "Fill those pots with water."

They quickly filled all six pots full of water, right to the brim. Once that was done, they looked at Jesus. He said, "Now draw some out and take it to the manager of the feast."

The servants did as they were told. The manager of the feast didn't know where this wine had come from, so he tasted it. To his surprise, it was better than any they had served that day! He went to the bridegroom and said, "Where have you been hiding this? Usually the best wine is served at the beginning of the feast. Then, as the day goes by, the lesser quality is served. You have saved the best until now."

This was the first miracle that Jesus performed.

Mount of Beatitudes

Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5 – 7 & Luke 6:37-42 #187

Jesus went up a mountain to teach his followers. He explained what it meant to be a disciple of Messiah and how to live a life that is pleasing to God. He started with:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
because the kingdom of heaven
belongs to them.

Blessed are those who mourn,
because they'll be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle,
because they'll inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they'll be filled.

Blessed are those who give mercy to others,
because mercy shall be given to them.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
because they'll see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, because
they'll be known as the children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you because of me.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because great is your reward in heaven. That's how they treated the prophets who came before you.

If you do these things, you'll be the salt of the earth. You'll be the light of the world. Many will see it and glorify God.

Don't think that I've come to do away with the law of God – just the opposite! My disciples are to live by a higher standard.

For example, the law says you're not to murder. You're to live by a higher standard. You're not to hate anyone. When you hate a person, it's as bad as killing them.

The law says you're not to commit adultery. You're to live by a higher standard. You're not to have lust in your heart. Uncontrolled thinking is the basis for misery, unfaithfulness, and divorce.

The law makes provision for equal justice – 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' You're to live at a higher standard. Love those who mistreat you and take advantage of you. If someone does something bad to you, do something good for them.

The disciples became uneasy as they heard about this “higher standard.” It was a different way of living. It didn’t seem possible. Jesus continued by saying:

There are three big areas that will keep you from serving God – pride, money and worries.

Watch out for pride in your spiritual life. God wants you to give to the poor, but not as a display of your generosity. He wants you to pray, but not for the purpose of impressing others. God wants you to fast, but not as a show for others to enjoy. He wants you to do these things privately. They aren’t hidden from God, and he will reward you.

Money is another area that will keep you from serving God. Money and God are both masters that demand your total dedication. You can’t serve them both. Dedicate yourself to God and use money to glorify him. If you don’t, you’ll be controlled by money and what it can buy you. Focus your life on heavenly treasure.

Watch out for common worries, like food and clothes. These things are not to fill your lives with fear. Keep your eyes on God and accept what he gives you. Look around you. He takes care of the birds and flowers. Don’t you think He cares more for you? He knows what you need. Focus on him and let him worry about you.

The entire crowd became restless at such radical teaching, but they once again grew quiet when Jesus continued. He talked about their attitude toward others. He said:

Don’t set yourselves up as a judge of why other people do what they do. Remember. You’ll be judged by the same standards you set for others.

Judging others is as silly as a man with a piece of lumber sticking out of his eye. He ignores it because he is focused on the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye. It’s as silly as a blind man trying to help another blind person down the street. Both will fall into a ditch.

Instead of judging others, give to them. No, not just a little. Give to them in a big way. It’s like a shopkeeper who says, ‘For a certain price, you can have one bucket full.’ As you fill that bucket, you shake it and press it down so you can get more in. Then you use your body to fill the bucket above the rim. That is how you’re to give to others! And if you do, that is how it will be given to you!

The crowd was quiet as they thought about what they were hearing. Jesus held out his hand to them and said:

If you’re going to be my disciples, do what I say. There are two roads before you. One is wide and well-traveled. It’s the natural way, and most people use it. You’re to go a different way. It’s narrow, and less traveled. It’s your choice.

It’s like two men who decided to build a house. The first built upon a solid foundational rock. The other man built his house on sand. When the houses were done, they looked very much alike. But then the storms came and beat on both houses. The house built on the rock stood firm, while the other one fell.

Build your life upon the firm foundation of what I'm teaching you. If you do, you'll be strong when the storms of life blow against you. Ignore what I say, and your life will crumble.

When Jesus was done teaching the people, they were amazed. They realized that he taught like one with great authority.

Calling the twelve disciples

Matthew 10:1-4, 16, 28-32, 37-39; Matthew 12:9-15; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:6-16 #189

One evening, Jesus left the crowd and went up a mountain. He wanted to be alone so he could talk with the Father. He prayed the entire night.

At daybreak, he came down and called a select group of disciples to himself. These were to stay with him so he could teach them and prepare them to preach. He gave them power to heal the sick and cast out demons.

He selected Simon, who was renamed Peter, and his brother Andrew.

The next two were James and his brother John, who were called "sons of thunder."

There was Philip and Bartholomew,

Thomas, who was a twin, and

Matthew, who had been a tax collector.

Within this group was another James, so history calls him "James the Less."

Thaddaeus was also called Judas, but he wasn't the one who betrayed Jesus.

There was another Simon, and he was known as "the Zealot".

Finally there was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

He said to these men, "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves.

People will hate you just like they hate me. But don't be afraid. The Father is watching over you. He knows when a sparrow falls to the ground, and you're more valuable than a sparrow. He even knows how many hairs are on your head.

Members of your family will want you to be loyal to them instead of me. If you choose their approval, you're not worthy of me. If you follow me, you're to take up your cross and bear my shame."

If you find a life without me, you'll lose it, and if you lose your life because of me, you'll find it."

Meeting Disciples after Resurrection

Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-53; John 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-26; I Corinthians 15:6#223

The disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had first selected them to be his disciples. He suddenly appeared and they worshiped him. Jesus said, "I give you authority to preach. Go to all nations and make disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them what I have taught you. Remember, I'm always with you."

“Eye of God” Cave

Jesus going to pray after healing Peter’s mother-in-law

Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:22-38, Luke 4:31-44, Luke 5:1-11#186

Jesus spent the night at the home of Simon Peter’s house. By evening, almost the entire town was at the house. Jesus taught the people, healed the sick, and cast out demons.

The next morning, he got up before sunrise and went to a place where he could be alone. There he prayed and talked to his Father.

When the people of the town woke up, they started searching for Jesus, and finally found him. He told them he was going to visit the other towns in the area. They begged him to stay with them, but he said, “No, I need to preach the kingdom of God in other cities as well.” He then traveled throughout Galilee, teaching the people, healing the sick and casting out demons.

Tabgha

Call of Peter, James, and John

Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:22-38, Luke 4:31-44, Luke 5:1-11#186

One day he went to the shores of the Sea of Galilee to teach the people. They crowded around him to hear the word of God.

There were two fishing boats on the shore, and the fishermen were washing their nets nearby. Jesus got into the boat that was owned by Simon Peter and asked him to push off a little from shore. Once this was done, he sat down and taught the people.

After he finished, he said to Peter, “Go into deeper water and let out the nets.”

Peter said, “Lord, we fished all night and didn’t catch anything. Still, if that’s what you want, I’ll cast out a net.”

He then took the boat into deeper water. When he cast out his net, he immediately caught a large school of fish – so many fish that the net started to rip apart. Peter yelled to his partners, “James, John!” They rushed out and helped gather in the fish. They filled both boats ... until they were in danger of sinking.

Peter was totally overcome by this miracle. He fell to his knees and said to Jesus, “Go away! I’m a sinful man!”

Jesus said, “Simon, don’t be afraid. In the past you caught fish. From now on, you’ll catch people.”

The fishermen brought their boats to shore, where they left everything and followed Jesus.

Winning back a disciple

John 21 #222

Sometime after the resurrection, a few of the disciples were at the Sea of Galilee. Peter said to the others, “I’m going fishing.” They said, “We’ll go too.”

They went out in a boat and fished all night but didn’t catch anything. In the dim light of early morning, a man stood on shore and called out, “Have you caught any fish?”

“No.”

“Cast your net on the right side of the boat.”

They did, and suddenly the net was full of fish. John said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!”

When Peter heard this, he wrapped his clothes around him, jumped into the water, and swam for shore. The others came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish.

Once they got there, they saw Jesus cooking bread and fish over a fire. He turned and said, "Bring me some more fish." Peter helped the others haul in the net, which contained 153 large fish.

Once everything was ready, Jesus said, "Come and eat." They gathered around and he gave them bread and fish.

When they were done eating, Jesus asked, "Simon, do you love me more than these?"

Peter was surprised by the question, "Yes, Lord. I love you."

"Then feed my lambs."

He asked a second time, "Simon, do you love me?"

"Yes Lord, you know I love you."

"Then feed my sheep."

A third time Jesus asked the question, "Simon, do you love me?"

Peter was grieved because Jesus had asked him the same question three times. He said, "Lord you know all things. You know I love you."

"Then you're to feed my sheep. When you were young, you went wherever you wanted. But when you get old, someone else will take you where you don't want to go." This referred to how Peter's death would bring glory to God.

Then Jesus said, "Follow me!"

Paying Temple tax

Matthew 17:24-27; Mark 9:33-41; Luke 9:49-50; 17:1-2

One day, a man who collects temple tax walked up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher pay the temple tax?"

"Uh, yes, he does." But Peter wasn't sure.

Back in Capernaum, Jesus saw him deep in thought. He said, "Simon, give me your opinion. When a king issues a tax, does he make his family pay it?"

"Oh no. Others have to pay, but not his family."

Jesus said, "That's true. The sons of the king don't have to pay. But we don't want to offend others on this issue. So go to the sea and catch a fish. When you have it, open its mouth. There you'll find a coin. It will be enough for you to pay the tax — for you and me."

Capernaum

Demon-possessed man in synagogue

Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:22-38, Luke 4:31-44, Luke 5:1-11#186

Jesus went to the synagogue in Capernaum. A demon-possessed man yelled at him, "Go away! Leave me alone! I know who you are! You're the Holy One of God."

Jesus said, "Don't talk! Come out of him."

The demon threw the man onto the floor. He screamed as the demon left his body. The crowd was shocked. They had never seen such authority and power

Healing Peter's mother-in-law

Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:22-38, Luke 4:31-44, Luke 5:1-11#186

Jesus went to the home of Peter and Andrew. Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. The family asked Jesus to heal her. So he touched her hand and said to the fever, "Leave this woman!"

Taking her hand he said, "Please, get up." Immediately the fever left her and she got up. She was totally recovered, so she started serving the guests in her house.

By evening, almost the entire town was at the house. Jesus taught the people, healed the sick, and cast out demons.

Man let down through the roof

Mark 2:1-12 & Matthew 9:9-13 #188

Jesus went into a house to teach. As soon as word got around, the house filled up with people. Among them were Pharisees and teachers of the law. The crowd went out through the doorway, with people standing outside.

Four men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a cot. They quickly realized they had no way of getting close to Jesus. So they carried the man and his cot up the outside stairs onto the roof. There, they made an opening by removing the tiles. When it was big enough, they lowered the man into the middle of the crowd and in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw the faith of the four men, he turned to the man on the cot, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

The religious rulers were shocked when they heard this. They thought, "How dare he say that! This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins."

Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said, "Why are you so troubled? It would've been easy for me to say, 'Get up and walk.' But you needed to know that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins."

He then said to the man, "Get up! Pick up your cot and go home."

Immediately the man got up, picked up his cot, and walked out in front of everyone. People were amazed and glorified God. They said, "We've never seen anything like this before."

Matthew Called

Mark 2:1-12 & Matthew 9:9-13

After that, Jesus left the house and walked toward the seashore. Along the way, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at a tax booth. The Jewish people hated tax collectors and said they were traitors to Israel.

Jesus stopped and said to him, "Matthew, follow me." Immediately, the man left everything and followed Jesus.

Soon afterwards, he hosted a reception for Jesus in his house. He invited many other tax collectors. They came as well as other people of low reputation.

The religious leaders were appalled! They said to his disciples, "Why is your master eating with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard this, so he answered them. "Doctors are for sick people, not for those who are well. I haven't come to work with people who think they are righteous. I've come to bring repentance to sinners."

Korazin

Lost Coin

Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15 #209

The religious crowd was upset when they saw common sinners flocking around Jesus. They said, "He allows tax collectors and sinners to be around him. He even eats meals with them." Jesus responded by telling them this story. He said... "A woman suddenly realized that one of her ten wedding coins was missing. She lit a lamp and carefully swept the entire house until she found it. She was so relieved that she called her friends and neighbors and said, 'Come and rejoice with me. I lost one of my coins, but now I have found it.' "So it is in heaven. When one sinner turns back to God, there is rejoicing among the angels.

Migdal (Magdala)

Touching the Hem of the Garment (Twelve Years)

Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43 Luke 8:40-56 #195

Jesus and his disciples left the Gentile side of the lake and went back to the Jewish side. A large crowd was waiting for him.

As they walked down the road, they passed the home of a certain woman. She had suffered a bleeding disorder for twelve years. Many doctors tried to help her, but her condition only got worse. This continued until her money was all gone.

When she heard that Jesus was passing by, she thought, "I'd be healed if I could get close enough to touch the edge of his clothes. No one would need to know anything about it."

So she made her way through the crowd and reached out and touched the edge of his clothes. Instantly she knew she had been healed. Jesus felt the power go out from his body, so he stopped and said, "Who touched me?"

Peter looked at the crowd and said, "What do you mean who touched you? Look at all the people around you."

Jesus ignored him and continued to look for the person who had touched him. When the woman realized she couldn't hide what she had done, she knelt down before him, trembling.

Jesus said to her, "Don't be afraid. Your faith has healed you. Go back home. That disease won't return."

Sea of Galilee

Jesus sleeping in the storm

Mark 4:35-5:20; Matthew 8:23-33 & Luke 8:22-39 #209

Jesus taught the crowd all day. In the evening, he said to his disciples, "Let's go to the other side of the lake." So they took several boats and started on their journey to the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee.

Being tired, Jesus went to the back of the boat and lay on a large cushion. Soon he fell into a sound sleep. During the night, a fierce storm hit the lake. Large waves crashed over the boat and threatened to capsize it. Jesus slept through it all.

The disciples woke him up and said, "Master, wake up. Don't you care that we are about to die?"

Jesus woke up and faced the storm. He said, "Stop! Be still!" Immediately the wind stopped and the sea became calm.

He then turned to the disciples and said, "Why did you fear? Where's your faith?" Then he lay down and went back to sleep.

The men looked at the sky and the calm sea. They said, "What kind of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey his voice!"

Walking on the Water

John 6:1-10 & Matthew 14:14-33 #198

After Jesus fed 5,000 people, they said, “This is the one the Scripture talks about – ‘the great prophet like Moses.’” They started talking among themselves about making him king.

Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he sent them away and told his disciples to go back by way of the sea. And he went up the mountain and prayed.

While Jesus was praying, a storm moved over the sea. Huge waves pushed the ship out toward the middle. The men rowed hard to get back to shore, but the wind was too strong for them.

At three o’clock in the morning, Jesus walked across the sea on top of the water. The men looked out and saw someone walking among the waves. They screamed because they thought it was a spirit.

Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid. It’s me.”

Peter said, “Lord, if it’s you, ask me to come to you.”

“Come.”

So Peter got out of the boat and started walking toward Jesus. Suddenly he looked at the waves and the wind. He became afraid and started to sink. He cried out, “Lord, save me.”

The Lord reached out and grabbed him. He said, “Oh Peter, where’s your faith?”

The two of them walked back and got into the boat. Suddenly the storm stopped. The disciples knelt down and worshiped Jesus. They said, “It is true. You are the Son of God.”

Caesarea Philippi

Peter's Confession

Matthew 15:29 –16:16; Mark 8:1-21, 27-30 #200

Jesus took them to Caesarea Philippi. There, he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

“Some say you’re John the Baptist. Others say you’re Elijah or Jeremiah.”

“Who do you say I am?”

Peter said, “You’re the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus said, “Peter, you’re blessed! You didn’t learn this from human sources, but the Father has revealed it to you.”

He then told all of his disciples, “For now, don’t tell anyone I am the Messiah.”

Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:9-10, 14-29; Luke 9:30-32#201

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a mountain to pray. As the Lord prayed, the three disciples fell asleep. Suddenly they woke up and saw the face of Jesus becoming brighter and brighter. His clothes were a brilliant white and shone like light.

Then they realized that two men were with him, and they knew it was Moses and Elijah, who also shone like the sun. Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about his death.

Peter spoke up when the two men started to leave. He said, “Lord, it’s good that we are here. Please allow us to build three shelters – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

As he was talking, a bright cloud covered them. This made the disciples afraid. A voice said, “This is my Son. Listen to him!”

The disciples fell down in terror. Jesus walked over and touched them. “Don’t be afraid. Get up.” They looked around and everything was back to normal. The only person with them was Jesus.

As they went down the mountain, Jesus said, “Don’t tell anyone about what you saw today, until after I’ve risen from the dead.” They wondered what he meant by ‘risen from the dead’, but no one said anything about it.

Help my Unbelief

Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:9-10, 14-29; Luke 9:30-32#201

A large crowd was waiting for Jesus at the bottom of the mountain. A man ran up and knelt before him, "Lord, have mercy on my son, my only child. A spirit takes him and throws him down, sometimes in the fire, sometimes in the water. He can't talk. He foams at the mouth and goes into convulsions. I came to your disciples, but they weren't able to help him. If you can do anything for him, please help us."

Jesus noticed that the father had said, "If you can do anything...". He said, "Everything is possible to a person who believes."

The father started to panic. "Lord, I believe. ... Oh, Lord, help my unbelief!"

Jesus said, "Bring the child to me."

When the spirit saw Jesus, he threw the boy to the ground, causing him to roll around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus said to the spirit, "Come out of this boy, and never enter him again."

The spirit came out of the boy violently. The child screamed and fell to the ground. People gasped and said, "He's dead." Jesus walked over and took the boy by the hand and helped him up.

Later the disciples asked the Lord, "Why couldn't we drive the spirit out of him?"

Jesus said, "This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting."

Dan

Grandson of Moses

Judges 17 – 18 #72

A young man named Jonathan was a Levite from Bethlehem. He left home looking for a place to settle down. He stayed the night in the home of a man named Micah. Soon the two of them became friends. Finally Micah said, “Stay here and I’ll make you the priest for my idol. I’ll give you everything you need – clothes, meals, a place to stay, and I’ll even give you a salary.” Jonathan agreed, and soon he became like one of the family.

At that same time, the tribe of Dan was looking for a permanent place for their people. In all of the years since Joshua, they hadn’t found a place of their own. They decided to send out five soldiers as spies.

The spies camped near Micah’s house, and Jonathan went out to visit with them. They said, “You have a Bethlehem accent. What are you doing here?”

He told them about his job and how well Micah treated him. When they found out that he was a Levite and a priest, they said, “Please, ask God if we’ll be successful.”

He said, “Don’t worry about a thing. The Lord is with you.”

The men left and continued their search. Finally they found a wonderful place, where the people were peaceable and unprotected. The spies went back to their tribe and said, “We’ve found a place for us to live! It’s a good land and the people will be easy to conquer.”

So the people of Dan sent 600 men to conquer the city. When they got to Micah’s house, the five spies said to the others, “The man who owns that house has an idol, clothes for worship, and even a priest. We could use those things in our new city.”

So the 600 men went to Micah’s house. Jonathan came out to greet them. While he stood there, the five spies went into the house and took the idol and all the stuff that went along with it.

Jonathan said, “What are you doing?”

They said, “Shut up and listen carefully. You have a choice. You can stay here and be a priest for one man, or you can come with us and be a priest for a whole tribe. You can tell us what God wants us to do.”

Jonathan thought this sounded like a good opportunity, so he agreed to go with them. He even helped them take all the things of worship from Micah’s home.

When Micah found out what had happened, he organized some men and chased after the Danites. As soon as he saw them, he yelled at them. Immediately they stopped, turned, and faced the men following them. They yelled back, “Why are you following us?”

Micah said, “How can you say that? You took my god and my priest. I have nothing left.”

The men from Dan said, “Stop yelling at us or we’ll take something else from you. We’ll take your life and kill your family.”

Micah saw there was nothing he could do. So he turned and went home.

The Danites continued their military campaign. They attacked the peaceable people and killed them all. They burned down their city and built a new one. They called it Dan, and it became their permanent home.

Jonathan and his descendants were priests for the Danites for hundreds of years. They helped them worship that idol until the Assyrians took them into captivity. Jonathan was the grandson of Moses.

Jeroboam's Golden Calves

1 Kings 12:25 – 13:8 & 13:33-34 #120

Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom called Israel. He chose the city of Shechem to be the capital. He built it up and put his palace there.

He realized his people had a natural tendency to be loyal to the family of David. He said to his advisors, "The people keep going to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. Eventually, they'll decide their true loyalty is to the king from the line of David. They'll kill me and reunite with Judah."

To solve this problem, he made two golden calves. He put one in the south at Bethel and the other in the north at Dan. He said to the people, "It's too hard to travel to Jerusalem several times a year. Here's your god who brought you out of Egypt."

Jeroboam built shrines to these idols and appointed priests for them. He then made annual celebrations at the same times as the ones in Jerusalem.

When he took the golden calf to Dan, people lined up behind it as it went along. Once they got there, Jeroboam made sacrifices to this new idol. He then went south to Bethel to sacrifice on the altar he had built there.

A young man of God (from the southern kingdom of Judah) walked up to Jeroboam as he was standing by the altar. The prophet yelled, "Altar, altar! Hear what the Lord God says to you.

'A king will be born in Judah named Josiah. On this altar he'll sacrifice the priests who burn incense on it.'"

The young prophet then turned to the people, "The Lord gave me a sign that these things will happen. This altar will rip apart and the ashes will spill to the ground."

King Jeroboam got angry and pointed at the prophet. "Grab that man!" As soon as he said those words, the hand he had stretched out froze in position and he couldn't pull it back. Suddenly the altar ripped apart and the ashes spilled to the ground.

Seeing this, the king begged the man of God. "Please pray to the Lord and ask him to restore my hand back to me."

So the man of God prayed and Jeroboam's hand returned to the way it was before. The king said, "Come with me to the palace and eat something. Then I'll give you a gift."

The young prophet said, "I wouldn't go with you even if you gave me half of everything you own. The Lord said that I'm not to eat or drink anything while I'm here. And I'm to go back to Judah a different way from how I came." With that, he walked away.

Even with this warning, Jeroboam didn't repent of what he was doing. He continued to promote the worship of the two calves and appoint priests for them. Because of this sin, his kingdom didn't continue after his death, and he had no descendants.

Tel Hazor

Deborah & Barak

Judges 4 – 5 #63

Israel sinned against God. So the Lord sold them to a Canaanite king from Hazor. This king ruled over them for twenty years. He was harsh and cruel. His army had 900 iron chariots, and his commander's name was Sisera. Finally, the people of Israel prayed to God for deliverance.

The person who judged Israel at the time was a prophet named Deborah. One day she called for a man named Barak and said to him, "The Lord has a message for you. He says, 'Take 10,000 men and go to Mount Tabor. I'll cause Sisera to come to you with his chariots and his army. He'll come to fight you, but I'll give him to you.'"

Barak said to Deborah, "I'll go and do as the Lord says, but only if you go with me. If you don't go, I won't go."

She said, "I'll go with you, but if I do, you won't get the credit for killing Sisera. The Lord will give that honor to a woman." Barak agreed, so Deborah went with him.

Barak gathered 10,000 men and went up Mount Tabor. Sisera heard about this, so he took his 900 chariots and his army and headed toward Mount Tabor. Deborah said to Barak, "Now's the time! Take your men and attack Sisera."

So Barak moved his men down the mountain and attacked the Canaanite army. The Lord was with him and caused Sisera's men to be confused. They turned and ran. When Sisera saw this, he left his chariot and tried to escape on foot. Barak chased the army until every man was killed.

Sisera ran until he came to the tent of Jael. Her husband was in alliance with the Canaanite king. She saw Sisera coming, so she went out and said, "Come in here, and you'll be safe."

He went in and she hid him under a rug. He said, "Please, give me water to drink." She gave him milk, and he sat up and drank it. He said, "Stand at the door of the tent. If anyone asks if there is a man in here, tell them 'No.'"

She then covered him again, and since he was exhausted, he fell into a deep sleep.

Jael went and got a tent peg and a hammer. She quietly knelt down next to Sisera and put the tent peg on the temple of his head. Then with solid blows, she nailed it through his head and into the ground.

Soon Barak came by her tent in search of Sisera. She went out and said, "Come and I'll show you the man you're looking for." Barak went into her tent and saw Sisera lying dead on the floor with a tent peg through his temple.

Israel continued to fight the Canaanite king until they were victorious. Then they lived in peace.

Joshua's Northern Campaign (Background only)

Joshua 10

The Israelites had:

- recently entered the Promised Land at Jericho
- defeated a league of 5 Canaanite kings from around Jerusalem (middle of the land)
- and then conquered Canaanite cities all across the southern part of the land

Joshua 11

King Ja'bin, king of Ha'zor:

- organized all the kings from across the entire north – from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Galilee and the Golan Heights
- they gathered at the waters of Me'rom (wadi or stream just west of Nazareth?)
- their men and horses and chariots covered the land like the sands upon the seashore

Joshua:

- made a surprise attack and totally conquered them
- possibly while they were watering their horses (unhitched? Swampy?)
- disabled their horses and destroyed their chariots.
- They then went to Hazor and burned the city—no other cities were burned—apparently because King of Hazor organized the northern kings

Archeology reveals multiple burnings of this city—1400BC, 1300BC, 1230BC. Scholars disagree which one is Joshua's burning, but it confirms the Bible's account.

Other Side of Sea of Galilee

2000 pigs

Mark 4:35-5:20; Matthew 8:23-33 & Luke 8:22-39 #194

Their boat came to shore near a place where a wild man lived in the tombs. No one was able to control him. Many times they tried to put chains on him, but he easily snapped them off. He roamed the hills naked and lived in tombs. He cried and yelled and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus and his disciples get out of their boat, he ran and knelt down before him. He shouted, "I know who you are. You're Jesus, the Son of the Most High God! Leave me alone. Don't torture me."

Jesus said, "What's your name?"

"We're called Legion because we're many. Please, don't send us into the abyss. Look, there are pigs over on that hill. Send us there."

Jesus looked at the pigs, and said, "Yes, you may go there."

With that, the demons left the man and entered the pigs. All 2,000 of them went wild and rushed down the hill and off the steep bank. They plunged into the sea and were drowned.

The men who were tending the pigs ran into the town and told the people what happened. A crowd came out to see for themselves. When they got to Jesus, they saw the man who had been demon possessed. He was sitting quietly, fully clothed, and listening to Jesus.

Again the men told what had happened. Everyone was afraid, so they asked Jesus to leave.

As he got into the boat, the man who was healed said, "Please, may I go with you?" Jesus turned to him and said, "Go back to your people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them about God's mercy on your life."

So Jesus and his disciples left the shore and returned to the Jewish side of the lake. The man went to his hometown and started telling everyone what Jesus had done for him. The people who heard this were amazed.

Feeding 4000

Matthew 15:29 –16:16; Mark 8:1-21, 27-30 #200

Jesus went to the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. As he taught the people, a great crowd brought those with various physical problems. They brought the lame, the blind, the crippled, and those with many diseases. Jesus healed them all, and the crowd was amazed.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I’m concerned for the crowd. They’ve been with us for three days, and their food has run out. I don’t want to send them away without feeding them because they’ll collapse with hunger as they go.”

The disciples said, “Lord, we don’t have enough food to feed this large of a crowd.”

“How much do you have?”

“We have seven loaves of bread and a few small fish.”

“Tell the crowd to sit down.”

He took the bread and fish and blessed it. He then broke it into pieces and gave it to his disciples. They turned and gave it to the crowd. 4,000 people were there. Everyone ate until they were full. The disciples then collected the leftovers and found they had seven baskets full.

Afterward, they sent the crowd home. Jesus and his disciples got in the boat and went to the Jewish side of the lake.

Jordan River

Israel Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3:7 – 5:12 #56

After hearing the report from the two spies, Joshua led the people toward the Jordan River, where they stayed for three days. On the third day, the leaders of Israel went throughout the camp and told the people, “Break camp tomorrow morning. Then watch the priests. They’re going to pick up the ark of God and move toward the Jordan River. Follow them, because you haven’t gone this way before.

“Tomorrow, the Lord will do amazing things for you. You’ll know that God lives with you and plans to drive out your enemies from before you.”

Joshua told them to select twelve men, one from each tribe, and send them to him. Then he told the priests what they were to do the next day.

In the morning, God said to Joshua, “Today, I will exalt you in the eyes of the people – so they’ll know I’m with you just like I was with Moses.”

Joshua told the priests, “Take the Ark of God, and go to the Jordan River.” So the priests carried the Ark of God to the river, which was at flood stage. When they came to the water’s edge, they kept going until the water covered their feet.

Suddenly the river stopped! A wall of water formed ten miles upstream. The rest of it flowed down to the sea. Seeing this, the priests walked to the middle of the riverbed and stood on dry ground. Then the people started moving across the river.

Joshua then said to the twelve men Israel had selected, “Each of you pick up a large stone from where the priests are standing. Put it on your shoulders and take it to the other side of the river.” Joshua then took another twelve stones and built a monument in the middle of the river, next to where the priests were standing.

The people looked at Joshua, and he was exalted in their eyes. They knew God was with him just like he had been with Moses.

When they had all crossed the river, Joshua said to the priests, “Come up from the middle of the riverbed.” As soon as the priests were on the banks of the river, the waters crashed down the riverbed and returned to its flooded condition, as it had been before.

Joshua took the people to a place called Gilgal, where they set up camp. Then he had them build a memorial with the twelve stones. He said, “In the future, children will see this monument and ask, ‘why are these stones here?’ Their parents will tell them about this day, when God stopped the Jordan River so his people could cross over on dry ground. All the nations of the earth will know that the hand of God, the Lord of all the earth, is powerful.”

The people of Canaan heard how God stopped the Jordan River so the people of Israel could cross over on dry ground. Terror spread throughout the cities of the land.

Naaman

II Kings 5:1-14

#136

Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army. He was a brave warrior and led his men to win many victories. His king considered him a great man. During one of their wars with Israel, he captured a young girl and brought her back to be a servant for his wife.

In time, Naaman realized he had leprosy, a crippling disease of the skin. The young slave girl said, "I wish my master could go to Israel. They have a prophet who's able to heal people, even those with leprosy."

Naaman told this to the king. Immediately, the king made preparations to send Naaman to the king of Israel. He sent gifts of gold, silver, and fine clothes along with a letter saying, "I'm sending my servant Naaman so you can cure him of leprosy."

The king of Israel was shocked when he read the letter. He ripped his clothes and yelled, "Who does he think I am? I'm not God. I can't cure people of leprosy! He's trying to start a war with me."

Elisha heard about this and sent a message to the king. "Why are you ripping your clothes? Send the man to me so he'll know there's a prophet in Israel."

So Naaman and his men rode to the prophet's house and stood outside. Elisha sent his servant Gehazi out with this message. "Go down to the Jordan River and wash seven times. After you're done, you'll be healed of leprosy."

Naaman couldn't believe what he was hearing. He became furious and stormed away. He said, "A true prophet would come out and stand in front of me. He'd pray to the Lord and wave his hand over my skin. If I thought washing in a river would help, I'd bathe in one of the beautiful rivers of Syria – not a dirty river like the Jordan."

His servants said to him, "My father, if the prophet had asked you to do something hard, you would've done it. But he told you to do something easy – wash and be clean."

So Naaman went to the Jordan River and dipped into it seven times. Suddenly his skin was healed just as the prophet said it would be. In fact, it was like the skin of a young boy.

After Naaman was healed at the Jordan River, he and his men went back to the prophet's house and stood before him. Naaman said, "Today I've learned, and now know, that there's no god on earth except the God of Israel. Please accept my humble gift."

Elisha said, "As sure as God lives, I won't take a gift from you." Naaman insisted, but the prophet still refused.

Then the commander said, "Please let me have as much dirt as two mules can carry. I'll no longer worship any other god. Instead, I'll kneel on this dirt from Israel and worship the Lord God."

Baptism of Jesus

Matt 3:1-17, Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:9-13, Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13, John 1:19-34 #181

When John became a man, God led him into the wilderness. He wore clothes made of camels' hair, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He preached that people should repent from their sins and turn from their wicked acts. He told them, "Don't rely on being children of Abraham. God can make children of Abraham from rocks." He then baptized those who wanted to live for God.

Some religious leaders asked him, "Are you the Messiah?"

He said, "No, I'm not the Christ. I was sent to prepare the way for him. He'll come after me. I'm not even worthy to untie his shoes."

The next day, John was baptizing at the Jordan River, when he saw Jesus coming toward him. John shouted to the crowd, "Behold, here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! This is the Son of God."

Jesus walked into the water and asked John to baptize him. John said, "No, I should be baptized by you."

Jesus said, "Allow this to be. It's God's will."

So John baptized Jesus in front of all the people. When he came up out of the water, the sky suddenly opened and the Spirit of God, like a dove, came down on him. Then a voice said, "You're my Son! I'm pleased with you."

Mt. Arbel

Feeding 5000

John 6:1-10 & Matthew 14:14-33 #198

Jesus went up a mountain where he taught his disciples. A large crowd went with them so they could hear him teach.

Soon it became apparent that they were hungry, and there was no food. Jesus knew what he was going to do, but still he asked Philip, "Where can we get food for these people?"

"Lord, even eight months' salary couldn't buy enough food for all these people." The other disciples said, "Send them into the villages so they can buy food for themselves."

Jesus said, "No, I want you to feed them."

"Lord, we don't have enough money to feed such a large crowd."

Jesus said, "Go and see how much food we have."

Andrew came back with a young boy. "Lord, this lad has five barley loaves and two small fish. But how can that help us with such a large crowd?"

Jesus said, "Give them to me."

He took the bread and fish and blessed them. He then divided them among the disciples and said, "Give this to the people and tell them they can have as much as they want."

They served the food to the people, who ate until they were satisfied. There were over 5,000 people there. Then Jesus said, "Go and pick up the remains." When they did, they had twelve baskets full of bread and fish.

The people said, "This is the one the Scripture talks about – 'the great prophet like Moses.'" They started talking among themselves about making him king.

Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he sent them away and told his disciples to go back by way of the sea. And he went up the mountain and prayed.

Jezreel

Naboth's Vineyard

1 Kings 21 #128

In the town of Jezreel, a man named Naboth owned a vineyard next to the palace of King Ahab. The king told Naboth he wanted to buy the vineyard and make it into a vegetable garden. He said, "I'll pay you full value in silver, or if you prefer, I'll give you a better vineyard someplace else.

Naboth said, "No. I couldn't sell this vineyard. It has been owned by our family for several hundred years."

At first, this made the king angry. He went home and refused to eat anything. Finally he became depressed and went and lay in his bed facing the wall.

Jezebel, the king's wife, asked him what was wrong. He said, "I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard and he told me no! I even offered him a better vineyard in exchange for his."

Jezebel said, "Oh, is that all? Well, come have something to eat, and don't worry about Naboth's vineyard. I'll get it for you."

She wrote a letter to the town officials. It said, "Go get Naboth and have him stand before you. Bring in two liars that will swear he cursed God and the king. Then take him out and stone him until he's dead." She signed Ahab's name to the letter and sealed it with the official seal.

The city leaders did exactly as they were told. They got Naboth and condemned him to death. After the stoning, they sent a message back to Jezebel saying, "Naboth is dead."

She went to her husband and said, "You now own the vineyard you wanted. Go and enjoy it because Naboth is dead." When the king heard this good news, he went to see his vineyard.

At that same moment, the Lord said to Elijah, "King Ahab just stole Naboth's vineyard. Go tell him this. 'You murdered Naboth and the dogs licked his blood from the ground. Dogs will lick your blood at that exact spot.' "

Elijah went and found Ahab at Naboth's vineyard. When the king saw the prophet coming, he said, "Well, look at this. My enemy has found me."

"Yes, I found you. And you have found every way possible to do the things God hates. Now it's time for judgment. Your punishment will be just like King Jeroboam. You'll have no descendants. First, dogs will eat the body of your wife Jezebel. After that, your entire family will be eliminated from the earth. Dogs will eat all your relatives that die in the city. Birds will eat those who die in the country."

This struck Ahab to the heart. He ripped his clothes in sorrow. He fasted and wore sackcloth day and night. Finally, the Lord said to Elijah, “Ahab is truly sorry for what he did. Therefore, I won’t destroy his family until after he’s dead. All that I said will happen when his son is king.”

Jehu becomes King

2 Kings 8:28 – 9:29 #141

Elisha selected one of the sons of the prophets. He said to him, “Take this bottle of oil and go to Jehu. He’ll be with his friends, so ask to see him alone. Anoint him king of Israel. Once you’re done, open the door and run away.”

The young prophet found Jehu visiting with the other commanders of the army. The young man said to Jehu, “I have a message for you.”

The two of them went into the house. The young prophet poured oil on Jehu’s head and said, “Here is the message from the Lord. ‘I anoint you king over Israel. You’re to kill the entire household of Ahab. Every male in his family is to die. Jezebel will be eaten by the dogs.’” With that, the young man opened the door and ran away.

Jehu went back to his friends. They said, “What did that crazy prophet want?”

“Oh, you know how they are. He went on and on about nothing.”

They said, “You’re not telling the truth. What did he say?”

“Oh well, he did say one interesting thing. He said, ‘I anoint you king of Israel.’”

The others jumped up and spread their coats down before him. They blew a ram’s horn and shouted, “Jehu is king!” Immediately they started planning how they were going to overthrow Joram, king of Israel. He was the son of Ahab and Jezebel.

Joram was at his palace at Jezreel. His nephew, the king of Judah, had come to visit him. Jehu gathered his men and went to Jezreel.

The watchman saw him and his men coming and said to the king, “There’s a band of soldiers coming this way.”

Joram said, “Send a rider out to them to see if they’re coming in peace.”

A man rode out to Jehu and said, “The king wants to know if you’re coming in peace.”

“He knows nothing about peace. Get behind my men.”

The watchman said to the king, “The rider got there but isn’t coming back. He’s now riding behind the others.”

So the king sent another rider out. He rode up to Jehu and said, “The king wants to know if you’re coming in peace.”

“He knows nothing about peace. Get behind my men.”

The watchman said to the king, “The second rider has also joined them. My lord, I know who’s coming. It’s like a wild man is driving the lead chariot. That’s how Jehu drives a chariot.”

Joram said, “Go get our chariots!” Both kings rode out to meet the soldiers, each in his own chariot. Joram yelled, “Jehu, do you come in peace?”

He yelled back, “How can there be peace when Jezebel practices witchcraft and makes everyone worship idols?”

Joram turned his chariot around and yelled to his nephew. “Run! It’s a trap.”

Jehu shot an arrow and killed Joram, hitting him between his shoulder blades. The commander shouted, “Take his body and throw it in the field that was stolen from Naboth.”

He then chased after the young king of Judah, because he was the grandson of Ahab. Once he was in range, Jehu shot the king with an arrow. So, in one day, Jehu killed both the king of Israel and the king of Judah.

Jezebel

2 Kings 9:30 – 10:36 #142

After Jehu killed the two kings, he went back to Jezreel to find Jezebel. She knew he was coming, so she put on makeup, brushed her hair, and sat next to her second-floor window.

When he arrived, she called down to him, “Why are you here – to keep killing people who are better than you?”

He looked up at her, and then yelled, “Is anyone up there that’s on my side?” Some men who worked for the queen looked down from the window. Jehu yelled, “Throw her out of the window!”

They picked up Jezebel and threw her out of the window. She fell to the ground, splattering blood on the wall. Jehu drove his chariot over her several times. He then went inside to get something to eat.

After the meal, he said, “Well, I guess we should bury her. After all, she is a queen.”

He sent some men out to take care of this, but they could only find her skull, feet and the palms of her hands. They told Jehu and he said, “God spoke through Elijah when he said, ‘Dogs will eat Jezebel at Naboth’s field, and she will be fertilizer.’ ”

Jehu then sent a message to the elders in Samaria. “Your city walls are strong, and you have plenty of horses, chariots and weapons. The 70 sons of Ahab live under your protection. Therefore, select one to be your king, and prepare for battle.”

The elders were terrified when they got this letter. They sent him a message saying, “We don’t want to make any of these sons of Ahab our king. We’re your servants and will do whatever you say.”

He sent a message back to them. “If that’s true, put the heads of those 70 sons in baskets and send them to me.” So the 70 sons of Ahab were killed, and their heads were sent to Jehu. He then made sure no other relative of Ahab was still alive.

The Funeral at Nain

Luke 7:11-17

Jesus took his disciples to another town, and a large crowd followed them. As they approached the gates, they saw a funeral procession. It was for a young man who was the only son of a woman who had also lost her husband.

Jesus saw her desperate situation and went to her. He said, “Don’t cry.”

He then walked over to the open coffin and put his hand on it. Immediately the pallbearers stopped.

Jesus said, “Young man, listen to me. Get up!”

The man opened his eyes and then sat up. He looked around and asked what was happening. Jesus helped him down and took him to his mother.

The crowd was stunned, and then afraid. Finally, they started to praise God. The news of this went throughout all of Israel, and into the surrounding countries.

Gideon's Spring

Gideon's Fleece

Judges 6 #64

For seven years, the Midianites came into Israel like a swarm of locusts. They moved across the land, taking everything off it - all the crops and farm animals. They left nothing for the Israelites to eat. The people became desperate and had to find places to hide in mountain caves.

A man named Gideon was also hiding from the Midianites. He had to thresh his wheat in a wine vat instead of an open threshing floor. The Angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree nearby. He said, "The Lord is with you, oh mighty warrior."

Gideon said, "Oh my Lord! If God is with us, why is he allowing all these bad things to happen to us? Where are all the wonderful miracles our fathers told us about? God is no longer fighting for us."

The Angel said, "I'm sending you to deliver Israel from the Midianites."

Gideon was shocked. "Lord, how can I deliver Israel? I'm a nobody."

The Lord said, "Yes, but I'll be with you, and you'll have victory."

Gideon said, "Lord, I need a sign that you're really talking to me. Please, stay here while I prepare a sacrifice."

The Lord said. "I will stay here until you return."

Gideon rushed off and prepared a sacrifice for him. When it was ready, he put it on a rock. The Angel of the Lord reached over and touched the sacrifice with the tip of his staff. Fire came up from the rock and burnt it up. And then the Lord vanished.

Gideon yelled, "Lord God! I'm about to die! I've seen the Angel of the Lord face to face!"

The Lord said, "Don't be afraid. You're not going to die. Do what I say."

Later, the Midianites once again came into Israel and camped in a valley. The Spirit of the Lord filled Gideon, and he sent out messages for people to come and be ready to fight.

Then Gideon prayed, "Lord, give me a sign." He then put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor and said to God "I'll know you'll deliver us if the morning dew is only on the fleece, and all the ground is dry."

He got up early in the morning and found that the fleece was soaking wet, but the ground was dry.

Gideon said, "Lord, don't be angry with me. Allow me one more test. This time let the fleece remain dry, and the dew be all over the ground." In the morning, the fleece was dry, and dew was all over the ground.

Three Hundred Men

Judges 7 – 8 #65

Gideon gathered a troop of 32,000 men. He took them and camped south of the Midianites. The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men with you. If I give the Midianites to you now, Israel will say, ‘We won this victory by our own power.’ Tell them, ‘If you’re afraid, go home.’”

Gideon said this to the people, and 22,000 people left, leaving 10,000 men.

The Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water. Watch carefully. Notice those who use their hands to bring the water to their mouth. Separate them from those who kneel down and drink like a dog.”

There were 300 men who drank, using their hands. The Lord said, “I’ll give you victory over the Midianites using these 300 men. Send the rest of them home.” So Gideon sent them home.

Those who were left made camp above where the Midianites were in the valley. The people of Midian were like a swarm of locusts, and their camels were like the sand by the sea.

That night the Lord said to Gideon, “Sneak into the Midianite camp. If you’re afraid, take your servant with you. Listen to what the soldiers say.” So Gideon took his servant and went into the Midianite camp.

He heard a man telling a friend about a dream. He said, “I saw a loaf of bread rolling into our camp. It struck a tent and totally destroyed it.”

His friend answered: “I know what it means. That loaf of bread is the sword of Gideon the Israelite. God has handed the entire Midianite camp over to him.”

Gideon returned to Israel’s camp and said, “Get up, for the Lord has given the Midianites to you.” He divided the 300 men into three companies of 100. He gave each man a trumpet and a jar with a torch inside it.

He said, “Watch me and follow my lead. When we’re all at the edge of their camp, our group will blow our trumpets. You’re to do the same. Everyone shouted, ‘The sword of the Lord and Gideon!’”

Then he placed them on three sides of the camp. When they were all in place, Gideon’s group blew their trumpets and broke the jars. The other two groups did the same. They held their torches in their left hands, their trumpets in their right hands, and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and Gideon!”

This totally shocked the Midianite army! They panicked and started to run, yelling as they ran. Gideon’s men blew their 300 trumpets. With this, the Midianite soldiers drew their swords and started killing one another.

Gideon then sent for the rest of the men of Israel. Together they ran after the Midianites as they tried to leave Israel. God gave a great victory that day over Midian, and they were no longer a threat to Israel.

After the battle, the people wanted to make Gideon their king, but he refused. He simply went back to live at his house. Then Israel was at peace for forty years.

Jericho

Two spies visit Rahab

Joshua 1:1 – 3:6 #55

Joshua started organizing the people for their campaign into Canaan. He started by sending two men across the river to spy on the land. They entered the city of Jericho and stayed at the house of a prostitute named Rahab.

The king of Jericho found out that they were in the city, so he sent a message to Rahab. “Bring out those men who are staying in your house. They’re spies from the people of Israel.”

The men were on her roof, where she had hidden them under bundles of flax. She told the king, “Yes, they were here, but I didn’t know where they came from. Just before dark, they left before the city gates were closed. They didn’t tell me which way they were going, but you should be able to catch them if you hurry.” So the king sent men to chase after them.

Rahab said to the spies, “Everyone here is afraid of you because we know God has given you this land! We heard how the Lord opened up the Red Sea when you left Egypt.

“Your God is the God of heaven above and the earth below. He’s done great things for you.

“I protected you! Now swear by your God that you’ll show kindness to my family. Spare our lives!”

So the spies said, “We’ll spare you when the Lord gives us your city, but only if you don’t tell the king about us. Tie this scarlet cord in your window. Your family will be safe if they’re in your house. If anyone leaves the house, we’re not responsible for what happens to them.”

Rahab’s house was on the city wall, so she put a rope out of her window and helped the men escape. They hid in the hills until the men of Jericho stopped looking for them.

Once it was safe, they went back across the river. They told Joshua everything that had happened. They said, “It’s true! God has given us the land. The people are afraid of us.”

Captain of the Lord's Army

Joshua 5:13-15 #57

While the people were still at Gilgal, Joshua looked toward Jericho and saw a man standing nearby with a sword in his hand. Joshua walked toward him and asked, "Are you for us, or for our enemies?"

The man said, "I am captain of the Lord's army. I've just arrived."

Joshua fell down and worshiped. He said, "What do you want me to do?"

The captain said, "Take off your shoes because you're on holy ground."

Destruction of Jericho

Joshua 6 #57

The Lord said to Joshua, "I've given you Jericho, its king, and its army." He then gave exact orders on how Jericho was to be conquered.

When the day arrived, Joshua arranged the people. He had part of the army take the lead. Behind them, he put seven priests who were to blow ram's-horn trumpets. The Ark of God was behind them. The rest of the army followed the Ark. Joshua told the people, "Don't say one word as you march around the city."

As they marched around the city, the priests blew the trumpets, but the people were silent. Once they had circled the city, they returned to their camp and spent the night.

They did the same thing the second day and the third. They repeated this march around the city for six days.

Early on the seventh day, Joshua told the people to follow the same procedure, except on this day they were to circle the city seven times. He said, "After we have marched around the city seven times, I will tell you to shout. The Lord will then give you the city. All the people and animals in the city are to die, except Rahab and her family.

"You're to burn everything, except the gold, silver, and things made of bronze and iron. These are to be set aside for the Lord. Be careful! Don't take anything that is set aside for the Lord, or you will be set aside for destruction."

So that day the people marched quietly around the city seven times while the priests blew the trumpets. After the seventh time, everyone stopped.

Suddenly the priests blew the trumpets one more time and Joshua yelled, "Shout!" The people shouted, and the walls of the city fell down in front of them. The army of Israel marched straight into the city and destroyed it. The two spies that Rahab had protected immediately went to her house. They brought her and her family out of the city alive. Everyone else in the city was killed and everything was burned, except the gold, silver, and things made of bronze and iron.

Rahab and her family were put in a safe place outside of the camp of Israel. Eventually she married an Israelite from the tribe of Judah. In time, they had a son named Boaz.

Temptation of Jesus

Matt 3:1-17, Matt 4:1-11, Mark 1:9-13, Luke 3:21-22, Luke 4:1-13, John 1:19-34

After Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights. After that, hunger gripped his entire body.

Suddenly the tempter was by his side. "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread so you can have something to eat."

Jesus said, "God's word says, 'Man is not to live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of mouth of God.'"

The devil took him to Jerusalem – onto the highest point of the temple wall. Jesus looked down at the rocks far below. The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down off of this wall.

God's word says there are angels taking care of you.

They'll keep you from hitting those rocks below. You won't even stub a toe on them."

Jesus said, "Yes, but God's word also says, 'You're not to tempt God and put him to the test!'"

The devil then took Jesus to a very high mountain. He caused the kingdoms of the earth in all their glory, to appear before them. He turned to Jesus and said, "I'll give you everything you see. All you have to do is bow down and worship me."

Jesus turned and looked at him. "Leave me Satan! God's word says, 'He's the only one to be worshiped. God is the only one to be served.'"

With that, the devil left him. Soon angels came to Jesus and cared for his needs

Elisha's Spring

Zacchaeus

Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 19:1-10; Mark 10:46-52 #212

A rich tax collector, whose name was Zacchaeus, lived in Jericho. He wanted to see Jesus as he passed through town, but he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd.

So he ran down the path ahead of the people and climbed up in a sycamore tree. He knew he'd be able to see Jesus when he passed under the tree.

When the Lord got to that spot, he stopped! He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down from that tree. I'm staying at your house today."

Zacchaeus quickly got down from the tree and welcomed Jesus into his house. People started to murmur, "How could he even think about staying in the house of that great sinner?"

But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, "I'm going to give half of everything I own to the poor. And where I've cheated people, I'll pay them back four times the amount I took from them."

Jesus said, "Today, salvation has come to this house. I came to seek and to save those who are lost."

Blind Bartimaeus

Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 19:1-10; Mark 10:46-52 #212

As Jesus left Jericho, he passed a poor blind man named Bartimaeus, who was begging along the side of the road. Bartimaeus heard the crowd and asked, "What's going on?"

"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

When he heard this, he yelled, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" People nearby told him to be quiet. But he yelled even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped and looked in his direction, "Go bring him to me."

They went to Bartimaeus and said, "Jesus is calling for you. Hurry, get up and go to him."

Bartimaeus got up, threw down his beggar's coat, and went to Jesus. The Lord said, "What do you want me to do for you?"

"Teacher, I want to see!"

The Lord said, "Go. Your faith has healed you." Immediately, Bartimaeus could see, and he started following Jesus.

Jericho and Elisha

2 Kings 2:19-22 #132

After Elijah was taken into heaven, Elisha crossed the Jordan and went back to Jericho. The people of the city said to him, “Jericho is a good place to live, but the spring is bad. It even keeps our crops from growing.

He said, “Put some salt in a new bowl and bring it to me.”

They brought it to him and he went to the spring. He threw the salt into the water and said, “The Lord has made this water pure. You can now grow crops and no one will starve.”

En Gedi

Corner of the Robe

1 Samuel 24 #92

David moved his men to the canyons of En-gedi. After Saul was done fighting the Philistines, he heard that David was at En-gedi. He selected 3,000 of his best soldiers and took them toward En-gedi.

Along the way, Saul stopped, and went into a cave to relieve himself. He didn't know David and his army were in the back of that cave. His men were thrilled that the Lord had given Saul to David. They whispered, "Kill him!"

Instead, David quietly got close and cut off the corner of Saul's robe. Instantly, he felt guilty for doing this. He said to his men, "Hear what I'm saying. God anointed Saul to be king over Israel. Even my little finger won't hurt him." He held his men back so Saul could leave the cave peacefully.

As the king was walking away, David came out and yelled, "My lord the king!" Saul stopped and looked back. David was standing there. He said, "Who are you listening to? Who told you I wanted to hurt you? Look at the corner of your robe.

"It's missing because I'm holding it in my hand. God gave your life to me when you came into this cave. My men told me to kill you, but I didn't because you're my king. You're the Lord's anointed, and I would never hurt you.

"Listen to what I'm saying. I haven't sinned against you. Still you're trying to kill me. I'm asking the Lord to judge between us, and I know he will make things right. But I will never hurt you."

When Saul heard this, he broke down and cried. He said, "Oh my son David, you're more righteous than I. You have only returned good for all the bad I've done to you. How is it that the Lord gave me to you, and you didn't kill me? Who's heard of such a thing?

"Now I know it's true. You'll be king over Israel. Oh David my son, swear to me by the Lord. When you're king, don't kill my descendants. Don't eliminate my father's name from our tribe." So David made that vow to Saul.

The king then took his men and returned back home. David went back to the Stronghold.

Jehoshaphat's Victory

II Chronicles 19 – 20 #130

Things were going well in Judah, and its king Jehoshaphat. Suddenly the nations of Moab, Ammon, and Edom decided to unite together and fight against Judah. A massive army moved to the west side of the Dead Sea to a place called En-gedi.

Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he sought the Lord's help. He sent out a proclamation saying that everyone was to fast and seek God's favor. The people responded, and many went to Jerusalem to be with their king and pray with him. A huge crowd went to the Temple and stood before the Lord. Men brought their wives and children, so entire families prayed together and sought God's help.

Jehoshaphat stood before all the people and prayed to God. He said, "Oh Lord, you're the God of heaven. You're the one who gave this land to your friend Abraham. You control all power and might. You said we're to trust you when we're in trouble. Look! The Moabites and Ammonites have gathered a massive army and have come to destroy us. We have no power to fight against them. We don't know what else to do but look to you."

Suddenly the Spirit of God came on a prophet. He said, "Hear what God says to you. 'Don't be afraid of this vast multitude. This isn't your battle, but mine. Tomorrow, go against them. You'll see them coming, but you don't have to fight them. Get in position, but stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Don't be afraid, I am with you.'"

Jehoshaphat bowed down and put his face to the ground. All the people did the same and worshiped the Lord. Suddenly the Levites stood and started praising the Lord God with a loud voice.

In the morning, the men got up early and went out to face their enemies. Jehoshaphat told them, "Believe in the Lord and you'll be successful." He then appointed people to sing for the Lord. They went out in front of the army singing, "Give thanks to the Lord. His faithful love endures forever."

As the people shouted and praised the Lord, suddenly their enemy became confused. The Ammonites and the Moabites turned on those from Edom and totally annihilated them. They then turned on one another and kept killing until every man was dead. When the army of Judah arrived on the battlefield, there was no army, just corpses lying on the ground. No one had escaped.

Jehoshaphat told his people to gather up anything of value from the dead bodies. They found that their enemies had carried many valuables onto the battlefield. There was so much that the people gathered for three days. Finally they couldn't carry any more.

They met on the fourth day, just to praise God. Then they returned to Jerusalem with Jehoshaphat in the lead. Everyone gathered at the Temple once again to praise the Lord with great rejoicing!

All the nations around Judah heard about the great victory God had given his people. They were all terrified of the Lord, and none of them attacked Jehoshaphat as long as he lived. So there was peace in the land, and all was quiet.

Masada

The Stronghold

I Samuel 22:1-4, II Samuel 23:13-17 #91

When David was running from Saul, his brothers and all his other relatives joined him in hiding. Then others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or just discontented—until David was the captain of about 400 men.

David went to Moab, where he asked the king, “Please allow my father and mother to live here with you until I know what God is going to do for me.” The king agreed, so David’s parents stayed in Moab. David went back to Israel and moved his men to a place called the Stronghold.

David developed a group of 30 men who were the core of his fighting force. All 30 of these fighting men were proven warriors with skill and courage—but three of them were an inspiration to the entire army.

There was a time when he and his men were staying in the stronghold. He became thirsty and said, “Oh, how I long for the water from the well in Bethlehem!” At that time, Bethlehem was in the hands of the Philistines.

These three men heard David longing for that water. They slipped out of the camp and went to Bethlehem. They crept into the city and got water from the well. They were then able to get safely back out of the Philistine area.

When they brought the water to David, he was shocked at what they had done. He said, “I won’t drink this water! This is precious like the blood of the men who risked their lives to get it.” So he stood and poured it out as an offering to the Lord.

Psalms 27 (ESV)

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me
to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.

6 And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!

8 You have said, "Seek my face."
My heart says to you,
"Your face, Lord, do I seek."

9 Hide not your face from me.
Turn not your servant away in anger,
O you who have been my help.
Cast me not off; forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!

10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
but the Lord will take me in.

11 Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies. 12 Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they breathe out violence.

13 I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living!

14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord

Negev

Ditches of Water

2 Kings 3 #133

For many years, Moab was controlled by Israel and paid them high taxes. When Ahab died, the king of Moab refused to pay Israel any more taxes.

Ahab's son, King Joram organized his army and prepared to march against Moab. He sent a message to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. "Please join me in our campaign against the king of Moab. He has rebelled against me."

Jehoshaphat agreed and the two armies marched south of the Dead Sea and into Edom. The Edomite army joined them. So all three continued their march toward Moab.

Soon they realized there wasn't enough water in that desert for all their men and animals. Joram said, "I think the Lord has led us here so we could all be captured by the Moabites."

Jehoshaphat said, "Do we have a prophet of God with us?"

One of the officers said, "Yes, Elisha is here."

The three kings went to him. When he saw Joram, he said, "Why are you coming to me? Why don't you talk to one of your idols?"

Joram said, "Please, I think the Lord your God has led us here so we would be captured by the Moabites."

Elisha said, "If it was just you, I wouldn't give you the time of day. But I have great respect for King Jehoshaphat, so send someone with a harp."

As the harp played, the Lord gave Elisha a message for Joram. "Dig ditches in this dry riverbed. You won't see a storm, but this riverbed will fill up with plenty of water. There will be enough for you and your animals. This is an easy thing for the Lord to do. He will also help you defeat the Moabite army, and you'll be able to capture their cities."

The next morning, the water suddenly started flowing, so much so that it flooded the land. The Moabite army got up early and looked in the direction of the three kings. The sun was shining on the water and made it look red. They shouted, "Look at all that blood. The armies of the three kings have turned and killed one another. Come! Let's go collect the spoils from their camps."

When they got to Israel's camp, the Israelite army attacked them. They chased them back into Moab and started taking city after city. Finally there was only one left that hadn't been defeated.

Israel surrounded it. The king of Moab tried to escape by taking 700 of his key soldiers and breaking through the front lines. The plan failed, so he grabbed his oldest son and sacrificed him as an offering on the city wall. The sight of this was so horrible that the

Moabite soldiers went into a frenzy of rage. Seeing this, the three armies withdrew and went home.

Lachish

King of Assyria

2 Kings 18:13 – 19:37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23 #154

The Assyrian army invaded Judah when Hezekiah was king. They had already conquered Israel a few years before.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, the commander of the Assyrian army called for a meeting with Jewish officials outside the walls of the city.

He said, “Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, sends this message to Hezekiah: Why do you resist my great army? Do you think other nations will come and help you? Listen. They won’t come! They’re afraid of us.

“Oh, are you trusting in the Lord your God? Why? It was your God who sent us here to destroy you!”

While the commander was talking, the people of Jerusalem were on the city walls—listening to everything he was saying. He spoke in Hebrew and was loud enough so they could hear.

The Jewish officials said, “Please, speak in your language. We understand it.”

The commander laughed and yelled louder, “No! This message is not only for your king. It’s also for the common men. They’re the ones who’ll suffer when we crush you.”

He pointed to the men on the wall. “Listen to me! Don’t trust your king. Don’t trust your God! Trust Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria! He’ll take good care of you. We’ve conquered many nations and their gods weren’t able to protect them. Your God can’t stop the great king of Assyria!”

When King Hezekiah heard this report, he ripped his clothes and went into the Temple to pray. He sent messengers to the prophet Isaiah asking him to pray for God’s people.

Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah. “I have a message from the Lord. He says, ‘I’ve heard this man. Don’t be afraid of him. I’ll whisper into his ear and he’ll rush back to his country. Once he gets there, someone will kill him.’ ”

Suddenly, the commander heard of trouble back in Assyria. He knew his king needed him. The entire army left.

Sometime later, Sennacherib moved his army toward Jerusalem once again. Along the way, he sent a message to Hezekiah. “Did your God tell you that you’re safe from me? Don’t believe him! I’ve conquered the gods of many other nations and burned them with fire. They couldn’t protect their nations. What makes you think your God will protect you?”

Hezekiah took the letter to the Temple. He spread it out before God and prayed. Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah, but it wasn’t addressed to him. It was God’s answer to Sennacherib.

It said, "Who do you think you are? I've told Jerusalem to spit on you. Who do you think you're mocking? I'm the one who put you in power so you could judge other nations. Now are you so arrogant that you yell at me? Here's what I'm going to do to you. I'm going to put a hook in your nose, and a bit in your mouth. Then I'll take you back to the barn from which you came!

"Hezekiah, don't worry about Sennacherib. Not one arrow will hit the walls of Jerusalem. Before his army gets here, they'll turn around and go back to their country. I'm your defense! I'll fight this battle and save the city."

That evening the army of Assyria set up camp.

The sun went down and men sat around the campfires until it was time to sleep. When the sun arose the next morning, 185,000 soldiers were dead where they had slept. The king of Assyria had an army of dead men!

He quickly returned home to Nineveh and knelt down before his idol. Two of his sons came in and killed him. Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, was dead, and Jerusalem was at peace.

Valley of Elah

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17 #87

The Philistines once again invaded Israel. Both armies faced one another across a ravine. Suddenly a large Philistine stepped forward. His name was Goliath, and he was 9 feet, 9 inches tall.

He yelled, “Why are you preparing for battle? Let two of us settle this. Send someone out and we’ll fight. If your man kills me, we’ll be your slaves. But if I kill your man, you’ll be our slaves. Come on, send someone out and let’s fight.”

No one accepted his challenge, so he came out and yelled at Israel every morning and evening. This went on for forty days. Saul offered a reward to anyone who could defeat this giant. He said, “I’ll make him wealthy and he can marry my daughter.”

While this was happening, Jesse said to David, “Go visit your brothers and take them some food. Bring back word of how the battle is going.”

So David got up early and went to the battle site. He saw the men lined up in battle formations. He gave the food to the quartermaster and ran to see what was going on.

Suddenly, Goliath started shouting his challenge. “Come on. Send someone out here and let’s fight – man to man. Winner takes all.” Everyone backed away.

David was shocked. He said, “Who does this ungodly Philistine think he is? He’s defying the armies of the living God.”

David’s oldest brother got angry. “Why are you here? Go back to your sheep. War is for men.”

David answered him. “I didn’t do anything wrong. I just asked a question.” He turned and asked the question again. “Who does this ungodly Philistine think he is?”

Saul heard about David’s question and sent for him. David said, “Don’t worry about this Philistine. I’ll fight him.”

The king said, “He’s a warrior – a seasoned fighter. You’re young with no experience.”

David said, “I watch my father’s sheep. Every time a bear or a lion has come and tried to take a lamb, I grabbed the beast and killed it. The Lord was always with me and gave me victory. This ungodly Philistine is just another lion or bear. The Lord will give him to me.”

Saul said, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

He then gave David his suit of armor, but he couldn’t walk because it was too heavy. He said, “I can’t wear these. They’ll hold me back.”

David got his shepherd's staff and a sling. He went down to the brook and selected five smooth rocks and put them in his shepherd's bag. Then he started walking toward the giant.

Goliath saw David coming. He yelled, "Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks? Come and I will give your flesh to the birds."

David yelled back, "You come to me with a sword and a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord. You've insulted him. Therefore I'm going to cut off your head and give your body to the birds. This battle is the Lord's, and he has given you to me."

Goliath started walking toward David, but David ran toward the giant. He reached into his shepherd's bag and put a rock into his sling. With deadly accuracy, the rock hit Goliath and sank into his forehead. He fell to the ground face forward. David ran up, pulled out Goliath's sword, and cut off the giant's head.

Both armies were shocked when they saw this. The Philistines turned and ran. The Israelites shouted a victory cry and chased after them. Many Philistines died that day.

Saul asked Abner, his general, "Who is that young man?"

"I don't know."

Saul sent for David. He came and stood before the king with the giant's head still in his hands. Saul said, "Who are you? Who is your father?"

David said, "I am the son of Jesse of Bethlehem."

Saul didn't let David go back home, but made him a commander in the army. David was successful in everything Saul had him do.

Beth Shemesh

Mice & Tumors

1 Samuel 5-6:18 #79

After the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they put it in the temple of their god. The next morning, they found their idol face down in front of the Ark. They set the idol back up, but the next morning it was on the ground again. This time, the head and hands were broken off.

Suddenly the city was overrun with mice, and the people had large tumors covering their bodies. The men said, "This is caused by the Ark of Israel's God." So they moved it to another city.

Immediately, God's judgment hit that city. They were overrun with mice and the people developed large painful tumors. This caused the people to panic. The men sent the Ark of God to yet another city, but the people there yelled at them. "You're trying to kill us! We don't want that Ark in our city!"

They moved the Ark from city to city for seven months. Fear and death followed it wherever it went. Finally the Philistines asked their priests, "How can we send the Ark of the Lord back to Israel?"

They said, "If you send the Ark back to Israel, you must send a guilt offering with it. Then God will remove his hand of judgment, and you'll be healed. Make five gold images of your tumors and five gold images of the mice that are destroying the land. Give glory to the God of Israel, and he'll stop crushing you. But if you become stubborn, you'll be like Pharaoh when these people left Egypt. He'll send more plagues upon you until you send the Ark back to Israel.

"Here's what to do. Prepare a new cart and place the Ark of God on it. Put the gold objects in a box beside it. Select two milk cows that have never been in a yoke and hitch them to the cart. Take the calves away from the cows and put them in a pen nearby. Then stand back and see what the cows do. If they ignore their calves and go up the road toward Israel, you'll know it was the Lord who tormented us for seven months. But, if the cows go toward their calves, we'll know that all of this was just something that happened by chance. It wasn't God's judgment."

The men did exactly as they were instructed. They got two milk cows and separated them from their calves. They hitched the cows to a cart, even though they had never been in a yoke before. They put the Ark on a new cart, along with the five gold images of their tumors and the mice.

When all was ready, they stood back and watched. The cows went straight up the road toward Israel. They stayed on that road with their heads down, lowing as they went. The Philistine rulers walked behind them all the way to the territory of Israel.

The people of Israel were harvesting wheat when they saw the Ark coming toward them. They shouted for joy. As they watched, the cows pulled the cart to a field near a

large rock and stopped. The people of Israel put the Ark on the rock. They then used the wood from the cart to offer the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. When the Philistine rulers saw this, they returned to their country.

Beginnings of Revival

1 Samuel 6:19-21 #79

There were 70 men from a nearby town who were curious about what was in the Ark of God, so they opened it and looked inside. All 70 men died by the hand of God.

This struck fear into the people, but it was the beginning of the nation of Israel turning their hearts back to God.

Samson & Delilah

Judges 16:4-21 #71

In time, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. When the Philistines found out about this, a group of their leaders met with her. They said, "Each of us will pay you 1,100 pieces of silver if you can find out the secret of his strength. Once we know that, we'll be able to kill him."

So she asked Samson, "How can someone tie you up in a way that makes you powerless?"

"Oh," he said. "I'll be like any other man if someone ties me up with seven brand new bowstrings."

The Philistines gave her seven fresh bowstrings and hid some guards in her room. She tied Samson up with the bowstrings, and then shouted, "Samson, the Philistines are here!" He jumped up and snapped the bowstrings as if they were pieces of yarn touched by a fire.

Delilah said, "You lied to me! Why would you make fun of me like that? Please tell me how you can be tied up."

He said, "The key is new ropes, but only ones that haven't been used for anything else. If I'm tied up with new ropes, I'll be like other people."

So she took some new ropes and tied him up. Guards were still in their hiding place. She yelled, "Samson, quick! The Philistines are here!" He jumped up and snapped the ropes like they were pieces of threads.

She said, "I'm nothing but a joke to you. Why do you keep lying to me? Now tell me how you can be tied up."

He said, "It's my hair. If you weave my seven braids with the web of a loom, I'll be as weak as any other man."

So Delilah waited until he fell asleep. She then wove his seven braids into the loom. When she was done, she yelled, “Samson! The Philistines are here.” He woke up and pulled his hair away from the loom.

Delilah said, “How can you say you love me when you don’t trust me? Three times now you’ve laughed at me by telling me a lie. Why can’t you trust me with the secret of your strength?”

She kept this up day after day. She begged and nagged him until she wore him down. Finally, he told her the truth. He said, “I’m what our people call a Nazirite. I’ve been one since birth. My hair has never been cut, and that’s the secret of my strength. If someone shaves my head, I’ll be like any other man.”

Delilah realized that he had finally told her the truth. She sent for the Philistine rulers. “Come. I finally got the truth out of him. Be sure to bring my money with you.” So they came with her money.

That night, he fell asleep with his head on her lap. She motioned for a man to come and cut off his seven braids. As he did, Samson’s strength left him.

Then she yelled, “Samson, the Philistines are here!”

He jumped up to defend himself, but he didn’t know the Lord wasn’t with him.

The Philistines grabbed him and he couldn’t break loose. They held him down on the ground and poked out his eyes. They then took him to prison, where he was forced to push a grain millstone.

Bring Down the House

Judges 16:22-31 #71

While he was in prison, Samson’s hair started to grow back. In time, the Philistines gathered to worship in the temple of their god. They ate and drank until they were drunk. Someone yelled, “Go get Samson. That’ll give us a good laugh.”

The place was packed as a boy led Samson into the temple. He said to the boy, “Take me to the supporting pillars.”

Samson called out to God. “Oh Lord God. Give me strength just one more time. Allow me to pay back the Philistines for taking my eyes. I’ll die with them.”

He then grabbed the two supporting pillars and pushed on them with all he had. They gave way and the temple fell on the Philistines, including all their leaders. More people died in Samson’s death, than he had killed in all of his life. He had been a judge in Israel for 20 years.

Emmaus

The Sun Standing Still

Joshua 9-10 #59

The Canaanite heard about Israel invading the land, and news spread quickly about the destruction of Jericho and Ai. Most of the cities formed alliances in order to protect themselves from Israel. But one city decided to do something different. The Gibeonites tricked Israel into forming an treaty with them.

The other kings of the land heard that the people of Gibeon had made peace with Israel. They joined together and marched against their city. The men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua saying, "We're your slaves. Come quickly and help us!"

So Joshua marched his army through the night and surprised those fighting again Gibeon. They tried to fight back, but the Israelite army was too strong for them. The Lord also sent large hailstones on them, and more people were killed by hail than by the sword.

Joshua needed more time, so he looked up and said, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon!" The Lord heard his command and honored it. The sun stopped moving across the sky. Never in the past, nor since, has there been a day like that.

Five kings ran and hid in a cave, but someone told Joshua. He said, "Roll a stone across the entrance of the cave." He then stationed men to guard it. Once Israel had sealed their victory, Joshua brought the kings out of the cave. He told his commanders to put their feet on the necks of the kings. He said, "Be strong and courageous. The Lord will do this to all your enemies." He then executed the five kings.

Joshua led his army from city to city, and the Lord gave him victory wherever he went.

Moving the Ark of God

1 Samuel 5-6 #79

The Ark of God had been ignored during reign of King Saul. So David decided to bring it to Jerusalem, his new capital. He sent a message throughout Israel inviting them to come join him for this great event.

The people agreed that this was the right thing to do. Unfortunately, they didn't follow God's instructions on how the Ark was to be moved. Instead they put it on a new cart and pulled it with a team of oxen.

As the cart moved toward Jerusalem, the king and the people walked along celebrating. They sang songs, and played instruments.

Suddenly one of the oxen stumbled and shook the cart. A man named Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark. The moment he touched it, God struck him and he fell to the ground and died.

David was shocked and confused. He didn't know why God had done this. He needed time to think about what to do, so he put the Ark of God in a nearby home. It stayed there for three months. During that time, the Lord blessed the family that lived there.

David heard how God was blessing the family, so he once again decided to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. This time he told the Levites to purify themselves and follow the instructions Moses gave on how the Ark of God was to be carried.

The people of Israel were excited as it entered Jerusalem. They made sacrifices to the Lord, shouted for joy, and blew trumpets. David took off his outer coat and danced with all of his might. Everyone rejoiced together.

Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-33 #221

In the afternoon of the day Jesus rose from the dead, two disciples left Jerusalem and started walking to Emmaus. They were discussing the events of the previous few days. Suddenly they noticed someone walking near them. They didn't realize it was Jesus.

He said, "What are you talking about?"

They turned and looked at him. "Are you a stranger here? Don't you know about the things that happened in the last few days?"

"What things?" "We're talking about Jesus of Nazareth, the one who spoke the words of God. Our leaders had him crucified three days ago.

"This morning, some women went to the tomb. They came and told us that the body was missing. A couple of men went, and sure enough, it was missing. Now the women are saying they saw angels and have actually seen the Lord alive."

Jesus spoke up. "Why are you so slow to understand? The prophets clearly said Messiah had to suffer these things." Then he started at the beginning of Scripture and explained the parts that were about him.

As they came near Emmaus, they said to him. "It's too dark to continue on. Please, stay with us." So, he went into the house with them.

At the evening meal, Jesus took bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Immediately they knew who he was. And then— he disappeared!

They looked at one another in amazement. Finally, one of them said, "Our hearts were on fire as he explained the Scripture to us!"

They quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples what happened.

Bethlehem

Shepherds in the field

Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 2:1-39 #178

The night Jesus was born, shepherds were watching their flock in a nearby field. Suddenly an angel stood with them, and the area was flooded with the glory of the Lord. The shepherds were terrified, but the angel said, “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to bring you great news!”

He then pointed toward the nearby town. “Tonight, the Savior was born in Bethlehem. He is Messiah. Go there and look for a baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” Suddenly the whole area was filled with angels who were praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest! Peace and goodwill to the earth.” Then, they disappeared.

The shepherds immediately did as they were told. They went to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby, just as the angel had said. They told them what happened that night, and everyone was amazed. Afterwards, they went back to the field, praising God for what they had seen.

Ruth and Naomi

Ruth 1 & 2 #75

After the death of her husband and two sons, Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem. So she and her two daughters-in-law prepared for the trip and left. Along the way, Naomi turned to her daughters-in-law and said, “Go back to your homes. May the Lord bless you, as you have been a blessing to me. I pray the Lord will give each of you a good husband and many children.” She then kissed them good-bye.

All three women cried, and both daughters-in-law insisted they wanted to stay with Naomi. She said, “No, you need to go home. I have no more sons to give you. Even if I got pregnant tonight, would you wait for my baby to grow up so you could marry him? No, it’s better that you go home. Life with me is going to be bitter.” With that, one daughter-in-law kissed Naomi and went home.

The second daughter-in-law was Ruth. She said, “I won’t leave you! Don’t make me go back. I’m going with you. Wherever you live, that’s where I’ll live. Your people will be my people. Your God is now my God. The place where you die is where I’ll die and be buried. Only death will separate you and me.”

Naomi saw she couldn’t argue with Ruth. So they both went back to Bethlehem.

When they got there, the whole town was excited that Naomi had come back home. She said to them, “Don’t call me Naomi anymore. That means ‘pleasant,’ and life is no longer pleasant. Call me Mara, which means ‘bitter.’ The Lord has made my life bitter.”

So Naomi and Ruth established their home in Bethlehem. Life was hard because the two women were poor.

It was harvest time when Naomi and Ruth established their home in Bethlehem. Poor people were allowed to go into the fields and pick up any grain that was dropped during harvest. So Ruth went to the fields to gather food for the two of them. She went to a field owned by a man named Boaz.

Later in the morning, Boaz came to his field. He saw Ruth and said to the foreman, "Who is that young woman?"

"Oh, she is the Moabite who came here with Naomi. She's a hard worker."

Boaz went to Ruth and said, "Don't go to any other field. Stay here and work alongside my servant girls. Watch them and go wherever they go. The men won't hurt you. I've already told them to stay away from you. In fact, go drink from their water when you're thirsty."

Ruth bowed her head and thanked Boaz. She said, "Why are you so kind to a foreigner?"

He said, "We've all heard how well you've treated Naomi. You left your parents and country to come here and care for her. May the Lord richly bless you!"

He then went back and told his men to leave extra grain in her path. Also, they were to provide her food when they stopped to eat.

That evening, Ruth went back home with all she had gathered. She even had leftovers from her meal. Naomi was amazed when she saw all of this. Ruth told her about the kindness of Boaz, the owner of the field.

Naomi responded when she heard the name Boaz. She said, "The Lord bless him! Oh Ruth, he's a close relative of our family. Stay in his field, just as he has said. You'll be safe there."

So Ruth continued to work with the servant girls of Boaz. She gathered grain throughout the barley harvest and the wheat harvest.

Ruth and Boaz

Ruth 3 & 4 #76

At the end of harvest, Naomi said to Ruth, "I am going to make sure you're cared for. Here's what you're to do. Take a bath and put on some perfume. Dress in your best clothes. Boaz and his men will be working late tonight at the threshing floor. When they're done, they'll eat and drink, and then sleep on the threshing floor to protect the grain.

"Go there, but don't let the men see you. Watch carefully and note where Boaz lies down. Once everyone is asleep, uncover his feet, and lie down next to them. When he wakes up, he'll explain what you're to do."

So Ruth went to where the men were working and hid in the shadows. She watched carefully until she saw Boaz and the others lie down on the threshing floor. Their heads were towards the grain with their feet pointing out. Once they were asleep, she quietly uncovered the feet of Boaz, and lay down.

During the night, Boaz realized there was a woman lying at his feet. He said, "Who are you?"

She said, "I'm Ruth. Spread your protection over me, because you're my closest relative."

He said, "The Lord bless you! You didn't come to our village looking for a husband, rich or poor. Instead you proved yourself to be a woman of integrity.

"Still, there is a next-of-kin who is closer than I. In the morning I'll talk to him and give him an opportunity to redeem you. If he doesn't, I will. For now, it's not safe to go home in the night. I'll send you there in the morning."

She lay at his feet until morning, and then got up while it was still dark. Boaz gave her grain to take to Naomi.

Ruth told her mother-in-law everything that happened. Naomi said, "Now you're to wait. Boaz won't rest until this matter is settled."

That day, Boaz arranged a meeting with the next-of-kin and the elders of the city. He said, "Naomi has come back from Moab and is selling her husband's land. You're the closest relative. Buy it in the presence of these elders. And if you don't, I'll buy it."

The man was quick to answer. "I'll buy it!"

Boaz went on to explain, "Well, when you buy it, you must also marry Ruth, the Moabite woman. This will keep the family name with the property."

The man said, "I can't marry this woman. It would ruin my own family name. You have my permission to buy the property." With that, the man took off one of his sandals and handed it to Boaz. That made the deal legally binding.

Boaz held the sandal out toward the elders. "You are witnesses that I just bought the property that belonged to Naomi's husband and sons. And because of that, Ruth will become my wife."

People had gathered around and were watching all of this. The elders said, "Yes, we've seen the whole thing. May the Lord bless you, and may the Lord bless this woman who will become your wife."

So Boaz took Ruth as his wife, and in the course of time, she gave birth to a son named Obed. He had a son named Jesse, who became the father of a shepherd boy named David. He became the great king of Israel!

Birth of Jesus

Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 2:1-39 #178

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, which was in the northern part of Israel. Yet the Scripture said that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is near Jerusalem. At that time the empire of Rome sent out an order requiring everyone to register in the city of their ancestry. Therefore, Joseph and his wife had to go to Bethlehem.

Soon after they got there, it came time for Mary to deliver her child. As soon as the baby was born, she wrapped him in strips of cloth, and laid him in a feeding trough because there was no room in the sleeping area. Messiah was born.

Wise men

Matthew 2:1-15 #179

While Jesus was still a young child, some men came from the east. Their research revealed that a royal redeemer would one day come to Israel. They studied the stars and saw signs that indicated this king had finally been born.

They went to Jerusalem and talked to Herod, the king who was appointed by the Romans to rule over Israel. They said, "Where's the child who has been born King of the Jews? We see his star and have come to worship him."

Herod was evil and cruel. He became angry when he heard the news of a different king born in his domain. Still, he controlled himself and told the men he'd look into the matter. He called for the priests and teachers and asked, "Where does your Scripture say Messiah is to be born?"

They were quick to answer. "He's to be born in Bethlehem."

Herod went back to his visitors and asked to hear more about the heavenly signs and exactly when the royal star first appeared. He then told them, "Go to Bethlehem. Once you have found the child, report back to me. I'd like to go ... (uh) worship him as well."

The men traveled the few miles to Bethlehem and went right to the house where Joseph, Mary, and the young child lived. They bowed down before Jesus and worshiped him. They gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

God warned these men that they were not to return to Herod, so they avoided Jerusalem and traveled home a different way.

Trip to Egypt

Matthew 2:16-23 #179

That night, an angel appeared to Joseph. “Get up! Herod will send soldiers to kill the child. Go to Egypt and stay there until I tell you to return.” So Joseph got up in the night and took his family to Egypt.

Herod was angry when he realized the men from the east had disobeyed him. He sent soldiers to Bethlehem and had all the young boys killed – those under the age of two.

In time, Herod died, and the angel told Joseph it was safe to return to Israel. Still, he decided to move his family to Nazareth instead of going back to Bethlehem.

Jesus grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Anointing David

1 Samuel 16 #86

The Lord said to Samuel, “Take some anointing oil and go to the home of Jesse at Bethlehem. I’ve selected one of his sons to become king.”

Samuel said, “Lord, King Saul will kill me if he finds out.”

The Lord said, “Take a calf to Bethlehem and say you’re coming to sacrifice to the Lord. Invite Jesse and his sons to join you. I’ll show you which one to anoint.”

So Samuel went to Bethlehem and invited Jesse and his sons to join him in sacrificing to the Lord. When they came, Samuel was immediately impressed with Jesse’s oldest son. “Ah,” he thought. “This is the one the Lord will choose.”

God said, “Samuel, don’t look at outward appearance. It doesn’t matter how tall a man is or how strong. I see things you can’t see. He’s not the one.”

Jesse then introduced his second son to Samuel. Again, he wasn’t the Lord’s choice. Jesse introduced seven of his sons to the prophet. As he met each of them, the Lord said, “He’s not the one.”

Finally, Samuel said to Jesse, “Don’t you have any other children?”

“Oh, well yes. I do have one more – my youngest. He’s out watching the sheep.”

“Send for him. I’ll not eat with you until I see him.”

As soon as David walked into the room, Samuel could see that he was a striking young man – healthy and handsome. The Lord said, “This is the one. Get up and anoint him.” So Samuel anointed him with oil. After that the Spirit of God departed from King Saul and came upon David in a mighty way.

Bethel

Jacob's Ladder

Genesis 28 #23

Esau was angry when he learned that Jacob had deceived their father and received the family blessing. He said, "After my father dies, I'll kill Jacob!"

Rebekah heard this and rushed to tell Jacob. "You must leave. Go to my brother's house! I'll send for you once Esau gets over his anger. Go quickly. I don't want to lose both of you in one day!"

She then got Isaac's permission for Jacob's trip. Isaac agreed that Jacob should go to Rebekah's country and find a wife.

Jacob started his journey to his mother's country. His father had said, "You're not to marry a Canaanite woman. Go back to your mother's family and find a wife there. May God give you the blessings he promised Abraham!"

Jacob traveled all day. That night, he slept on the ground, using a rock for a pillow.

During the night he dreamed he saw a ladder that went up to Heaven. There were angels going up and coming down! He saw the Lord standing above the ladder saying, "I Am the Lord God of Abraham and your father Isaac. I'm giving this land to you and your descendants. All the earth will be blessed because of them! I'm with you and will watch over you as you go. I'll bring you back to this land."

Suddenly Jacob woke up and was afraid. He said, "Oh... God is here and I didn't know it! This is the house of God and the doorway to Heaven!"

He took the rock he had used as a pillow and used it to build an altar. He poured oil on it and called the place Bethel, which means "the house of God." He said, "If God watches over me, and provides for me, and brings me back to this land, then he'll be my God, and I'll give him a tenth of all he gives to me."

The Old Prophet

1 Kings 13:11-32 #121

There was an old prophet living at Bethel. His sons told him about the young man of God from Judah, and what he had done at Jeroboam's altar. The old prophet said, "Which way did he go?"

He then told his sons to saddle his donkey. He rode down the road until he found the man of God sitting under an oak tree.

"Are you the man of God from Judah?"

"Yes, I am."

The old prophet said, "Come home with me and I'll serve you a meal."

“No, I can’t go with you. The Lord told me not to eat or drink anything while I’m here.”

The old man said, “Yes I know. I’m a prophet too, just like you. The Lord sent an angel to me who told me to come get you and provide you food and water. So come to my house.”

This was a lie, but the man of God went with him and ate bread in his house and drank water. While they were sitting at the table, the Lord spoke through the old prophet, saying, “You’ve rebelled against my command. I told you not to eat or drink anything at this place. Because you disobeyed me, you’ll die and you won’t be buried in your family’s grave.”

After the two men were done eating, the old prophet saddled the young man’s donkey. He left, and along the way a lion jumped on the man of God and killed him. His body fell to the ground, but the donkey didn’t run away. He simply stood by the body of the young prophet. The lion stood on the other side.

Some travelers saw this and told the people in the town about it. When the old prophet heard it, he said, “I know who that is. It’s the man of God who disobeyed the Lord.”

He told his sons to once again saddle a donkey for him. He went and found the body. The lion was still standing next to it, as well as the donkey. Yet the lion hadn’t eaten the corpse nor attacked the donkey.

The old prophet put the body of the man of God on the donkey that was standing there. He took it back home and buried it in his own grave. He mourned the young man’s death saying, “Oh my brother.”

He then told his sons. “When I die, bury me where this man of God is buried. Put my bones beside his bones. He spoke God’s words against these idols and Israel’s sin. Everything he said will come true.”

Josiah's fulfilling prophecy

II Kings 23 & II Chronicles 34:32–35:1-27 #158

Years later, King Josiah and the nation of Judah renewed their commitment to the Laws of God. The king then took all the false altars out of the Temple and had them burned. The people also went throughout Jerusalem and destroyed all the idols that were in the city.

Once that was done, the king personally went throughout the land of Judah and oversaw the destruction of idol worship in all the cities. Next he went throughout the land of Israel and destroyed all the idols and altars that were there. When he found a major pagan spot, he desecrated the altar so the people would never use it again.

He went to the altar Jeroboam had built at Bethel. Josiah totally destroyed everything that was around it. He saw some tombs nearby, so he sent men to get some human bones. He burned them on top of the altar to desecrate it.

Then Josiah saw a monument nearby. He said, "What's that?"

The men of the area said, "That's the tomb of the prophet who came from Judah. The Lord sent him here to speak against Jeroboam when he dedicated this altar to his golden calves. He prophesied and told the people what you would do to this altar. Today you have fulfilled his prophecy. It is also the grave of an old prophet from Samaria."

Josiah said, "Don't disturb these bones." He then returned to Jerusalem.

Shiloh

Hannah

1 Samuel 1 #77

Hannah couldn't have children. This tormented her so much that she went to the Tabernacle and begged God for a child. She said, "Oh Lord, if you'll give me a son, I'll give him back to you and he'll serve you for the rest of his life."

Eli, the high priest, noticed that Hannah was moving her mouth but she wasn't saying anything. He thought she was drunk. "Woman, put away your wine!"

"Oh sir! I'm not drunk. I'm praying to God."

"Oh, well ... uh ... go your way. The Lord will answer your prayer."

Sure enough, the Lord answered her prayer. In less than a year, she gave birth to a baby boy and named him "Samuel," which means "God heard me."

When the boy was old enough, his mother took him back to the Tabernacle and presented him to Eli. She said, "I prayed for a child, and the Lord answered me. Now I'll give my son to the Lord, and he'll serve Him for the rest of his life."

Every year Hannah came to visit and brought new clothes for Samuel. The priest prayed that God would give Hannah more children. After that she had three sons and two daughters.

Call of Samuel

1 Samuel 2 – 3 #77

Eli gave Samuel work to do in the Tabernacle. As he grew physically, he also grew in favor with the Lord and with people.

Eli's sons were just the opposite. They were wicked and didn't honor God in any way. Many of their sins were committed in the house of the Lord. Eli talked to them about this but did nothing about it.

One night, while Samuel was sleeping, the Lord called out, "Samuel, Samuel."

He woke up and ran to where Eli was sleeping. He said, "Yes, I'm here!"

Eli woke up and looked at the boy. "I didn't call you, Samuel. Go back to your bed."

Samuel went back and lay down. As he was going to sleep, the Lord called him again. "Samuel, Samuel."

This time he knew he wasn't dreaming. He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am!"

Eli once again said, "Son, I didn't call you. Now, go back to sleep." So Samuel went back and lay down.

Once again, the Lord called to him, "Samuel, Samuel."

At this point in his life, Samuel didn't know God, and the Lord hadn't talked to him.

So, the boy did the only thing he knew to do. For the third time, he ran to Eli. "I'm here because you called me."

This time, Eli realized what was happening. He knew the Lord was calling Samuel, so he said, "Go back and lie down. If you hear someone calling you again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

Samuel went back to his bed and lay down. The Lord called him once again, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Quietly Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

God said, "I'm not pleased with how Eli allows his sons to do evil in my house. I'm going to judge him and his sons."

Samuel lay back in his bed. In the morning, Eli called him, "Samuel, what did the Lord say to you?"

The boy was afraid to tell him the message from God. Eli said, "Son, don't hide it from me." So Samuel told him everything.

Eli said, "He is Lord! Let Him do what is good in His eyes."

The Lord was with Samuel from that day on, and God continued to reveal His words to him. Samuel obeyed the Lord, and everything he said came true. All of Israel recognized that he was a prophet of the Lord.

Brides for Benjamin

Judges 20 – 21 #74

Because of what the Benjamites had done, the entire nation of Israel prepared for civil war. All the tribes united against the tribe of Benjamin. They declared that no city was exempt from this war. Any that violated this would be destroyed. They also swore an oath that no man would give his daughter to marry a Benjaminite.

The tribe of Benjamin almost won the war, but finally the Lord fought against them. Soon they were terrified and tried to run, but Israel had them surrounded. The only ones to survive were 600 men who hid in a fortress. Everyone else in the tribe was killed, and their cities destroyed.

Once it was over, the people of Israel realized what they had done. They went to Bethel and sat before the Lord. They sobbed and mourned. “Oh Lord God. What have we done? Now we’re missing one of our twelve tribes.”

They stayed before the Lord all day and made sacrifices. They said, “What can we do? We only have 600 men from Benjamin and all their women are dead.” They knew it was important that the tribe repopulate.

They couldn’t give them their daughters because of the oath they had taken. Suddenly they got an idea. “Was there a city that didn’t come to battle as they were commanded?”

One city had disobeyed the order to fight. So the army of Israel went and killed everyone there. The only exception was virgin women. When the battle was over, they had 400 virgins from that city.

Israel made peace with the 600 men in the fortress and gave them the 400 women to be their wives. They still needed 200 women.

Then they had another idea. They said to the Benjaminites, “Shiloh has an annual festival. At one point, young women come dancing out of the city. Hide in the vineyard next to the road. When the time is right, each of you jump out and grab a wife for yourself. Take them back to your own land. Don’t worry about their fathers and brothers. They’ll complain to us, but we’ll explain the situation.”

So the Benjaminites hid in the vineyard next to the road. They waited until the young women came dancing out of Shiloh. At the right moment, they jumped up and grabbed wives for themselves.

The fathers and brothers of the women complained, but the men of Israel said, “Be kind and let them keep your daughters. They need wives, and we don’t have enough to give them. Don’t worry about the curse because you didn’t actually give them your daughters. They took them!”

The men of Benjamin went back to their cities and rebuilt them. They settled down with their new wives and raised families. Once again, all was peaceful in the land.

Samaria

Joseph and His Brothers

Genesis 37 #28

The ten older brothers of Jacob took the family flocks to graze in a field near Shechem. Jacob decided to send Joseph to see how they were doing. He couldn't find them when he got there, but someone told him they had gone to Dothan.

When the brothers saw him coming, they said, "Here comes that 'dreamer.' Let's kill him and throw him into a deep pit. Then we'll see what happens to his dreams!"

Reuben was the oldest brother and said, "Don't kill him! Just throw him into a pit." His plan was to rescue the boy later and send him back to his father. So the brothers agreed, and threw Joseph into a pit.

Reuben went on an errand while the others ate a meal. While they were eating, a group of merchants came by on their way to Egypt. Suddenly one of the brothers, named Judah, had an idea. "Why should we kill Joseph? After all, he's our brother. Instead, let's sell him!" So they sold him to the merchants.

Reuben came back later and was shocked to see that the boy was gone. The brothers told him what they had done.

Together they thought of a story to tell their father.

Four Lepers

II Kings 6:24 – 7:20 #139

The king of Syria once again invaded Israel. His army surrounded Samaria and set up camp just outside the city walls. They cut off all supplies going into the city. Eventually there was no food, and the people started to starve. It was so bad that a donkey's head sold for two pounds of silver, and a small bowl of dove's droppings sold for two ounces of silver.

The king said, "I'll get Elisha for this if it's the last thing I do." He sent a guard to cut off the prophet's head.

Elisha was sitting in his house with several elders of Israel. He said, "Our murdering king has sent a guard to cut off my head. The king is right behind him."

Just then the king walked in. He yelled at the prophet. "You said all this trouble is from God. So why should I serve him if he acts like this?"

Elisha said, "I have a message from God. He said this disaster is almost over. Tomorrow at this time, people will buy a sack of fine flour for a few coins. They'll buy a large sack of barley for the same price."

The king's chief adviser said, "Impossible! We couldn't have that much food around here even if God opened up the windows of heaven."

The man of God said, “You’ll see it with your own eyes, but you won’t eat any of it.”

During the night, the Syrian army heard a loud noise like a large army marching toward them. The noise got louder and sounded like the army had many horses and chariots.

The Syrian soldiers thought Israel had hired other nations to come and help them. They yelled, “Let’s get out of here!” They got up and ran away, leaving everything behind.

Before light the next morning, four lepers were sitting just outside of the city gates. One said to the others, “Why are we just sitting here slowly dying of hunger?”

Another one said, “Well, it’s no better in the city. If we go in there, we’ll still die of hunger.”

“Well that’s true, but we can’t stay here. Let’s go into the Syrian camp. If they kill us – well, we’re about to die anyway. But maybe they’ll have pity on us and give us food.”

So, the four men got up and walked toward the camp, not knowing it was empty. They went into the first tent and found food, gold, silver, and expensive clothes. The first thing they did was eat the food. They then took the other things away and hid them. They came back and hid what they found in the next tent.

Finally they said, “What we’re doing isn’t right. People are dying of hunger on the other side of the wall. God will punish us if we don’t go tell them about this.”

So they went to the city gate and yelled to the gatekeeper, telling him exactly what they found. When the king heard about this, he thought it was a trap. He said, “The Syrian army is hiding out of sight, waiting for us to come out of the city.”

So he sent a few soldiers to scout out the land. The men found the route the Syrians had taken. It was full of clothes and equipment the army had thrown away so they could run faster.

The soldiers went back and told the king what they had found. With that, people flooded out of the city to raid the Syrian camp. The price of food immediately dropped.

The king gave his chief adviser the job of crowd control at the gate. Soon, he was trampled to death. All of this fulfilled what the prophet had said.

Israel in Exile

2 Kings 17 #152

Israel was the northern kingdom, separated from the southern kingdom of Judah. None of Israel’s kings followed the Lord, even though great prophets were sent to them. The people refused to turn to God.

So, after many warnings, God finally allowed them to be conquered.

The armies of Assyria invaded Israel, captured their king, and put him in prison. They then encircled Samaria and kept anyone from going in or out. This lasted for three years, until finally Samaria surrendered.

The Assyrians were cruel. They used the people of Israel as a warning to other nations not to rebel against their authority. Those who survived were taken off the land and sent into exile.

Other people were brought in to live on the land of Israel. They settled in the cities and called their new nation Samaria.

The new people knew nothing about the Lord, so they continued worshiping the idols they brought with them. God sent lions among them, and many people were killed.

An advisor to the king of Assyria said, “The Samaritans don’t know the God of the land. He sent lions to kill them because they don’t know how to worship him correctly.”

So the king said, “Select a priest from the people of Israel and send him back to Samaria. Have him teach the people how to worship the God of the land.”

A priest was selected and sent back. He taught the Samaritans about the Lord and how to worship him. The people started worshiping God, but they also kept their old idols. They mixed the two together. This continued for many years to come.

Philip presents the gospel to the people

Acts 8:4 – 8:40 #229

When the persecution started in Jerusalem, believers were scattered throughout the region. Wherever they went, they told people about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ. The Holy Spirit allowed him to perform miracles among the people. Unclean spirits were cast out – screaming. The paralyzed were healed as well as the lame. The people of the city were amazed at what they saw, so they listened carefully to his preaching. They were filled with joy at what they heard.

The people there had been following the witchcraft of a man named Simon. But when they heard the gospel of Christ, they received it with joy. Simon also believed and was baptized with the others.

The apostles heard that the people of Samaria welcomed the gospel, so they sent Peter and John to meet with them. After they arrived, they prayed for the believers, asking God to give them the Holy Spirit. The two men then laid their hands on the people, and the people immediately received the Holy Spirit.

Simon watched this with amazement. He offered Peter and John money and said, “Give me this power, so I can lay my hands on people and they’ll receive the Holy Spirit.”

Peter said, “You’ll be destroyed along with your money. You’re still holding on to your old ways. Evil lives inside of you. Pray and ask God to get rid of it.”

Simon cried out, “Please, pray for me. I don’t want these things to happen.”

After Peter and John went back to Jerusalem, God sent an angel to Philip. “Go to the road that leads south from Jerusalem.”

Sychar

Woman at the Well

John 4: 1-42 #184

One time Jesus took his disciples through Samaria as he traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee. This was unusual since Jews avoided any contact with Samaritans.

Around noon, they came to a well near one of the Samaritan villages. Jesus was tired, so he sat down while his disciples went into the town to buy food.

A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Please give me some water to drink."

The woman was surprised. "Jews usually don't talk to Samaritans. So, why did you ask me for a drink, since I'm a Samaritan woman?"

Jesus said, "If you knew who I am, you would ask me to give you living water."

She said, "Sir, the well is deep, and you have no bucket. How can you get 'living water'? Are you greater than Jacob who dug this well?"

Jesus said, "Those who drink from this well will get thirsty again. But those who drink my water will have a living well inside them that continually springs up to eternal life."

The woman was amazed. "Oh please, give me this water so I'll never get thirsty again. Then I won't have to come back to this well."

"Go get your husband and bring him here."

She looked away. "I don't have a husband."

"I know you don't. You've had five husbands, and the one you are living with now is not your husband."

Her eyes snapped back. "Uh, sir, I can tell you're a prophet. Please settle this age-old argument. We Samaritans say that this mountain is the place to worship God. The Jews say a person has to go to Jerusalem to worship. Who's right?"

"Woman, listen carefully. The time has now come when God is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and truth."

She was almost speechless! "I know that someday the Messiah is coming, and he'll explain all these things."

Jesus smiled. "The person speaking to you is the Messiah."

The woman left her water jug and rushed back to the village just as the disciples were returning with the food. They were amazed that Jesus had been talking with her, but no one said anything about it.

When the woman got to the town, she told everyone about the man she had met at the well. "Come and see someone who told me everything I've ever done in my life. Surely

he's the Christ." The men were curious, so they went out to see what she was talking about.

Meanwhile, the disciples were trying to get Jesus to eat the food they had brought from town. He said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

They looked at one another. "Did someone bring him something to eat?"

Jesus shook his head. "No, my food is to do the will of God."

"You think we still have four months until harvest." He pointed to the men coming out from the town. "Look over there. It's time to harvest right now."

The men came and talked with Jesus, and finally asked him to stay with them for a while. He stayed for two days, and many believed on him as their Lord and Savior.

Shechem

Stone of Witness

Joshua 23-24 #60

Gideon and his many wives produced seventy sons. He also had a son by a concubine in the town of Shechem. His name was Abimelech.

When Joshua knew he was about to die, he called the people of Israel to meet with him at Shechem. When they were gathered, he said, "You have seen all that the Lord has done for you. You have land where your families can live because he fought for you.

"Be strong and continue to obey the Law of Moses. Don't turn away from it. Don't start worshiping the gods of the people who still live in this land. Instead, remain true to the Lord your God. If you don't, he will take you off this land."

Joshua then reviewed the entire history of Israel. He finished by saying, "God sent hornets ahead of you and drove out the people who lived on this land. He gave you fields you didn't buy, houses you didn't build, and vineyards you didn't plant.

"Choose today who you're going to worship. You can serve the idols your fathers bowed down to. You can worship the gods of the people who live in this land. Or you can worship and serve the Lord who brought you here with his mighty hand. As for me and my family, we'll serve the Lord."

The people said, "We won't worship the gods of this land. We'll remain true to the Lord our God. We've seen his mighty works, so we too will serve the Lord."

Joshua said, "I don't believe you. You'll turn your back on the Lord, so he'll have to destroy you. How could you do that after he's been so good to you?"

The people shouted, "No! We'll worship and serve the Lord."

Joshua said, "You're witnesses to what you've said." He then set up a large stone next to the sanctuary of the Lord. He said, "Look at this stone! It has heard you and is a witness to what you've said. Get rid of all the stupid idols and fully trust in the Lord your God."

Soon afterwards, Joshua died at 110 years old.

Killed by a Woman!

Judges 9 #66

Gideon and his many wives produced seventy sons. He also had a son by a concubine in the town of Shechem. His name was Abimelech.

The men of Shechem agreed to make Abimelech, son of Gideon, king of Israel. They gave him money, so he was able to hire a gang of thugs as his private army. The first thing they did was to kill all the other sons of Gideon.

Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years. Then God put a bad spirit between him and the men of Shechem. This was to bring justice for what they had done to the sons of Gideon.

Abimelech heard about their rebellion, so at night, he put his men in hiding outside of the city so he could attack in the morning. At sunrise, one of the men of Shechem stood at the gate with the mayor. Suddenly he saw some movement. He said, "Look! What is that? Is it men coming to attack us?"

The mayor said, "No. That's only shadows from the mountain."

A few moments later, the man saw several units of men coming at the city. He ran back into the city and yelled, "We're under attack!"

The battle lasted several days. Finally, the city was captured, and the people escaped to a tower. Abimelech and his men put tree branches around the tower and burned it down. Over 1,000 men and women died there that day. Jotham's curse on the men of Shechem had come true.

Abimelech destroyed the city and tore it down. He spread salt over it so nothing could grow there.

When that was done, he and his men went to destroy another rebellious city. Again, the people escaped to a tower. Abimelech and his men went and got wood so they could set it on fire. As they were putting it in place, a woman looked down and saw Abimelech directly beneath her. So she dropped a piece of a millstone down on his head.

Abimelech called for one of his soldiers. "Quick, kill me with your sword! I don't want to be known as the man who was killed by a woman!"

Temple Front Steps

Trial of Abraham

Genesis 22 #16

When Isaac was a young man, God came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, take Isaac, the son you love so dearly, and go to a place I'll show you. There, you're to sacrifice him as a burnt offering.”

So the next morning, Abraham got up early and cut wood for the sacrifice. He saddled a donkey, took two servants, and started on the journey.

Three days later, Abraham saw the place God had selected. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey. Isaac and I will go and worship the Lord. We'll come back after the sacrifice.”

He told Isaac to carry the wood. Abraham took the hot coals and the knife. Isaac looked around and asked: “Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where's the lamb for sacrifice?” Abraham looked at his son and finally said, “God will provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice.”

When they got to the place God had selected, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on top. Next, he tied up his son and put him on top of the wood. He then reached for the knife to kill his son.

With that, the Angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven. “Abraham, Abraham! Don't kill your son! Don't do anything to him! For now I know you fear God, since you were willing to give me your son!”

Abraham looked off to the side and saw a ram with his horns caught in a bush. He took the ram and used him as the sacrifice instead of his son. Abraham named the place “The Lord Will Provide”.

Afterwards, God said to Abraham, “Because you have obeyed me, I'll bless you and your descendants. I'll make your descendants as hard to count as the stars. They'll be as hard to count as the sand on the seashore. On top of that, I'll make them prominent, even in the cities of their enemies! And the whole earth will be blessed because of them.”

Then Abraham and Isaac went back to where the servants were waiting, and together they went home.

David Numbering the People

II Samuel 24 & I Chronicles 21 #113

King David called for Joab and said, “Go throughout the land and number all the people.” He did this to see how big of an army he could build.

Joab knew this wasn’t God’s will for David. He said, “Don’t disobey the Lord. God will give you as many people as you need for any situation.” But David insisted, so Joab used his army to go to every part of Israel and count the people. When they were finished, he told David there were over 1,300,000 men who were able to go to war if needed.

After David heard this report, he knew the Lord wasn’t pleased that he had done this. He prayed, “Oh God, I’ve acted foolishly and sinned against you. Forgive my sin.”

The Lord sent a prophet to give David a message. “You’re to choose one of three punishments for this sin.

a famine that will devastate the land three years,

an invading army to whom you’ll lose battle after battle for three months,

or an epidemic that will sweep across the land for three days.”

David said, “All three of these terrify me! Still, I choose to suffer under the hand of God, rather than at the hands of men. I know the Lord is merciful.”

So God sent the Angel of the Lord, who swept across the land with a severe epidemic. 70,000 men died! The Angel then focused on Jerusalem. As death came upon the city, God said, “Stop! It’s enough!”

The Angel immediately stopped. He was over a threshing floor owned by a Jebusite named Ornan.

It was the exact place where Abraham had offered his son to the Lord.

David looked up and saw the Angel holding a sword stretched out over the city. Ornan also saw the Angel so he ran and hid.

David fell down with his face to the ground. “Oh Lord, I’m the one who sinned! Not these people. They’re like sheep. What have they done? Punish me and my family.”

The prophet walked up to David with a message from God. “Build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor.” David immediately walked toward it. When Ornan saw this, he ran to the king and bowed down.

David said, “Sell me your threshing floor, so I can build an altar to the Lord. Then he will hold back the plague from the people. I’ll pay you full price for it.”

Ornan said, “Oh King, I’ll give it to you. Please take it and build your altar. Use my oxen for the burnt offering, and use my wood for the fire. I give it all. I trust the Lord will hear you.”

David said, “No my friend, I’ll buy it all at full price. I won’t sacrifice to the Lord using that which costs me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor, the oxen, and the wood. He then built the altar and sacrificed to the Lord.

God heard David’s prayer and sent fire from heaven to burn up the offering. He then commanded the Angel, “Put away your sword!” With that, the epidemic was over.

From that day on, David used that altar whenever he sacrificed to God. He said, “This is the house of the Lord.”

Then he organized people and bought materials that were needed for building the Temple. Years later, Solomon built the Temple of the Lord at that very place.

A Book is Found

II Kings 22 & II Chronicles 34:1-32 #157

Josiah was eight years old when he became king of Judah. He walked with the Lord from the day he became king until the day he died 31 years later. He was the last great king before the people of Judah went into captivity.

When he was 26 years old, he hired men to restore the Temple. Money had been given for that purpose, so he gave it to the workmen and said, “You have proven yourselves to be men of integrity. Therefore you don’t have to keep an account of this money.”

One day, a workman found the Book of the Law, written by Moses. He sent it to the king, who had it read out loud. When Josiah heard what was written in the book, he ripped his clothes and said, “Surely the Lord’s anger is great against us! Our ancestors made a contract with God and then broke it over and over. His judgment on us must be close at hand. Go and find someone who can ask the Lord about this.”

The priest went to a certain section of the city to the home of Huldah, a woman prophet. They asked her about what was written in the book. She said, “I have a message from God to the man who sent you here.

“God says, ‘The people of this land have totally turned against me. They serve idols and false gods. I’m about to fulfill the judgment written in the book you found. Disaster will soon fall on this place and everyone who lives here. Nothing can turn away the judgment that is coming.’ ”

Huldah then said, “I have another message to the king of Judah. The Lord says, ‘When you heard the words of this book, your heart was sad and you ripped your clothes and cried. You have sought me with humility, and I heard you. Therefore, you will not see the disaster I’m bringing on this place. I will wait until you die and are buried.’ ”

The priest took these words back to Josiah. When he heard them, he gathered together all the elders of Jerusalem and Judah. They in turn went and got the rest of the people. Everyone went to the Temple, where they heard the king read the Law of Moses. They heard about the agreements their nation had with God.

Once the reading of the Law was done, Josiah stood in the place reserved for the king. In front of everyone, he made those same commitments to the Lord. He vowed that he would follow God's commandments with all of his energies and power. All the people agreed to do the same.

City of David

II Samuel 5, 23:13-23 & I Chronicles 11

Jerusalem was a walled city on Mount Zion controlled by the Jebusites. David said to his men, "Whoever is able to conquer this city will become the commander of my army."

Joab conquered it by getting inside the walls through the water tunnels. So he became the commander of the army.

David renamed the town, "The City of David," and from that time on it was the center of his government.

Widow's coins

Mark 12:41-44 & Luke 21:1-4 #214

As Jesus was teaching in the temple complex, he looked across the way at the temple treasury. He watched the crowd dropping money into the treasury, especially the rich people who were putting in large amounts. Suddenly a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth less than a cent.

Jesus called his disciples around him and said, "Listen to me. That poor widow has put more into the temple treasury than all those other people. They gave a little out of all they have. But she is extremely poor. What she gave was all she has. She gave the only money she has to live on."

Bethesda Pool

Pool of Bethesda

John 5 #196

Jesus went to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival. There was a pool near the Sheep Gate called Bethesda. Local people believed that occasionally an angel would stir the waters of the pool. They felt a sick person would be healed if he or she were the first to get into the water after it was stirred. Therefore a large group stayed near the pool, waiting for the angel.

Jesus went there and saw a man who had been sick for 38 years. The Lord said, “Do you want to be healed?”

The man said, “Yes, but when I see the stirring of the waters, someone always gets into the pool before me.”

Jesus said, “Stand up! Pick up your bedroll and walk.” Immediately the man was healed and got up. Jesus slipped away into the crowd as the man was picking up his bedroll.

Some of the Jewish leaders saw the man carrying his bedroll. They said, “How dare you! This is the Sabbath. It’s not legal to carry bedrolls on the Sabbath.”

The man said, “But...but...a man healed me and then told me to pick up my bedroll and go home.”

“Who told you to do this work on a Sabbath?”

“I don’t know. He healed me and then disappeared into the crowd.”

Later, Jesus saw this man in the temple. The Lord said, “You’ve been healed, but you must stop sinning. If you don’t, something worse will happen to you.” The man now knew who had healed him. So he rushed to the Jewish leaders and told them that it was Jesus.

Hearing this made them more determined to end the influence Jesus had with the people. They felt his actions on the Sabbath were totally unacceptable.

Jesus said to them, “My Father works on the Sabbath, so I will too.”

Hearing this, the leaders started talking about killing him. They said, “He breaks the rules about the Sabbath. Now he calls God his father. He thinks he’s equal with God!”

Roof Top in Old City

Athaliah

II Chronicles 21-23 & II Kings 8:16-29, 9:14-29, 11:1-21 #143

King Jehoshaphat wanted to establish a good relationship between Judah and Israel. To do that, he had his oldest son marry Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel. Unfortunately, Athaliah influenced her husband to follow the sinful ways of Ahab.

When Jehoshaphat died, his son became an evil king. God judged him so he would die a slow agonizing death. Unfortunately, his son was also evil because he followed the direction of his mother Athaliah. He was killed soon after becoming king.

At that point, Athaliah decided to become the king, even though she was a woman. Still, she knew the people of Judah always selected their kings from the descendants of David. That meant the people could kill her and make one of her grandchildren king. Therefore, she decided to kill them. She called for the guard and told him to go to the palace and kill them all.

Athaliah's daughter heard this and rushed to the palace. She worshiped the Lord and was married to Jehoiada, the high priest. At the palace, she took the baby Joash and his nurse, and left just before the guards got there. She hid the child in the Temple of the Lord. Meanwhile the guards killed all the other royal descendants of David.

Athaliah was confident she had killed them all. So she became king of Judah and ruled the nation for six years.

Jehoiada hid Joash in the Temple until he was seven years old. Finally the priest knew it was time to act. He organized a meeting with trusted military leaders and the heads of various family groups. He asked them, "What would you do if you had a descendant of King David?"

"We would make him king!"

Jehoiada then brought Joash before them and said, "Here is your next king."

Together, they set a date to bring him out before the people. They organized the military, Temple activities, and crowd control. On the big day, the people of Judah went to the Temple.

Joash was brought out and put in the place reserved for the king. Jehoiada anointed him with oil and placed a crown on his head. The trumpets blew, the choir sang, and the people shouted, "Long live the king!!"

Athaliah heard all the shouting, so she went out to see what was going on. People were running through the streets, celebrating, and talking about the king. She walked into the Temple and saw Joash in the place reserved for the king. He had a crown on his head. She ripped her clothes and screamed, "Treason! Treason!"

Jehoiada pointed at her and said, “Take that woman out, because it is not right to kill someone in the Temple.”

So they dragged Athaliah out of the Temple and killed her at the horse corral. The people went through the city and tore down everything that had to do with Baal. The high priest once again set up the worship of the Lord in the Temple. Everyone rejoiced because Athaliah’s reign of terror was over.

New Birth

John 2:13-23, John 3: 1-21, Numbers 21:4-9 #183

Nicodemus was a Jewish ruler and a Pharisee. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Teacher, we know you’re from God because we see your miracles.”

Jesus got right to the point, “Listen to me carefully. Unless a person is born again, he can’t see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus was shocked. “That’s impossible! How can a man get back in his mother’s womb and be born a second time?”

Jesus explained, “To get to heaven, a person has to experience physical birth and spiritual birth. If you’re only born once, you’ll focus on the things of this earth. Those who are born spiritually, focus on the things of the Spirit. You must be born a second time.

“Don’t be so amazed. There are many things you can’t see with your eyes. You hear and feel the wind, but you can’t see it. So it is with the Spirit of God.”

Nicodemus shook his head, “I just don’t understand.”

Jesus sat back and looked at him. “You are a teacher of Israel, and you don’t understand these things?”

“In the wilderness, the people of Israel complained against God. He sent snakes among them, and many died. He then told Moses to make a brass snake and put it on a pole. Those who looked at it were healed. Others died because they refused to look.

“So it’ll be with the Son of Man. He’ll be lifted up, and those who believe on him will have eternal life.

“God loved the world so much that he sent his Son to save the world and bring eternal life to those who believe.

“Let me explain it carefully so you can understand. If you believe on the Son of God, you will have eternal life. If you don’t believe on him, you must suffer God’s judgment.”

Man Born Blind

John 9:1-38 #205

Jesus and his disciples passed a man who had been blind since birth. His disciples said, "Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be blind? Was it his sin, or his parents'?"

Jesus said, "His blindness isn't the result of a particular sin. It was given to him so he could display God's power. Don't forget, I am the light of the world."

Jesus then spit on the ground and made wet clay. He placed it on the man's eyes and said, "Go to the pool and wash this off."

The man went to the pool, washed his eyes, and suddenly he could see. He went home, and his neighbors were shocked that he could see. They thought maybe he wasn't the same man. He said, "It's true, I'm the man who was born blind!"

"How did you get your sight?"

"A man called Jesus spit on the ground and made wet clay. He put some on my eyes and told me to go wash it off. As soon as I did, I could see."

They said, "Where is this man?"

"I don't know."

They took him to the Pharisees, and he explained the whole thing to them. He ended his story by saying, "So I went to the pool and washed it off just like he told me. Now I can see!"

This started an argument among the religious leaders. Some didn't think this miracle was from God, because it was done on the Sabbath. Others pointed out that evil men can't do miracles.

So they asked the man. "What do you say? What kind of man healed your blindness?"

Without hesitation he said, "He's a prophet!"

They didn't want to hear that. So some questioned whether the man had ever been blind in the first place.

They called for his parents. "Is this your blind son? If so, how is it that he can see?"

The parents were afraid to answer because they knew the religious leaders could have them expelled from the synagogue. They said, "He's our son, and yes, he was born blind. That's all we know. We have no idea why he can now see. He's an adult, ask him."

So they once again turned to the man. "Don't praise this man Jesus, who is evil. Give your praise to God."

The man said, "I don't know about theology. All I know is, I used to be blind, but now I can see."

Again, they didn't like his answer. So they once again asked him how it happened.

He said, "I've already told you what happened. Why do you want to hear it again? Are you planning to become his disciples?"

They were stunned at his boldness. "No! We are disciples of Moses, who talked with God. This man? We don't know what authority he has."

The man was surprised. He said, "You don't know where he gets his authority? Look at me! I was blind and he healed me! God doesn't give that kind of power to evil people!"

This made the Pharisees mad. "How dare you try to teach us!" They immediately threw him out of the synagogue.

Jesus heard about what happened, so he went and found the man. He said, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

"Lord, who is he that I may believe?"

Jesus smiled, "You have seen him with your own eyes. He is the one talking to you."

The man fell down in worship and said, "Lord, I believe."

Mount of Olives

The Ascension of Christ

Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-53; John 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-26; I Corinthians 15:6#223

Jesus then led his disciples to the Mount of Olives. He said, "Don't leave Jerusalem until you receive the promise from the Father. John baptized with water, but now you'll be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

They said, "Lord, is now the time you're going to make Israel into a kingdom again?"

Jesus said, "Only the Father knows when that will happen. Meanwhile, you're to spread the good news that people can receive forgiveness of sins."

"Wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes upon you. He'll give you power to spread this good news. Start in Jerusalem and then go to the entire nation, including Samaria. Finally, go to the entire world."

Jesus then blessed them. As he did, he suddenly moved upward and disappeared in a cloud. The disciples stood there looking up.

Two men, dressed in white, appeared nearby. They said, "Why are you standing there looking into the sky? You saw Jesus go up. He will come back in the same way."

Triumphal Entry

John 12:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:39-40 #213

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. He told two of his disciples, "Go into the village, and there you'll find a donkey with her colt. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you're doing, tell them 'the Lord has need of them'."

The two went into the village and found the donkey and colt. The men untied them and started walking away. The owners said, "What are you doing?" They replied, "The Lord has need of them," so he allowed them to go. So the disciples brought the donkey and colt to Jesus.

No one had ever ridden the colt before that day, yet the disciples put their robes on it and helped Jesus get on. As he rode along the path, people spread their robes in front of him. The crowds grew as he rode down the Mount of Olives. They got palm branches and laid them on the path.

People shouted for joy, and praised God for all the miracles they had seen. "Blessed is the King who is coming in the name of the Lord!" As Jesus continued on, they shouted, "Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!"

Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Do you hear what your followers are saying? Make them stop!"

Jesus said, "If they stop, the stones will start shouting."

As he was about to enter the city, he stopped and started to cry. He said, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! If you had only known! This was a special day for you, a day that would bring you peace. But now your eyes will be covered so you won’t be able to see. A mighty army will destroy you – all because you didn’t recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

He and the crowd continued into Jerusalem. The entire city was shaken by the event. Visitors from other countries asked, “Who is this?” The people said, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth.”

Garden of Gethsemane

Matthew 26:30-39, 52-57; Luke 22:42-51; John 18:3-10 #216

As Jesus and his disciples walked out of the gates of Jerusalem, he said, “All of you will abandon me tonight ... but after I rise from the dead, I’ll meet you in Galilee.”

Peter spoke up, “Lord, I’ll never desert you, even if everyone else does.”

Jesus stopped and looked at him. “Oh Peter, this very night you’ll deny you even know me – and not just once. Before the rooster crows in the morning, three times you’ll tell people you don’t know me.”

Peter was shocked, “Lord! Even if it means death, I’ll never deny you!” All the other disciples said the same thing.

They came to a grove of olive trees called the Garden of Gethsemane. At the entrance Jesus told his disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray.” Then he took Peter, James, and John into the garden. Once there, he started to agonize. He said, “I’m overcome with grief. Stay awake and pray with me.”

He then went a little farther and fell down. “Father, this cup of agony – do I have to drink it? You can do anything. Take it away from me! But if not, I’ll follow your plan for me.”

He went back to the three men and found them sleeping. He woke them up and said, “Peter, stay awake and pray with me. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

He went back and once again he prayed in deep agony. “Oh Father, take this cup from me! Still, I’ll drink it if it’s your will.”

Once again, he saw that the three men were sleeping. He said, “Why are you sleeping?” They looked at him and didn’t know what to say.

When he prayed the third time, he started to sweat, but it was like drops of blood that fell to the ground. An angel appeared and gave him strength.

He went back to where his disciples were once again sleeping. Looked at them, he said, “Go ahead and sleep because the time is close.”

About then, Judas led a band of guards into the garden. He knew it was a place Jesus often went with his disciples. He said, “Watch me carefully. Jesus is the one I’ll kiss.”

They went into the garden carrying torches, swords, and clubs. Jesus turned to his disciples. "Get up! My betrayer is here."

Judas walked up to him and said, "Hello Master." And then gave him a kiss.

Jesus said, "Oh Judas, do you betray me with a kiss?" He then turned to the guards, "Who are you looking for?"

"Jesus of Nazareth!"

"I am he!"

Instantly, they were knocked back and fell to the ground. As they got up, Jesus asked again, "Who are you looking for?"

They looked at one another and said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

"Well, I told you I am he. Now let these others go their way."

Peter suddenly realized what was happening. He pulled out his sword and attacked a servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Jesus stopped him and said, "Put your sword away. Don't you understand? I could pray right now and my Father would send thousands of angels to protect me." He then turned and touched the servant's ear and healed it.

With that, all the disciples ran away. Then the guards took Jesus, tied him up, and led him out of the garden.

St. Stephen's Monastery

Stephen, The First Christian Martyr

Acts 6:8 – 7:60 #228

God's power was on Stephen. He was arrested and taken before the governing council. When he got there, men started lying about him. "He is teaching others that Jesus is going to tear down this Temple and change everything that Moses gave us."

After hearing this, the council turned and looked at Stephen. Suddenly his face became like that of an angel. In frustration, the high priest spoke up. "Are you guilty of these things?"

Stephen answered by giving a brief history of Israel. He concluded by saying, "You are a rebellious people with cold hearts! You resist the Holy Spirit just like your forefathers. They persecuted all of the prophets, and now you are walking in their footsteps. You've betrayed and murdered the Righteous One."

The council flew into a rage and started yelling at him. Through it all, the Holy Spirit controlled Stephen. Suddenly he looked up and said, "The heavens are opening, and I see Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

The crowd put their hands over their ears and screamed as loud as they could. They grabbed Stephen and took him out of the city and threw him on the ground. They gave their coats to a young man named Saul. They then took large stones and threw them at Stephen.

While the stones were hitting him, Stephen looked up and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he prayed, "Lord, forgive them for this sin." With that, he fell beneath the blows and died.

This started a great persecution of the church in Jerusalem.

Upper Room

Last Supper

Matthew 26:1-2, 21-30; Luke 22:1-13; John 13:3-17, 26-30 #215

Jesus said to Peter and John, “Go into the city and look for a man carrying a water jug. Follow him until he enters a house. Tell the owner of the house, ‘The Lord says his time has come. He’ll eat the Passover in your guest room.’ The man will take you to his upper room. Prepare the meal there. Get everything ready for us.”

The two men found everything just as Jesus had said. So they prepared the meal. That evening, Jesus and his disciples met there to celebrate Passover.

During the meal, Jesus got up and took off his coat. He wrapped a towel around his waist and poured water into a basin. He then started washing the feet of his disciples.

Peter was shocked. He said, “Lord, are you about to wash my feet?”

“Peter, you don’t understand what I’m doing now, but some day you will.”

“No Lord, I won’t let you wash my feet. I should be washing yours.”

Jesus looked at him. “If I don’t wash your feet, you can’t be a part of what I’m doing.”

“Oh Master, if that is the case, then wash me all over – my feet, hands, and head!”

“No, Peter. When a person takes regular baths, only his feet need washing.”

Once Jesus had finished washing their feet, he sat back down at the table and said, “You’ve seen what I have done. A servant isn’t better than his master. If I’ve humbled myself before you, you’re to humble yourselves before each other.”

Soon, Jesus became very sad. He said, “One of you will betray me. It has to be – because it was foretold from ages past. Still, it would be better for that person if he had never been born.

The disciples were shocked and started asking, “Lord, is it me? Am I the one?”

Jesus said, “During this meal, I’ll dip bread in the broth and hand it to the person who will do this.”

Judas leaned over and whispered, “Am I the one, Lord?”

Jesus looked at him and said quietly, “You know you are,” and handed him the bread dipped in broth. As Judas took it, Satan entered his heart and he stood up.

Jesus looked up at him and said, “Go and do it quickly.” Judas then walked out of the room. The others thought he was simply going on an errand.

As they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and said, “Take this and eat it; it’s my body, which I give for you. Remember me as you eat.”

After the supper, he took the cup and blessed it. He gave it to them and said, "All of you, drink from this. It's my blood, which will be poured out for the forgiveness of sins. I'll not drink wine again until I sit with you in God's kingdom."

Jesus talked with them for a long time, and then prayed for them. Afterwards they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

Flesh and Bone

Luke 24:33-45 #221

After meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus, the two men quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the disciples what happened. They were in a room that was securely locked because they feared the Jewish leaders.

When the two men arrived, they said, "It's true! The Lord has risen. He walked with us explaining the Scripture. We didn't recognize him until he broke bread with us." The disciples couldn't believe it.

Suddenly the Lord stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

Still, the disciples couldn't believe that what they saw was really Jesus. They thought it was a spirit.

He said, "Look at the scars in my hands and feet. Here, touch them. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bone like this."

They still couldn't believe because of their joy. He said, "Do you have something to eat?" They gave him some fish and honeycomb, and he ate it.

Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

Pentecost

Acts 1:1 – 2:42 #224

On the Day of Pentecost, the believers were praying in the upper room. Suddenly they heard a loud noise. It sounded like a violent storm coming out of heaven. The sound filled the room, and they saw what looked like fire. Suddenly it separated and settled on each believer. Instantly they were filled with the Holy Spirit and started to speak in foreign languages.

People from the city heard about this. Among them were Jews from many countries who spoke different languages. They went to see what was happening. When they got there, they heard the apostles speaking in various languages, including the ones of everyone in the crowd.

Some of the people said, “This is impossible! These men can’t speak our language. They’re from Galilee. Yet we’re hearing them in our own tongue.”

Others said, “Oh, they’re just drunk.”

Peter stood up in front of them and said, “These men aren’t drunk. This is what the prophets of old talked about when they said God would pour out his Spirit upon common people.”

“You saw the miracles of Jesus. Still, you crucified him – nailed him to a cross and put him in the grave. But we’re witnesses that God raised him from the dead! He’s alive. He sits at the right hand of the Father. Now he has sent us his Holy Spirit. This is what you’re seeing.”

“Understand what I’m saying. You crucified Jesus, but God highly exalted him and made him Lord and Messiah!”

The people said, “What you’re saying is true, but what can we do?”

Peter said, “Repent, and we’ll baptize you in the name of Jesus. Once you’ve received forgiveness of your sins, God will fill you with the Holy Spirit.”

That day, the apostles baptized those who received the message. The number of believers grew to over 3,000 people. They met together often so they could learn from each other and from the apostles.

House of Caiaphas

Trial before Jews

Matthew 26:57-75, 27:1-5; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:19-24; #217

Guards took Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane and led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. Once there, he sat by a charcoal fire in the middle of the courtyard. A servant girl looked at him and said, "Aren't you one of his disciples?"

"No.... No, I'm not." He then moved to a different part of the courtyard.

The former high priest questioned Jesus concerning his teachings. Jesus said, "I taught in public places, and I didn't hide anything. If you want to know what I taught, ask those who heard me."

One of the guards slapped him. "You're to be respectful when you talk to this man of God!"

Jesus turned to him, "Why did you hit someone who spoke the truth?"

They then took Jesus to a balcony that overlooked the courtyard so he could stand before the high priest. Several people testified against him, but they couldn't agree about what he said. Others were called to clear up the confusion but simply made it worse.

Finally, in frustration, the high priest said, "Tell me plainly. Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?"

Jesus said, "Yes, I am."

The priest was shocked and ripped his clothes. He shouted, "We don't need anything else! You heard him. He blasphemes God!"

Everyone yelled, "Kill him!" They beat him and spit on him.

Peter was watching this from the courtyard. One of the men looked at him and said, "Here's one of them! He was with Jesus!"

Peter saw everyone looking at him. "No, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know him."

About an hour later, a man spoke up. "I saw you in the garden. You're one of them." Turning to the others he said, "Listen to his speech. He's from Galilee."

With that, Peter started to swear. Then he said, "Leave me alone! I tell you, I don't know this man!"

As soon as those words left his mouth, a rooster crowed. Peter looked up and saw Jesus looking at him.

He remembered the words; "You'll deny me three times before the rooster crows in the morning." Then Peter left the courtyard and cried bitterly.

When the sun came up, the Jewish court was brought together and Jesus was condemned to die. So they took him to the Romans for execution.

Psalm 88 (ESV)

O Lord, God of my salvation,
I cry out day and night before you.
Let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry!
For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.
I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I am a man who has no strength,
like one set loose among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.
You have put me in the depths of the pit,
in the regions dark and deep.
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah
You have caused my companions to shun me;
you have made me a horror to them.
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
my eye grows dim through sorrow.
Every day I call upon you, O Lord;
I spread out my hands to you.
Do you work wonders for the dead?
Do the departed rise up to praise you? Selah
Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
Are your wonders known in the darkness,
or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

But I, O Lord, cry to you;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
O Lord, why do you cast my soul away?
Why do you hide your face from me?
Afflicted and close to death from my youth up,
I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.
Your wrath has swept over me;
your dreadful assaults destroy me.
They surround me like a flood all day long;
they close in on me together.
You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;
my companions have become darkness.

Valley of Hinnom

Ahaz

2 Chronicles 28:1-4 #150

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to his reign as king of Judah, and he reigned for sixteen years. He didn't do what was right in the eyes of the Lord but became one of the worst kings of Judah. He put images for the Baals all around Jerusalem, and even practiced the ritual of child sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom.

He made an alliance with the wicked kingdom of Assyria to gain an advantage against some of the nations around him. He took things from inside the Temple and used them with a new altar he had made. He then closed the doors of the Temple so that no one could go inside to worship.

His kingdom started falling apart and Assyria did nothing to help. Still, he didn't turn to the Lord. Instead, he kept trying to find another god who would help him. Finally, he died, and his son Hezekiah became king.

Garden Tomb

Trial before Romans

Matthew 27:12-26; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:2-25; John 18:28-32; 19:12-15 #218

Jesus was taken to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate asked the religious leaders, “What’s this man guilty of?”

They said, “He says he’s a king. He should die because he’s a rebel against Caesar. We would execute him, but we’re not allowed to do that. Therefore we’ve brought him to you.”

Pilate turned to Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

“Yes, I am.”

Pilate then found out that Jesus was from Galilee, which was under Herod’s rule. Herod happened to be in Jerusalem so Pilate sent Jesus to him.

Herod was glad because he wanted to see some miracles. But Jesus wouldn’t even talk to him. Finally Herod and his guards mocked Jesus by putting kingly robes on him and sending him back to Pilate.

The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of many crimes, but he stood there and didn’t defend himself. Pilate said, “Don’t you hear what they’re saying? What is your defense?” Still, Jesus said nothing.

Pilate finally concluded there was no proof that Jesus was guilty of any crime worthy of death. He then thought of a way he could set the man free. Every Passover, he released a prisoner to the people. He thought he could simply have Jesus beaten and then release him.

Pilate was about to present this idea to the people, when his wife sent him a message. “I’ve had nightmares about the man you have on trial. Don’t do anything to him. He’s innocent.”

Pilate stood before the people. “Which one shall I release to you – Jesus, called Messiah – or Barabbas, a thief and a murderer?”

The religious leaders knew that Pilate might do this, so they had prepared the people. “Barabbas, give us Barabbas!”

Pilate was shocked. “What should I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?”

“Crucify him!”

Pilate turned away because he didn’t want to kill an innocent man. Finally the Jewish leaders threatened him, “If you release this man, we’ll tell Caesar you helped a man who was in rebellion against the empire.”

Pilate went back to reason with the people, “Do you want me to crucify your King?”

They shouted louder and louder. “Crucify Him! Crucify Him! We have no King but Caesar!”

Pilate realized the people were on the verge of a riot. He finally gave in to their wishes and called for a basin of water. He washed his hands in front of them and said, “You’re witness that I’m innocent. This man’s blood isn’t on my hands.”

They shouted, “Let his blood be upon us and our children!”

With that, Pilate had Jesus whipped and then handed him over to the guards to be crucified.

Crucifixion

Matthew 27:27-60; Luke 23:26-43; John 19:16-42 #219

Jesus was condemned to die by crucifixion. Pilate turned him over to Roman soldiers, who put a crown of thorns on his head. They laughed at him and said, “Look, the King of the Jews.” They beat him and spit on him. Then they led him away to be crucified. Along the way, they grabbed a man and made him carry the cross. A large crowd followed, mourning and crying.

They took Jesus and two criminals outside the city walls to a place called “The Skull.” All three were nailed to crosses, with Jesus in the middle.

Pilate wrote a sign to indicate the charge against Jesus, and had it put on the cross. It said, KING OF THE JEWS.

The chief priests said, “Don’t write ‘King of the Jews’. Put ‘He said he was the King of the Jews.’” Pilate replied, “What I have written, I have written.”

After the crosses were put into place, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them! They don’t know what they’re doing.” It was nine o’clock in the morning.

Some of the people shouted, “If you’re the Son of God, come down from that cross.”

The religious leaders laughed, “Oh, he can save others, but he can’t save himself! He said he was the Son of God. Why isn’t God helping him?”

One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus yelled, “If you’re the Messiah, save yourself and us.”

The other criminal yelled back, “Don’t you fear God? We deserve to be crucified, but this man is innocent!” Then he said, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus said, “Today, you’ll be with me in Paradise.”

The soldiers took the clothes of Jesus and divided them among themselves. His robe was seamless, so they threw dice to see who would get it.

Jesus saw his mother standing near the cross, and John nearby. He said, “Mother, look to John as your son. John, take care of my mother.”

Around noon, darkness covered the entire area and lasted for three hours.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and died.

At that moment, there was an earthquake. Huge boulders split in two. The veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom. The soldiers standing near the cross were afraid when they saw all of this. They looked up at Jesus and said, "It's true! This was the Son of God!"

Later in the afternoon, other soldiers came to break the legs of those on the crosses. They did this to speed up their death. First, they broke the legs of the two criminals. When they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead. Just to make sure, a soldier thrust a spear into his side.

A rich man named Joseph went to Pilate and got permission to bury the body of Jesus. The religious leaders also met with Pilate and said, "This deceiver told his disciples that after his death he would rise from the dead on the third day. We're afraid that they may come and steal the body and then tell everyone that he rose from the dead." Pilate agreed to put a Roman seal on the stone, and he assigned guards to watch the grave.

Joseph and his friend Nicodemus helped take the body down from the cross. They wrapped it in strips of linen cloth, with a mixture of spices. Joseph then laid it in his own tomb and rolled a large stone across the entrance. A Roman seal was put on the stone. Then soldiers stood in front of the grave to guard the body of Jesus.

Resurrection

Matthew 27:62 – 28:15; Mark 16:1-13; John 20:1-18 #220

All was quiet at the tomb of Jesus until early Sunday morning while it was still dark. Suddenly there was an earthquake and an angel appeared at the gravesite. He rolled back the huge stone and sat on it! The guards were terrified and fainted. And then ... all was quiet once again.

As the sun came up, Mary Magdalene and some other women walked into the garden so they could put spices on the body of Jesus. They were wondering how they were going to get someone to roll back the stone from the tomb.

When they came to the tomb, they realized that the soldiers were gone and the stone was rolled back. They looked – and saw that the tomb was empty!

Mary turned and ran to tell the disciples about the empty tomb. The other women stayed in the garden. Finally they went inside the tomb. They saw two angels. One of them said, "Don't be afraid! You're looking for Jesus who was crucified. He's not here, because he has risen. Go tell his disciples and Peter." So the women went to do as they were told.

Meanwhile, Mary found the disciples and told them, "They've taken the body of Jesus and we don't know where it is!"

When Peter and John heard this, they ran to the tomb. John got there first but didn't go in. Peter rushed in, and John followed. They saw the strips of linen cloth lying just as they had been wrapped around the body of Jesus – but the body was missing! The cloth that had been around his head was neatly folded and laid to one side. They left the tomb and walked home, confused about what had happened.

After they were gone, Mary Magdalene arrived back at the garden, weeping as she walked. When she got to the tomb, she saw the angels. One of them said, "Why are you crying?"

"Because they have taken away my Lord and I don't know where he is."

She turned and saw a man standing near her. She didn't realize it was Jesus. She thought it was the gardener. "Sir, if you have taken him away, please tell me where he is so I can go get him."

Jesus said, "Mary!"

Instantly, she knew who it was! She fell down and grabbed his feet, "My Master!"

He said, "Don't hold me, but go tell my disciples that you have seen me." Immediately she got up and ran to find the disciples.

Jesus then appeared to the other women as they were walking back into the city. They fell down and worshiped him. He said, "Go find my brothers and tell them that I'll meet them in Galilee."

All the women found the disciples and said, "Jesus is alive! We have seen him and talked to him. He's alive!" The men were overcome with all these reports and could not believe it was really true!

The guards who were at the tomb were terrified by the events of that morning. They went and told the religious leaders exactly what had happened.

After some discussion, they gave the guards a large amount of money and said, "Tell people that the disciples of Jesus came and stole his body while you were sleeping. We will make sure you don't get in trouble with Pilate." The guards took the money and did as they were told.

JORDAN

Gadara

Feeding 4000

Matthew 15:29 –16:16; Mark 8:1-21, 27-30 #200

Jesus went to the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. As he taught the people, a great crowd brought those with various physical problems. They brought the lame, the blind, the crippled, and those with many diseases. Jesus healed them all, and the crowd was amazed.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I’m concerned for the crowd. They’ve been with us for three days, and their food has run out. I don’t want to send them away without feeding them because they’ll collapse with hunger as they go.”

The disciples said, “Lord, we don’t have enough food to feed this large of a crowd.”

“How much do you have?”

“We have seven loaves of bread and a few small fish.”

“Tell the crowd to sit down.”

He took the bread and fish and blessed it. He then broke it into pieces and gave it to his disciples. They turned and gave it to the crowd. 4,000 people were there. Everyone ate until they were full. The disciples then collected the leftovers and found they had seven baskets full.

Afterward, they sent the crowd home. Jesus and his disciples got in the boat and went to the Jewish side of the lake.

The Citadel

Ammonites

2 Samuel 10 & 1 Chronicles 19-20 #103

In all of David's conquest, he didn't attack the Ammonites because the king had been kind to him when he was running from Saul. One day, the king of the Ammonites died and his son ruled in his place.

David sent a group of men with a message of comfort to the new king. When the men got there, the Ammonite leaders said to their king, "These men aren't here to show David's concern for you. They aren't here to show respect for your father. They're spying on us. They're scouting out our city to see where we're weak."

So the new king took the men and shaved off half of each man's beard. He then cut off their robes, exposing the lower half of their bodies.

The men went back to Israel deeply humiliated.

David heard about this great insult and sent word to his men. "Stay in Jericho until your beards grow back. Then return to us."

The Ammonites finally realized what they had done. They had made David extremely angry. So they started building up their army. They even hired 33,000 soldiers from other countries.

David sent Joab and his army to fight against the Ammonites. When they were in place, the Ammonite army moved to a position where they were on one side of the Israelites, with the foreign soldiers on the other. Joab realized he was in between the two, with front lines on both sides. Therefore he split the army. He selected his best troops to fight with him and attack the foreign soldiers. Everyone else was to fight the Ammonites under the command of his brother.

Joab said to his brother, "Both of us will be ready to help the other if there's a need. Be brave and fight hard. We must protect our people and the cities of God. May the Lord's will be done."

The battle was decisive. Joab and his elite troops hit the foreign armies so hard that they turned and ran. When the Ammonites saw this, they retreated back into their walled cities. With this, Joab took his army back to Jerusalem.

The foreign army reorganized and came back to fight again. This time, David went with his men and totally defeated them, killing over 40,000 men. Those who escaped went back to their country and never returned again. David waited until spring to finish defeating the Ammonites.

Uriah the Hittite

2 Samuel 11 #1043

When it was spring, it was time to once again attack the Ammonites. Normally David would go with his men, but he decided to stay home.

After taking a nap one afternoon, he walked along the sundeck that was on the roof of the palace. From there, he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. He sent for a servant and asked, "Who is that woman?"

"Oh, her name is Bathsheba. She is the wife of Uriah, one of your 30 fighting men."

David sent for her, so she came to the palace. He slept with her that night. In time she realized she was expecting a baby, and she knew it was from the night she spent with the king. She sent word to David that she was pregnant.

He decided he had to hide what he had done. So he immediately sent a message to Joab. "Send Uriah to me."

The soldier arrived and the king asked him, "How is the battle going? Is Joab well?" After Uriah gave a report, the king told him he could go home to his wife before going back to the battle. He even sent a gift for the couple.

Uriah left the king, but didn't go home. He slept the night at the door of the palace with all of the king's servants. In the morning, the king called him in and asked, "Why didn't you go home?"

"No, I wouldn't do that. The Ark of God is on the field of battle. The army of Israel sleeps in tents. Joab and his officers are on the field. I can't go to my house and live in ease. I can't eat and drink with my wife while they are sacrificing for our nation."

David said, "Stay here one more day, and then I'll send you back to the battle."

The king then asked Uriah to eat and drink with him. During the course of the evening, David got him drunk. Still, he didn't go home, but slept on a cot at the palace doors.

The next morning David wrote a letter to his commander. "Put Uriah in the front where the fighting is the most fierce. At an assigned moment, have your men fall back, leaving him to die."

The king gave the sealed letter to Uriah, and told him to take it to Joab. He went back to the battle and gave the letter to his commander. Joab obeyed the order and put Uriah at the exact place that was the most dangerous. At the assigned moment, everyone else fell back and Uriah was killed. Bathsheba heard that her husband died in battle, and she mourned his death.

Joab continued his battle against the Ammonite capital city. Finally he broke through and captured their water supply. He sent word to David. "Come quickly! Lead the army into the city and capture it so you'll get the glory."

David went and led the army to victory over the Ammonite cities. He had the Ammonite people totally tear down their walls and all of their buildings. He took everything of value, and put the people to work making bricks.

David then went back to Jerusalem. Once Bathsheba's time of mourning was over, he made her his wife. Soon afterward, she gave birth to their son. Only God knew about their sin, and he was not pleased.

Mt. Nebo

Death of Moses

Numbers 27:12-23 & Deuteronomy 30 – 34 #54

The Lord said to Moses, “Go up this mountain. There I’ll show you the land I’m giving Israel. You can’t go in with them because of your sin of hitting the rock. But I’ll let you see the land, and after that you’ll die.

Moses said, “Lord, select a man to lead these people—someone who can stand before them and make decisions that will be good for them. If you don’t, they’ll be like sheep without a shepherd.”

God said, “Joshua has the spirit of wisdom in him. Have him stand in front of Eleazar the priest while the entire congregation is watching. Make sure everyone can hear you give him the authority to lead the nation. Tell the people to obey him like they’ve obeyed you. Tell Joshua he should get advice from Eleazar.”

So Moses did as the Lord commanded. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar and all the people. Moses then laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him to lead the nation.

He then said to the people, “I have a command for you. It’s well within your ability to obey. If you do, you’ll have life and prosperity. Not obeying it will bring heartaches and death.

“The command is simply this. Love the Lord your God and do what He says. If you do, He’ll bless you as you go into the land. If you don’t, He’ll take everything you love away from you.”

“I’m asking heaven and earth to be a witness to what I’m saying. I set before you life and death, blessing and a curse. Therefore choose life. Love the Lord your God. Obey him and be faithful to him, because he is your life.”

Then Moses said to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous. The Lord will be with you and will go before you. Don’t be afraid or discouraged.”

After saying this, Moses went up the mountain, which was across from Jericho. There, God showed him the land of Israel. He was able to see it all, from the north to the south, from the east to the west. The Lord said, “This is the land I promised to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I’ve allowed you see it, but you can’t cross over into it.”

So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died, and the Lord buried him in the land of Moab. He was 120 years old when he died. Yet his eyesight was still good, and he was physically fit.

The people cried for thirty days after the death of Moses. There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses. Yet, God promised the people that someday, a Great Prophet would come who would be like Moses.

Machaerus (Herod's Castle)

John Beheaded

Mark 6:14-29, Luke 9:7-9 #197

To make his wife happy, King Herod had John the Baptist arrested. John had preached against their marriage, saying, "It is a sin to marry your brother's wife."

Herod's wife wanted him dead! But Herod knew that John was a righteous man. The king also feared the people, knowing that they

thought he was a prophet. Besides, he enjoyed hearing John preach. So, he decided to keep the prophet in prison, instead of killing him.

Herod hosted a big banquet to celebrate his birthday. He invited a large crowd of important people. During the party, he sent for his wife's daughter, and had her dance for the crowd.

Herod was pleased with her performance. So he said to the girl, "Ask me for something and I'll give it to you."

He could tell that this impressed the people at his banquet, so he added, "Ask me anything. I swear I'll give it to you, up to half my kingdom."

The daughter knew she should ask advice about this. So, she talked to her mother. "What should I ask for?"

This was exactly what her mother wanted. "Ask for the head of John the Baptist."

The girl rushed back to the party and said, "I want the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And I want it now."

Herod was shocked. Still, he had made his promise in front of his guests. So, he told the guard to go and behead John, and give the head to the girl.

The guard did as he was told. He went to the prison and beheaded John. He then brought the head back and gave it to the young woman on a platter. She took it to her mother.

John's disciples went to the prison and got his body. After they buried it, they went and told Jesus.

Some time later, Herod heard about the things Jesus was doing. It struck him with conviction.

He said, "I killed John, and now he's risen from the dead. He has come back with great powers."

From that day on, Herod wanted to meet and talk with Jesus.

Tel Al Hamam

Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 19:1-29 #12

In the early evening, two angels entered Sodom. They found Lot sitting at the city gate. As soon as he saw them, he went and bowed before them. He said, "I'm your humble servant. Please come to my house so I can make you comfortable. I'll wash your feet and give you a place to spend the night. Then I'll wake you up early so you can be on your way."

They said, "No, we'll just spend the night here in the town square."

"Oh, no, my lords! You must come with me right now. Please follow me."

He led them to his house and his family prepared a meal for them. As they were preparing for bed, a mob gathered outside. It was all the men of the city, both young and old. They surrounded the house and yelled, "Lot, give us those men who are in your house. Send them out so we can have sex with them."

Lot stepped outside and closed the door behind him. He said, "Please, my brothers, don't do this wickedness. These men are guests in my house. Instead of these men, take my two daughters. They're virgins. Do what you want with them, but don't touch these men."

The mob got angry. "Get out of the way! Who do you think you are – our judge? You're not even one of us."

With that, they pushed him aside and started to break down the door. The angels opened the door, grabbed Lot, pulled him inside, and slammed the door. They then caused all the men outside to go blind. The crowd dispersed as they tried to find their way.

The angels turned to Lot. "We're here to destroy this city! The voices of its victims are yelling into the ears of God. Quick, go get any relatives you have who are living in the city – sons, daughters, sons-in-law – anyone who belongs to you. Get them and leave this city.

Lot rushed to the home of his future sons-in-law. "Wake up! Come with me! We have to get out of the city! The Lord is about to destroy it." But they ignored him because they thought he was joking.

Lot had still not left the city in the morning as the sun was coming up. The angels yelled, "Hurry! You and your family get out of here! You're about to be killed in the judgment."

Still, they took their time getting ready to leave. With that, the Lord showed compassion on them. The angels physically grabbed Lot, his wife and daughters and rushed them out of the city. Once there, the angels said, "Run for your lives! Don't look back! Don't stop until you're in the mountains."

Lot said, “Oh Lord, you’ve been merciful to me. But I can’t make it to the mountain. Please, there’s a small town nearby. Let me go there.”

The angel said, “Go there and I’ll hold the judgment away from that town. But hurry! I can’t do anything until you’re safe.” The Lord was showing mercy to Lot because of Abraham. Unfortunately, Lot’s wife looked back toward the city as they were running away, so she became a pillar of salt.

The sun was fully up when Lot reached the little town. As soon as he was inside, the Lord brought down fire from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the other cities in the valley, except for that one little town.

Abraham went out to the spot where God had talked with him. He looked in the direction of Sodom but all he saw was smoke rising into the sky.

Two Daughters

Genesis 19:30-38 #13

After the destruction of Sodom, Lot and his two daughters left the little town where they lived because Lot was afraid of what might happen to them there. They went to the mountains and lived in a cave.

One day, the oldest daughter said to her sister, “Our father is old, and we have no hope of getting a husband and having children. Therefore, it’s up to us to preserve our father’s line for future generations. I have a plan. Let’s get our father drunk until he no longer knows what he’s doing. We’ll then have sex with him.”

The sister agreed, so that night they got their father drunk. The oldest daughter lay down with him. He didn’t know anything that happened.

The next day, the older daughter said to her sister, “Tonight it’s your turn. Remember, we’re doing this to preserve our father’s line.” So they got their father drunk, and the younger daughter lay down with him. Again, Lot didn’t know anything that happened.

Both daughters became pregnant by their father. The oldest sister gave birth to a son who became the father of the Moabites. The younger sister gave birth to a son who became the father of the Ammonites.

Petra

Edom Humbled (Obadiah)

God's message to Obadiah about Edom.

1. Edom's doom (1-10)

Edom:

- your pride has blinded you to truth
- you say, who can attack us way up here in these rocks

God says:

- even if you fly free and high like an eagle and make your nest among the stars, I will bring you down
- every one of your supposed allies will turn against you
- they will lie to your face, ambush you, and utterly destroy you
- they will ransack your nation—taking every last hidden treasure

2. Edom's wrongs (11-14)

Here are the charges against you, Esau:

- when Babylon ransacked Jerusalem, you stood by and did nothing!
- worse, you even killed those trying to escape or turned them over to the enemy!
- you should not have celebrated your brother Jacob's disaster that day!

3. Nations' doom (15-18)

But God's judgment is coming on all the godless nations:

- the evil you have done will be done to you
- the punishment you deserve is coming—more than you can bear

God's people:

- will conquer those who conquered them
- will take over Mount Esau, Philistia, Samaria, Gilead—the Promised Land

4. Israel's restoration (19-21)

God declares:

- my people will come back home Mt. Zion
- it will be a place of safety
- it will be my Kingdom and I will be their King!

Red Sea

Red Sea

Exodus 13:17 – 15:21

#40

God led the Israelites out of Egypt by what appeared to be a pillar of fire. The fire became a pillar of cloud during the day. God didn't lead them straight to Canaan along the most direct route, but took them out into the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

He told Moses to have the people camp at a certain location next to the Sea. He said, "I'm going to make Pharaoh stubborn one more time, and he'll chase after you. After that, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."

Pharaoh saw that the Hebrews had gone to the Red Sea, and were hemmed in and vulnerable. He said to his servants, "Why did we let our slaves go? They should be here, serving us." So he took his army and chased after them.

The people of Israel saw this and yelled at Moses. "Why have you brought us here to die? If we were still serving the Egyptians, they would let us live. But now, because of you, we're about to die."

Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid!

Watch and see what God is about to do. He'll fight your battle for you. Look at the Egyptians! You'll never see them again after today."

God said to Moses, "Lift your shepherd's staff into the air, and point your hand out over the sea. The people of Israel are going to the other side – on dry ground."

Then the pillar of cloud that was in front of the Israelites moved behind them—between them and the Egyptians. It stayed there the rest of the day and into the night.

Moses pointed his hand toward the sea. And when he did, God caused a strong wind to sweep back the waters, so they formed a wall on the right side and on the left. And then the wind blew on the path between the two walls for the rest of that day and into the night—until the ground became dry.

That night, God told Moses and the Israelites to cross over to the other side, using the path between the walls of water. The people moved across the sea throughout the night.

Once they were across, God allowed the Egyptians to chase after them, using the same path. When they were in the middle of the sea, God caused them to be totally confused, and their chariot wheels started to break.

Suddenly, the Egyptian army saw the seriousness of their situation. They shouted, "Run! The Lord is fighting for the Israelites!" They turned and tried to run for safety.

God said to Moses, "Point your hand out over the water." So Moses pointed his hand toward the sea just as the sun was about to come up.

Suddenly the walls of water crashed together, covering the entire Egyptian army. Not one of them survived!

The Israelites watched the power of God from the other side of the sea. And as the sun rose that morning, they saw the dead bodies washed up on the shore. Then the people worshiped the Lord with singing. They had seen the power of God and believed in Him, and they believed in His servant Moses.

Bethany

Raising Lazarus

John 11 #211

Lazarus, and his sisters Mary and Martha, lived about two miles from Jerusalem in a town called Bethany. Lazarus became extremely sick, so his sisters sent for Jesus. He was a friend of their family. They said, “Lord, your friend is sick.”

Jesus waited two days after getting this message. He then said to his disciples, “We’re going to Judea.”

They said, “Lord, it’s not safe to go there. The Jews are looking for you so they can kill you.”

He said, “Our friend Lazarus is asleep, and I need to go wake him up.”

“Lord, it’s good that he’s asleep. It’ll help him get better.”

Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead! And it was for you that I didn’t go sooner. What I’m about to do will help you believe in me. Now, let’s go to Bethany.”

Thomas said, “Well, we might as well go and die with him.”

When they were almost there, they learned that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Martha heard that he was coming, so she went to meet him. “Lord, you could’ve healed my brother. He’d be alive today if you would’ve been here. I know all things are possible with you.”

Jesus said, “Martha, your brother will rise again.”

“I know, Lord. He’ll be a part of the resurrection in the last day.”

Jesus said, “I’m the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even if they die. They will always be alive—forever. Martha, do you believe this?”

“Yes Lord. I believe you’re the Messiah, the Son of God.”

She then went back to their house and whispered to her sister. “Mary, the Teacher is here and is asking for you.”

Mary got up and ran to Jesus, and others followed her. When she got to him, she fell at his feet. “Lord, my brother would still be alive if you had come sooner.” She then started to cry.

Jesus was greatly moved when he saw Mary and the others crying. He said, “Where did you put him?” She got up to take him there. With that, Jesus started crying.

They took him to the place where they had laid the body, which was a cave with a stone across the entrance. When Jesus saw it, he said, “Take away the stone.”

Martha stepped forward. “Lord, he’s been dead for four days. By now, the smell will be great.”

He turned to her, "Remember what I said? If you believe, you'll see the glory of God."

So, she stepped back, and the men removed the stone. Jesus looked up and prayed, "Father, I thank you that you always hear me. Take this miracle and use it to help people believe that you sent me."

He then looked at the entrance to the tomb and shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"

All eyes turned to the tomb. Suddenly the dead man came out, still bound with linen cloth from head to foot. Jesus said, "Unwrap him, and let him go."

Many of the Jews believed on Jesus that day. But when the religious rulers heard about it, they called a council. It was decided that Jesus must die before everyone believed in him.

They also made plans to kill Lazarus, because his resurrection was causing so many people to turn to Jesus.

Timna Park

Hitting the Rock and Death of Aaron

Numbers 20 #51

The Israelites travelled to a place where there was no water. The people went to Moses and said, “We wish we would have died with our brothers under God’s hand. You brought us here with many promises, but we don’t see any farms, fig trees, or vineyards. On top of that, there’s no water for us or our livestock.”

The Lord said to Moses, “Gather the people together and stand in front of them with your staff. Speak to the rock, and it will give you water. There will be enough for the people and their livestock.”

So Moses stood in front of the people. He said, “You’re a bunch of rebels. Do I have to provide you water from this rock?” With that, he hit the rock two times with his staff. Water came gushing out, and everyone had enough.

But the Lord wasn’t pleased with Moses and Aaron. He said, “You didn’t trust my power. These people saw you disrespect my command. Therefore, you won’t take these people into the land I promised them.”

As the people of Israel moved on, they came to the border of Edom. Moses sent a message to their king asking permission to pass through their land. He assured the king that they wouldn’t disturb anything, and they would pay for any water they drank.

The king refused to let them pass through the land. He even sent his army to their borders and threatened war if the Israelites crossed into their land. So Moses turned away.

Shortly after that, the Lord said to Moses,

“Aaron is about to die. Therefore take the high priest’s garments off of him and put them on Eleazar, his son.”

Moses did this, and Aaron died soon afterwards. The people of Israel mourned his death for thirty days.

Bronze Serpent

Numbers 21 #51

As the Israelites moved around Edom, the people started to complain again. They said, "We didn't have to come here to die. We could've done that in Egypt. We have no water, and we hate this awful food!"

So the Lord sent poisonous snakes into the camp. People were bitten, and many died. They rushed to Moses and said, "We've sinned! We shouldn't have spoken against you and the Lord. Please talk to God and ask him to take away these snakes." So Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. People will be healed from their snake bites if they look at the bronze snake."

As the people of Israel traveled, they came to the border of the Amorites. They sent a message to the king asking if they could travel through his land. They assured him that they would not take anything and would do no harm.

The king of the Amorites refused. Instead, he took his army and attacked Israel. So the people of Israel fought them and totally defeated them. They took over all their cities and lived in them. They controlled all the land right up to the Ammonite border.

Beersheva

God Hears

Gen. 21 #15

King Abimelech came to Abraham and said, “We can clearly see that God is with you in everything you do. So let’s make an agreement that there’ll be peace between your people and my people.”

Abraham said, “I agree, but there is a problem we need to talk about. Your people have taken one of my wells.”

The king said, “I didn’t know anything about this. Why didn’t you tell me before now? I’ll take care of it.”

So they made an agreement and Abraham sealed it with giving Abimelech cattle and sheep. But he set aside seven ewe lambs.

Abimelech asked about this. Abraham said, “You are to accept these seven lambs as your way of saying that I own this well.”

The king accepted the seven ewe lambs, and Abraham called the place Beer-sheba, which means, “Well of the Oath.” He planted a tamarisk tree there and worshiped the Lord, the Everlasting God.



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