

Main Scripture Readings for Devotions and 'Going Deeper'

Day One - The Purpose of this Journey - The Road to Emmaus

Key Reading: Luke 24:13-49

Luke 24:13-49

13 That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. 16 But God kept them from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. 18 Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

19 "What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. 20 But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. 21 We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

22 "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. 23 They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! 24 Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."

25 Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. 26 Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" 27 Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, 29 but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. 30 As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. 31 Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

32 They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" 33 And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, 34 who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter."

35 Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread. 36 And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. 37 But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

38 "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? 39 Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." 40 As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41 Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he ate it as they watched.

44 Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. 47 It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' 48 You are witnesses of all these things. 49 "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

Going Deeper: John 5:16-47

John 5: 16-47

16 So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. 17 But Jesus replied, "My Father is always working, and so am I." 18 So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

19 So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. 21 For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. 22 In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, 23 so that everyone will honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. Anyone who does not honour the Son is certainly not honouring the Father who sent him.

24 "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

25 "And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live. 26 The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. 27 And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man. 28 Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, 29 and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgement. 30 I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me.

Therefore, my judgement is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will.

31 "If I were to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be valid. 32 But someone else is also testifying about me, and I assure you that everything he says about me is true. 33 In fact, you sent investigators to listen to John the Baptist, and his testimony about me was true. 34 Of course, I have no need of human witnesses, but I say these things so you might be saved. 35 John was like a burning and shining lamp, and you were excited for a while about his message. 36 But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, 38 and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you.

39 "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

41 "Your approval means nothing to me, 42 because I know you don't have God's love within you. 43 For I have come to you in my Father's name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. 44 No wonder you can't believe! For you gladly honour each other, but you don't care about the honour that comes from the one who alone is God.

45 "Yet it isn't I who will accuse you before the Father. Moses will accuse you! Yes, Moses, in whom you put your hopes. 46 If you really believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. 47 But since you don't believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Day 2 - Creation - Jesus the Creator of All Things

Key Reading: John 1:1-18

John 1: 1-18

1 In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist, 7 to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. 8 John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. 9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

15 John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

16 From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

Going Deeper: Colossians 1:15-20

Colossians 1:15-20

15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,
16 for through him God created everything
in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see
and the things we can't see—

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him.

17 He existed before anything else,
and he holds all creation together.

18 Christ is also the head of the church,
which is his body.

He is the beginning,
supreme over all who rise from the dead.

So he is first in everything.

19 For God in all his fullness
was pleased to live in Christ,

20 and through him God reconciled
everything to himself.

He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth
by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

Day 3 - The Fall of Man - The Need for Redemption

Key Reading: Genesis 3:1-24

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

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

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

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

8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

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

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

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

13 Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

14 Then the Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic and wild.
You will crawl on your belly,
grovelling in the dust as long as you live.

15 And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

16 Then he said to the woman,
“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.”

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

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

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

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

22 Then the Lord God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” 23 So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. 24 After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Going deeper: Ephesians 2:1-5

Ephesians 2:1-5

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

Day 4 - Adam a 'Type' of Christ

Key Reading: Romans 5:12-21

12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. 13 Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. 14 Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. 15 But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. 16 And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. 17 For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. 19 Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

20 God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. 21 So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Going Deeper: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 45-49

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. 23 But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

24 After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. 25 For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. 26 And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Corinthians 15: 42-49

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. 46 What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. 47 Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. 48 Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. 49 Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

Day 5 - The Necessity of Faith - Cain and Abel

Key Reading: Genesis 4:1-12; Hebrews 11:1-4,13

Genesis 4: 1-12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 11:1-4

1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

Hebrews 11:13

13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 11:1-40, Romans 3:21-26

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5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

7 It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. 9 And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. 10 Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

11 It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. 12 And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, 18 even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." 19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

20 It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau.

21 It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.

22 It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.

23 It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.

24 It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. 27 It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. 28 It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

29 It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

30 It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

32 How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. 33 By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. 35 Women received their loved ones back again from death.

But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. 40 For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

Romans 3:21-26

21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Day 6 - The Flood - The Judgement of God

Key Reading: Genesis 6:5-22, Matthew 24:36-42

Genesis 6:5-22

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

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

11 Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. 12 God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. 13 So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!"

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

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

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

Matthew 24:36-42

36 "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

37 "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn't realise what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

40 "Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

42 "So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. 43 Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. 44 You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 9:27-28, Matthew 24:1-42

Hebrews 9:27-28

27 And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgement, 28 so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

Matthew 24:1-42

As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings. 2 But he responded, "Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!"

3 Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?"

4 Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you, 5 for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. 7 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. 8 But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

9 “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. 10 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. 12 Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

15 “The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place.” (Reader, pay attention!) 16 “Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. 17 A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. 18 A person out in the field must not return even to get a coat. 19 How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. 20 And pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. 22 In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones.

23 “Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. 25 See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.

26 “So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it! 27 For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. 28 Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.

29 “Immediately after the anguish of those days,

the sun will be darkened,
the moon will give no light,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

32 “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 33 In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

36 “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

37 “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

40 “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

42 “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. 43 Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. 44 You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

Day 7 - The Way of Salvation - Noah's Ark

Key Reading: Genesis chapter 7, Genesis 8:13-22

Genesis 7

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

5 So Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him.

6 Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. 7 He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. 8 With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. 9 They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. 10 After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth. 11 When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. 12 The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

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

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

Genesis 8: 13-22

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

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

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

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. 21 And the Lord was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. 22 As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.

Going Deeper: Genesis 8: 20-22, Genesis 9:1-17

Genesis 8:20-22 (see above) and Genesis 9: 1-17

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

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

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

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

Day 8 - Abraham - Father of Faith

Key Reading: Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15:1-6, Matthew 1:1-17 or Luke 3: 23-38

Genesis 12:1-3

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

Genesis 15:1-6

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

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

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

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

Matthew 1:1-17

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham:

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Ram.

4 Ram was the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
5 Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).
Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).
Obed was the father of Jesse.
6 Jesse was the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.
Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.
Abijah was the father of Asa.
8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.
Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.
Jehoram was the father of Uzziah.
9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham.
Jotham was the father of Ahaz.
Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.

Manasseh was the father of Amon.
Amon was the father of Josiah.
11 Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).
12 After the Babylonian exile:
Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the father of Azor.
14 Azor was the father of Zadok.
Zadok was the father of Akim.
Akim was the father of Eliud.
15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar was the father of Matthan.
Matthan was the father of Jacob.
16 Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

17 All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

Luke 23:3-38

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.

Jesus was known as the son of Joseph.
Joseph was the son of Heli.
24 Heli was the son of Matthat.
Matthat was the son of Levi.
Levi was the son of Melki.
Melki was the son of Jannai.
Jannai was the son of Joseph.
25 Joseph was the son of Mattathias.
Mattathias was the son of Amos.
Amos was the son of Nahum.
Nahum was the son of Esli.
Esli was the son of Naggai.
26 Naggai was the son of Maath.
Maath was the son of Mattathias.
Mattathias was the son of Semein.
Semein was the son of Josech.
Josech was the son of Joda.
27 Joda was the son of Joanan.

Joanan was the son of Rhesa.

Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel.
Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the son of Neri.
28 Neri was the son of Melki.
Melki was the son of Addi.
Addi was the son of Cosam.
Cosam was the son of Elmadam.
Elmadam was the son of Er.
29 Er was the son of Joshua.
Joshua was the son of Eliezer.
Eliezer was the son of Jorim.
Jorim was the son of Matthat.
Matthat was the son of Levi.
30 Levi was the son of Simeon.
Simeon was the son of Judah.
Judah was the son of Joseph.
Joseph was the son of Jonam.
Jonam was the son of Eliakim.
31 Eliakim was the son of Melea.
Melea was the son of Menna.
Menna was the son of Mattatha.

Mattatha was the son of Nathan.
Nathan was the son of David.
32 David was the son of Jesse.
Jesse was the son of Obed.
Obed was the son of Boaz.
Boaz was the son of Salmon.
Salmon was the son of Nahshon.
33 Nahshon was the son of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the son of Admin.
Admin was the son of Arni.
Arni was the son of Hezron.
Hezron was the son of Perez.
Perez was the son of Judah.
34 Judah was the son of Jacob.
Jacob was the son of Isaac.
Isaac was the son of Abraham.
Abraham was the son of Terah.
Terah was the son of Nahor.
35 Nahor was the son of Serug.

Serug was the son of Reu.
Reu was the son of Peleg.
Peleg was the son of Eber.
Eber was the son of Shelah.
36 Shelah was the son of Cainan.
Cainan was the son of Arphaxad.
Arphaxad was the son of Shem.
Shem was the son of Noah.
Noah was the son of Lamech.
37 Lamech was the son of Methuselah.
Methuselah was the son of Enoch.
Enoch was the son of Jared.
Jared was the son of Mahalalel.
Mahalalel was the son of Kenan.
38 Kenan was the son of Enosh.
Enosh was the son of Seth.
Seth was the son of Adam.
Adam was the son of God.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 11:8-12, Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3: 23-38

Hebrews 11:8-12

8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. 9 And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. 10 Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

11 It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. 12 And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3: 23-38 (See Key Reading for this day)

Day 9 - The Covenant of Circumcision

Key Reading: Genesis 17, Colossians 2:11-15

Genesis 17

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

3 At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, 4 “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! 5 What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no

longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. 6 I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! 7 "I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

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

15 Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. 16 And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants."

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

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

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

Colossians 2:11-15

11 When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. 12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptised. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

Going Deeper: Romans 4

Romans 4

Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners. 6 David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it:

7 “Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight.

8 Yes, what joy for those
whose record the Lord has cleared of sin.”

9 Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. 10 But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

11 Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith. 12 And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. 14 If God’s promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. 15 For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

16 So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham’s. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. 17 That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.” This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

18 Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” 19 And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

20 Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. 22 And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. 23 And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded 24 for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

Day 10 - Abraham - The Sacrifice of the Son

Key Reading: Genesis 21:1-7, Genesis 22:1-18

Genesis 21:1-7

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

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

Genesis 22:1-18

Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

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

3 The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. 16 "This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that 17 I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. 18 And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

Going Deeper: Genesis 18:1-25

Genesis 18:1-25

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

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

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

6 So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread." 7 Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. 8 When the food was ready, Abraham took

some yoghurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

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

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

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

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

13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

15 Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the Lord said, “No, you did laugh.”

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

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

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

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

Day 11 - Esau and Jacob - The Birthright

Key Reading: Genesis 25:19-34, Galatians 4:4-7

Genesis 25:19-34

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

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

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

24 And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! 25 The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. 26

Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

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

29 One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. 30 Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

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

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

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

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

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. 6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Going Deeper: Hebrews 1:1-4, Romans 9:1-16

Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. 3 The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honour at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. 4 This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

Romans 9:1-16

With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. 2 My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief 3 for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them. 4 They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshipping him and receiving his wonderful promises. 5 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

6 Well then, has God failed to fulfil his promise to Israel? No, for not all who are born into the nation of Israel are truly members of God's people! 7 Being descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too. 8 This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. Only the children of the promise are considered to be Abraham's children. 9 For God had promised, "I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." 10 This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. 11 But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; 12 he calls people, but not

according to their good or bad works.) She was told, “Your older son will serve your younger son.” 13 In the words of the Scriptures, “I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau.”

14 Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! 15 For God said to Moses,

“I will show mercy to anyone I choose,
and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.”

16 So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it.

Day 12 - Jacob's Ladder - Jesus the Way between God and Man

Key Reading: Genesis 28:10-22, John 1:45-51

Genesis 28:10-22

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

13 At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, “I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. 14 Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. 15 What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”

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

18 The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. 19 He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz.

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

John 1:45-51

45 Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

46 “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

“Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied.

47 As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.”

48 “How do you know about me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.”

49 Then Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

50 Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” 51 Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”

Going Deeper: Genesis 32:22-32, Matthew 16:13-20

Genesis 32:22-32

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

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

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

27 "What is your name?" the man asked.

He replied, "Jacob."

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

29 "Please tell me your name," Jacob said.

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

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

Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Day 13 - Joseph - Son, Slave, Saviour

Key Reading: Genesis 37:1-13, 18-36, Philippians 2:5-11

Genesis 37:1-13

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

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

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

5 One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever.

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

8 His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them. 9 Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!" 10 This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. "What kind of dream is that?" he asked. "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?" 11 But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant. 12 Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem. 13 When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them." "I'm ready to go," Joseph replied.

Genesis 37:18-36

18 When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. 19 "Here comes the dreamer!" they said. 20 "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, 'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!" 21 But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. 22 "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father. 23 So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. 24 Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. 25 Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt. 26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. 27 Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. 28 So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt. 29 Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. 30 Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?" 31 Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. 32 They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?" 33 Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!" 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. 35 His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "I will go to my grave mourning for my son," he would say, and then he would weep. 36 Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

Philippians 2:5-8

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.
6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God

as something to cling to.

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Going Deeper: Genesis 39:1-6, Genesis 39:19-23, Genesis 41:14-46

Genesis 39: 1-6

When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

2 The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. 3 Potiphar noticed this and realised that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. 4 This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. 5 From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. 6 So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Genesis 39:19-23

19 Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. 20 So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favourite with the prison warden. 22 Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. 23 The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

Genesis 41:14-46

Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. 15 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."

16 "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

17 So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, 18 and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. 19 But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. 20 These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. 21 But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

22 "In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. 23 Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shrivelled, and withered by the east wind. 24 And the shrivelled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

25 Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. 26 The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. 27 The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

28 "This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. 29 The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. 30 But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. 31 This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. 32 As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

33 "Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. 34 Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. 35 Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. 36 That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land."

37 Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. 40 You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. 43 Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

45 Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphara, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. 46 He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

Day 14 - Joseph - The Reconciler

Key Reading: Genesis 45, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Genesis 45

Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, "Out, all of you!" So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. 2 Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

3 "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realise that Joseph was standing there in front of them. 4 "Please, come closer," he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. 5 But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. 6 This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither ploughing nor harvesting. 7 God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. 8 So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

9 "Now hurry back to my father and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! 10 You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. 11 I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.'"

12 Then Joseph added, "Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! 13 Go tell my father of my honoured position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly." 14 Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. 15 Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

16 The news soon reached Pharaoh's palace: "Joseph's brothers have arrived!" Pharaoh and his officials were all delighted to hear this.

17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'This is what you must do: Load your pack animals, and hurry back to the land of Canaan. 18 Then get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces.'"

19 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Take wagons from the land of Egypt to carry your little children and your wives, and bring your father here. 20 Don't worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

21 So the sons of Jacob did as they were told. Joseph provided them with wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he gave them supplies for the journey. 22 And he gave each of them new clothes—but to Benjamin he gave five changes of clothes and 300 pieces of silver. 23 He also sent his father ten male donkeys loaded with the finest products of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other supplies he would need on his journey.

24 So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, "Don't quarrel about all this along the way!" 25 And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan.

26 "Joseph is still alive!" they told him. "And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!" Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn't believe it. 27 But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father's spirits revived.

28 Then Jacob exclaimed, "It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die."

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Going Deeper: Genesis 42, Genesis 44:6-17

Genesis 42

When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another? 2 I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die."

3 So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. 4 But Jacob wouldn't let Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. 5 So Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well.

6 Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. 7 Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where are you from?" he demanded.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied. "We have come to buy food."

8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn't recognize him. 9 And he remembered the dreams he'd had about them many years before. He said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become."

10 “No, my lord!” they exclaimed. “Your servants have simply come to buy food. 11 We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!”

12 “Yes, you are!” Joseph insisted. “You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

13 “Sir,” they said, “there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us.”

14 But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! 15 This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! 16 One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don’t have a younger brother, then I’ll know you are spies.”

17 So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. 18 On the third day Joseph said to them, “I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. 19 If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die.” To this they agreed.

21 Speaking among themselves, they said, “Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn’t listen. That’s why we’re in this trouble.”

22 “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy?” Reuben asked. “But you wouldn’t listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!”

23 Of course, they didn’t know that Joseph understood them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. 24 Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.

25 Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men’s sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother’s payment at the top of his sack. He also gave them supplies for their journey home. 26 So the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home.

27 But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack. 28 “Look!” he exclaimed to his brothers. “My money has been returned; it’s here in my sack!” Then their hearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, “What has God done to us?”

29 When the brothers came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them. 30 “The man who is governor of the land spoke very harshly to us,” they told him. “He accused us of being spies scouting the land. 31 But we said, ‘We are honest men, not spies. 32 We are twelve brothers, sons of one father. One brother is no longer with us, and the youngest is at home with our father in the land of Canaan.’

33 “Then the man who is governor of the land told us, ‘This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your starving families and go on home. 34 But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give you back your brother, and you may trade freely in the land.’”

35 As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man’s sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money. 36 Jacob exclaimed, “You are robbing me of my children! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!”

37 Then Reuben said to his father, “You may kill my two sons if I don’t bring Benjamin back to you. I’ll be responsible for him, and I promise to bring him back.”

38 But Jacob replied, “My son will not go down with you. His brother Joseph is dead, and he is all I have left. If anything should happen to him on your journey, you would send this grieving, white-haired man to his grave.”

Genesis 44:6-17

6 When the palace manager caught up with the men, he spoke to them as he had been instructed.

7 "What are you talking about?" the brothers responded. "We are your servants and would never do such a thing! 8 Didn't we return the money we found in our sacks? We brought it back all the way from the land of Canaan. Why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? 9 If you find his cup with any one of us, let that man die. And all the rest of us, my lord, will be your slaves."

10 "That's fair," the man replied. "But only the one who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go free."

11 They all quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them. 12 The palace manager searched the brothers' sacks, from the oldest to the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack! 13 When the brothers saw this, they tore their clothing in despair. Then they loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city.

14 Joseph was still in his palace when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him. 15 "What have you done?" Joseph demanded. "Don't you know that a man like me can predict the future?"

16 Judah answered, "Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we explain this? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—all of us, not just our brother who had your cup in his sack."

17 "No," Joseph said. "I would never do such a thing! Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go back to your father in peace."

Day 15 - Slavery in Egypt - The Need to be Rescued

Key Reading: Exodus 1:6-22, Exodus 2:1-10

Exodus 1:6-22

In time, Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation. 7 But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land.

8 Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. 9 He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. 10 We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."

11 So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labour. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centres for the king. 12 But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. 13 So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. 14 They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.

15 Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: 16 "When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." 17 But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too.

18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives. "Why have you done this?" he demanded. "Why have you allowed the boys to live?"

19 "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women," the midwives replied. "They are more vigorous and have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time."

20 So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live."

Exodus 2:1-10

About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married. 2 The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months. 3 But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River. 4 The baby's sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.

5 Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, and her attendants walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it for her. 6 When the princess opened it, she saw the baby. The little boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This must be one of the Hebrew children," she said.

7 Then the baby's sister approached the princess. "Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked.

8 "Yes, do!" the princess replied. So the girl went and called the baby's mother.

9 "Take this baby and nurse him for me," the princess told the baby's mother. "I will pay you for your help." So the woman took her baby home and nursed him.

10 Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, "I lifted him out of the water."

Going Deeper: Romans 6

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? 3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. 6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. 8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. 9 We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. 10 When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. 11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. 14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

15 Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! 16 Don't you realise that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. 17 Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. 18 Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

19 Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. 21 And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. 22 But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Day 16 - The Burning Bush - I AM

Key Reading: Exodus 3, John 8:52-59

Exodus 3

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. 3 "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

4 When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

5 "Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. 6 I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. 9 Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. 10 Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt."

11 But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain."

13 But Moses protested, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what should I tell them?"

14 God replied to Moses, "I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you." 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.

This is my eternal name,

my name to remember for all generations.

16 "Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, 'Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, "I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you. 17 I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.'"

18 "The elders of Israel will accept your message. Then you and the elders must go to the king of Egypt and tell him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So please let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord, our God.'

19 "But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand forces him. 20 So I will raise my hand and strike the Egyptians, performing all kinds of miracles among them. Then at last he will let you go. 21 And I will cause the Egyptians to look favourably on you. They will give you gifts when you go so you will not leave empty-handed. 22 Every Israelite woman will ask for articles of silver and gold and fine clothing from her Egyptian neighbours and from the foreign women in their houses. You will dress your sons and daughters with these, stripping the Egyptians of their wealth."

John 8:52-59

52 The people said, "Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, 'Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!'" 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

54 Jesus answered, "If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, 'He is our God,' 55 but you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."

57 The people said, "You aren't even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?"

58 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I am!" 59 At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

Going Deeper: Exodus 4:1-23, 29-31, John 2:1-11

Exodus 4:1-23

But Moses protested again, "What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, 'The Lord never appeared to you?'"

2 Then the Lord asked him, "What is that in your hand?"

"A shepherd's staff," Moses replied.

3 "Throw it down on the ground," the Lord told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back.

4 Then the Lord told him, "Reach out and grab its tail." So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd's staff in his hand.

5 "Perform this sign," the Lord told him. "Then they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you."

6 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with a severe skin disease. 7 "Now put your hand back into your cloak," the Lord said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.

8 The Lord said to Moses, "If they do not believe you and are not convinced by the first miraculous sign, they will be convinced by the second sign. 9 And if they don't believe you or listen to you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, the water from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground."

10 But Moses pleaded with the Lord, "O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled."

11 Then the Lord asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say."

13 But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send anyone else."

14 Then the Lord became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. 15 Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. 16 Aaron will be your spokesman to the people. He will be your mouthpiece, and you will stand in the place of God for him, telling him what to say. 17 And take your shepherd's staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you."

18 So Moses went back home to Jethro, his father-in-law. "Please let me return to my relatives in Egypt," Moses said. "I don't even know if they are still alive."

"Go in peace," Jethro replied.

19 Before Moses left Midian, the Lord said to him, "Return to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you have died."

20 So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey, and headed back to the land of Egypt. In his hand he carried the staff of God.

21 And the Lord told Moses, "When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will harden his heart so he will refuse to let the people go. 22 Then you will tell him, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. 23 I commanded you, "Let my son go, so he can worship me.'" But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!"

Exodus 4:29-31

29 Then Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called all the elders of Israel together. 30 Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. 31 Then the people of Israel were convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped.

John 2:1-11

The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. 3 The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine."

4 "Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

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

6 Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, 8 he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions.

9 When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. 10 "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!"

11 This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Day 17 - The Plagues of Egypt - The Wrath of God

Key Reading: Exodus 9, Revelation 16

Exodus 9

"Go back to Pharaoh," the Lord commanded Moses. "Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. 2 If you continue to hold them and refuse to let them go, 3 the hand of the Lord will strike all your livestock—your horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep, and goats—with a deadly plague. 4 But the Lord will again make a distinction between the livestock of the Israelites and that of the Egyptians. Not a single one of Israel's animals will die! 5 The Lord has already set the time for the plague to begin. He has declared that he will strike the land tomorrow.'"

6 And the Lord did just as he had said. The next morning all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but the Israelites didn't lose a single animal. 7 Pharaoh sent his officials to investigate, and they discovered that the Israelites had not lost a single animal! But even so, Pharaoh's heart remained stubborn, and he still refused to let the people go.

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from a brick kiln, and have Moses toss it into the air while Pharaoh watches. 9 The ashes will spread like fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, causing festering boils to break out on people and animals throughout the land."

10 So they took soot from a brick kiln and went and stood before Pharaoh. As Pharaoh watched, Moses threw the soot into the air, and boils broke out on people and animals alike. 11 Even the magicians were unable to stand before Moses, because the boils had broken out on them and all the Egyptians. 12 But

the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and just as the Lord had predicted to Moses, Pharaoh refused to listen.

13 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh. Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. 14 If you don't, I will send more plagues on you and your officials and your people. Then you will know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 By now I could have lifted my hand and struck you and your people with a plague to wipe you off the face of the earth. 16 But I have spared you for a purpose—to show you my power and to spread my fame throughout the earth. 17 But you still lord it over my people and refuse to let them go. 18 So tomorrow at this time I will send a hailstorm more devastating than any in all the history of Egypt. 19 Quick! Order your livestock and servants to come in from the fields to find shelter. Any person or animal left outside will die when the hail falls.'"

20 Some of Pharaoh's officials were afraid because of what the Lord had said. They quickly brought their servants and livestock in from the fields. 21 But those who paid no attention to the word of the Lord left theirs out in the open.

22 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Lift your hand toward the sky so hail may fall on the people, the livestock, and all the plants throughout the land of Egypt."

23 So Moses lifted his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed toward the earth. The Lord sent a tremendous hailstorm against all the land of Egypt. 24 Never in all the history of Egypt had there been a storm like that, with such devastating hail and continuous lightning. 25 It left all of Egypt in ruins. The hail struck down everything in the open field—people, animals, and plants alike. Even the trees were destroyed. 26 The only place without hail was the region of Goshen, where the people of Israel lived.

27 Then Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he confessed. "The Lord is the righteous one, and my people and I are wrong. 28 Please beg the Lord to end this terrifying thunder and hail. We've had enough. I will let you go; you don't need to stay any longer."

29 "All right," Moses replied. "As soon as I leave the city, I will lift my hands and pray to the Lord. Then the thunder and hail will stop, and you will know that the earth belongs to the Lord. 30 But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the Lord God."

31 (All the flax and barley were ruined by the hail, because the barley had formed heads and the flax was budding. 32 But the wheat and the emmer wheat were spared, because they had not yet sprouted from the ground.)

33 So Moses left Pharaoh's court and went out of the city. When he lifted his hands to the Lord, the thunder and hail stopped, and the downpour ceased. 34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain, hail, and thunder had stopped, he and his officials sinned again, and Pharaoh again became stubborn. 35 Because his heart was hard, Pharaoh refused to let the people leave, just as the Lord had predicted through Moses.

Revelation 16

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."

2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped its image.

3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died.

4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

"You are just in these judgments, O Holy One,
you who are and who were;

6 for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets,
and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."

7 And I heard the altar respond:

"Yes, Lord God Almighty,

true and just are your judgments.”

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. 9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

15 “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

Going Deeper: Exodus 7:3-5, Romans 9

Exodus 7:3-5

‘But I will make Pharaoh’s heart stubborn so I can multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 Even then Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you. So I will bring down my fist on Egypt. Then I will rescue my forces—my people, the Israelites—from the land of Egypt with great acts of judgement. 5 When I raise my powerful hand and bring out the Israelites, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.’”

Romans 9

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

6 It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 8 In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. 9 For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”

10 Not only that, but Rebekah’s children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! 15 For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

16 It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. 17 For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" 20 But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

22 What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— 24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 25 As he says in Hosea:

"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people;
and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"

26 and,

"In the very place where it was said to them,
'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"

27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

"Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,
only the remnant will be saved.

28 For the Lord will carry out
his sentence on earth with speed and finality."

29 It is just as Isaiah said previously:

"Unless the Lord Almighty
had left us descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah."

30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. 33 As it is written:

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall,
and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."

Day 18 - The Passover Lamb - Jesus the Lamb of God

Key Reading: Exodus 12:1-13, Exodus 12:21-30

Exodus 12:1-13

While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the Lord gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: 2 "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. 3 Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each household. 4 If a family is too small to eat a whole animal, let them share with another family in the neighbourhood. Divide the animal according to the size of each family and how much they can eat. 5 The animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects.

6 “Take special care of this chosen animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then the whole assembly of the community of Israel must slaughter their lamb or young goat at twilight. 7 They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal. 8 That same night they must roast the meat over a fire and eat it along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat any of the meat raw or boiled in water. The whole animal—including the head, legs, and internal organs—must be roasted over a fire. 10 Do not leave any of it until the next morning. Burn whatever is not eaten before morning. 11 “These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the Lord’s Passover. 12 On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgement against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! 13 But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:21-30

Then Moses called all the elders of Israel together and said to them, “Go, pick out a lamb or young goat for each of your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. 22 Drain the blood into a basin. Then take a bundle of hyssop branches and dip it into the blood. Brush the hyssop across the top and sides of the doorframes of your houses. And no one may go out through the door until morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through the land to strike down the Egyptians. But when he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, the Lord will pass over your home. He will not permit his death angel to enter your house and strike you down.

24 “Remember, these instructions are a permanent law that you and your descendants must observe forever. 25 When you enter the land the Lord has promised to give you, you will continue to observe this ceremony. 26 Then your children will ask, ‘What does this ceremony mean?’ 27 And you will reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. And though he struck the Egyptians, he spared our families.’” When Moses had finished speaking, all the people bowed down to the ground and worshipped.

28 So the people of Israel did just as the Lord had commanded through Moses and Aaron. 29 And that night at midnight, the Lord struck down all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn son of the prisoner in the dungeon. Even the firstborn of their livestock were killed. 30 Pharaoh and all his officials and all the people of Egypt woke up during the night, and loud wailing was heard throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died.

Going Deeper: Exodus 12:11-20, Matthew 16:5-12

Exodus 12:11-20

These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the Lord’s Passover. 12 On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgement against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! 13 But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 “This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. This is a law for all time. 15 For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. On the first day of the festival, remove every trace of yeast from your homes. Anyone who eats bread made with yeast during the seven days of the festival will be cut off from the community of Israel. 16 On the first day of the festival and again on the seventh day, all the people must observe an official day for holy assembly. No work of any kind may be done on these days except in the preparation of food.

17 “Celebrate this Festival of Unleavened Bread, for it will remind you that I brought your forces out of the land of Egypt on this very day. This festival will be a permanent law for you; celebrate this day from generation to generation. 18 The bread you eat must be made without yeast from the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. 19 During those seven days, there must be no trace of yeast in your homes. Anyone who eats anything made with yeast during this week will be cut off from the community of Israel. These regulations apply both to the foreigners living among you and to the native-born Israelites. 20 During those days you must not eat anything made with yeast. Wherever you live, eat only bread made without yeast.”

Matthew 16:5-12

Later, after they crossed to the other side of the lake, the disciples discovered they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 “Watch out!” Jesus warned them. “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 7 At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn’t brought any bread. 8 Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, “You have so little faith! Why are you arguing with each other about having no bread? 9 Don’t you understand even yet? Don’t you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up? 10 Or the 4,000 I fed with seven loaves, and the large baskets of leftovers you picked up? 11 Why can’t you understand that I’m not talking about bread? So again I say, ‘Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’” 12 Then at last they understood that he wasn’t speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Day 19 - The Red Sea Crossing - Baptism

Key Reading: Exodus 14, Romans 6:3-7

Exodus 14

Then the Lord gave these instructions to Moses: 2 “Order the Israelites to turn back and camp by Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, across from Baal-zephon. 3 Then Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are confused. They are trapped in the wilderness!’ 4 And once again I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after you. I have planned this in order to display my glory through Pharaoh and his whole army. After this the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord!” So the Israelites camped there as they were told.

5 When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. “What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?” they asked. 6 So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops. 7 He took with him 600 of Egypt’s best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with its commander. 8 The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so he chased after the people of Israel, who had left with fists raised in defiance. 9 The Egyptians chased after them with all the forces in Pharaoh’s army—all his horses and chariots, his charioteers, and his troops. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon.

10 As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the Lord, 11 and they said to Moses, “Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren’t there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? 12 Didn’t we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, ‘Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It’s better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!’”

13 But Moses told the people, “Don’t be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. 14 The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.”

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! 16 Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground. 17 And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after the Israelites. My great glory will be displayed through Pharaoh and his troops, his chariots, and his charioteers. 18 When my glory is displayed through them, all Egypt will see my glory and know that I am the Lord!"

19 Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to the rear of the camp. The pillar of cloud also moved from the front and stood behind them. 20 The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night.

21 Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the Lord opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. 22 So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

23 Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers—chased them into the middle of the sea. 24 But just before dawn the Lord looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their forces into total confusion. 25 He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. "Let's get out of here—away from these Israelites!" the Egyptians shouted. "The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!"

26 When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the Lord said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers."

27 So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the Lord swept them into the sea. 28 Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

29 But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides. 30 That is how the Lord rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. 31 When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Romans 6:3-7

3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. 6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

Going Deeper: Matthew 3

In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, 2 "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." 3 The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming!
Clear the road for him!'"

4 John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. 5 People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the

Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. 6 And when they confessed their sins, he baptised them in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptise, he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? 8 Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. 9 Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. 10 Even now the axe of God's judgement is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

11 "I baptise with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12 He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."

13 Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptised by John. 14 But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptised by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

15 But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptise him.

16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy

Day 20 - Manna - Jesus the True Bread from Heaven

Key Reading: Exodus 16:11-26, John 6:26-42

Exodus 16:11-26

Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt. 2 There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.

3 "If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death."

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. 5 On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual."

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "By evening you will realize it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. 7 In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?" 8 Then Moses added, "The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us."

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Announce this to the entire community of Israel: 'Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.'" 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud.

11 Then the Lord said to Moses, 12 "I have heard the Israelites' complaints. Now tell them, 'In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'"

13 That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. 14 When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. 15 The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. "What is it?" they asked each other. They had no idea what it was.

And Moses told them, "It is the food the Lord has given you to eat. 16 These are the Lord's instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent."

17 So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. 18 But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.

19 Then Moses told them, "Do not keep any of it until morning." 20 But some of them didn't listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them.

21 After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. 23 He told them, "This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the Lord. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow."

24 So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. 25 Moses said, "Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the Lord. There will be no food on the ground today. 26 You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day."

John 6:26-42

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. 27 But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval."

28 They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

30 They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? 31 After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. 33 The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."

35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me.

37 However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. 38 For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. 39 And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. 40 For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

Going Deeper: John 6

After this, Jesus crossed over to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A huge crowd kept following him wherever he went, because they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick. 3 Then Jesus climbed a hill and sat down with his disciples around him. 4 (It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration.) 5 Jesus soon saw a huge crowd of people coming to look for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" 6 He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip replied, "Even if we worked for months, we wouldn't have enough money to feed them!"

8 Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. 9 "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

10 "Tell everyone to sit down," Jesus said. So they all sat down on the grassy slopes. (The men alone numbered about 5,000.) 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted. 12 After everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Now gather the leftovers, so that nothing is wasted." 13 So they picked up the pieces and filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

14 When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!" 15 When Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself.

16 That evening Jesus' disciples went down to the shore to wait for him. 17 But as darkness fell and Jesus still hadn't come back, they got into the boat and headed across the lake toward Capernaum. 18 Soon a gale swept down upon them, and the sea grew very rough. 19 They had rowed three or four miles when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat. They were terrified, 20 but he called out to them, "Don't be afraid. I am here!" 21 Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately they arrived at their destination!

22 The next day the crowd that had stayed on the far shore saw that the disciples had taken the only boat, and they realised Jesus had not gone with them. 23 Several boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the Lord had blessed the bread and the people had eaten. 24 So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. 25 They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

26 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. 27 But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval."

28 They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?"

29 Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."

30 They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? 31 After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. 33 The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."

35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me.

37 However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. 38 For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. 39 And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. 40 For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

41 Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

43 But Jesus replied, "Stop complaining about what I said. 44 For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. 45 As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)

47 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. 48 Yes, I am the bread of life! 49 Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. 50 Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

52 Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

53 So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. 54 But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever."

59 He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

60 Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

61 Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? 62 Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? 63 The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But some of you do not believe me." (For Jesus knew from the beginning which ones didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) 65 Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me."

66 At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. 67 Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?"

68 Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. 69 We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

70 Then Jesus said, "I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil." 71 He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would later betray him.