

The Novel Bible

Jesus and His Followers

Published by the Interesting Book Publishing Company
Ste. Anne, Manitoba, Canada

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Editor's Notes

When Jesus said, “It is written,” he did not quote verse and chapter number. These were only added into the Bible hundreds of years later.

Over the years, headings were also added by translators.

These tools do much to assist us when we are trying to find a particular piece of scripture.

However, they also slow us down when trying to read the whole Bible. We find ourselves reading a verse or two, or a whole chapter, instead of reading “the Bible”.

This publication endeavors to get back to the original—no verses, no chapters, no headings, just words. Read it like a novel.

The original Greek did not capitalize God’s pronouns, so neither do we.

The words in this book come from the Berean Reader’s Bible, a respectable translation of the Bible. We may have tweaked a punctuation mark or two, to make it more in line with English grammar, but all the words are unchanged.

Part one is the book of Luke, and part two is the book of Acts.

So curl up in front of a warm fire with a hot cup of something and try reading it all in one sitting.

Enjoy!

Part One

Chapter I

Many have undertaken to compose an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by the initial eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, and whose wife Elizabeth was a daughter of Aaron.

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Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and decrees of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well along in years.

One day while Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And at the hour of the incense offering, the whole congregation was praying outside.

Just then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and gripped with fear.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He shall never take wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Many of the sons of Israel he will turn back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

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

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“I am Gabriel,” replied the angel. “I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And now you will be silent and unable to speak until the day this comes to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.”

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he took so long in the temple. When he came out and was unable to speak to them, they realized he had seen a vision in the temple. He kept making signs to them but remained speechless. And when the days of his service were complete, he returned home.

After these days, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. She declared, “The Lord has done this for me. In these days he has shown me favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. The angel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. So the angel told her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High. The Lord God will give

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him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end!”

“How can this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the son of God. Look, even Elizabeth your relative has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel left her.

In those days Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah, where she entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord’s word to her will be fulfilled.”

Then Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

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and my spirit rejoices in God my savior!
For he has looked with favor on the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud
in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones,
but has exalted the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful,

as he promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day, when they came to circumcise the child, they were going to name him after his father

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Zechariah. But his mother replied, “No! He shall be called John.”

They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who bears this name.” So they made signs to his father to find out what he wanted to name the child.

Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. Immediately Zechariah’s mouth was opened and his tongue was released, and he began to speak, praising God.

All their neighbors were filled with awe, and people throughout the hill country of Judea were talking about these events. And all who heard this wondered in their hearts and asked, “What then will this child become?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has visited and redeemed his people.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through his holy prophets,
those of ages past,
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us,
to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham,

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to grant us deliverance from hostile hands,
that we may serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him
all the days of our lives.

And you, child, will be called
a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord
to prepare the way for him,
to give to his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the dawn will visit us from on high,
to shine on those who live in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet
into the path of peace.”

And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until the time of his public appearance to Israel.

* * *

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census should be taken of the whole empire. This was the first census to take place while

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Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, since he was from the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to him in marriage and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her child to be born. And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds residing in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Just then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord! And this will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a great multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men
on whom his favor rests!"

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When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the Baby, who was lying in the manger. After they had seen the child, they spread the message they had received about him. And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which was just as the angel had told them.

When the eight days until his circumcision had passed, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

And when the time of purification according to the law of Moses was complete, his parents brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord: “Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer the sacrifice specified in the law of the Lord: “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. And when the

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parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and blessed God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was spoken about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary:

“Behold, this child is appointed to cause
the rise and fall of many in Israel,
and to be a sign that will be spoken against,
so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed—
and a sword will pierce your soul as well.”

There was also a prophetess named Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was well along in years. She had been married for seven years, and then was a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

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Coming forward at that moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Jesus' parents had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

And the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast.

When those days were over and they were returning home, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware he had stayed. Assuming he was in their company, they traveled on for a day before they began to look for him among their relatives and friends.

When they could not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. Finally, after three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. "Child, why have you done this to us?" his mother asked. "Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

"Why were you looking for me?" he asked. "Did you not know that I had to be in my father's house?" But they did not understand the statement he was making to them.

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Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Chapter II

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

He went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

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“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
 ‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
 make straight paths for him.
Every valley shall be filled in,
 and every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked ways shall be made straight,
 and the rough ways smooth.
And all humanity will see God’s salvation.’”

Then John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit, then, in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe lies ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

The crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

John replied, “Whoever has two tunics should share with him who has none, and whoever has food should do the same.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

“Collect no more than you are authorized,” he answered.

Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

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“Do not take money by force or false accusation,” he said. “Be content with your wages.”

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John could be the Christ. John answered all of them: “I baptize you with water, but one more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

With these and many other exhortations, John proclaimed the good news to the people. But when he rebuked Herod the tetrarch regarding his brother’s wife Herodias and all the evils he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in a bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved son; in you I am well pleased.”

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

He was regarded as the son of Joseph,
the son of Heli,
the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi,
the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

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the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum,

the son of Esli, the son of Naggai,
the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein,

the son of Josech, the son of Joda,
the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel,

the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,
the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam,
the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,
the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim,
the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,
the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph,
the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,
the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha,

the son of Nathan, the son of David,
the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz,
the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon,
the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni,

the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,
the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham,
the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,
the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg,
the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,

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the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem,

the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,
the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared,

the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan,
the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam,
the son of God.

* * *

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. "I will give you authority over all these kingdoms and all their glory," he said. "For it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

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Then the devil led him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple. “If you are the son of God,” he said, “throw Yourself down from here. For it is written:

‘He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a
stone.’”

But Jesus answered, “It also says, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

When the devil had finished every temptation, he left him until an opportune time.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and the news about him spread throughout the surrounding region. He taught in their synagogues and was glorified by everyone.

Then Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. And when he stood up to read, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives

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and recovery of sight to the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, returned it to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him, and he began by saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" they asked.

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

Then he added, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. But I tell you truthfully that there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and great famine swept over all the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. Yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

On hearing this, all the people in the synagogue were enraged. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him over the cliff. But Jesus passed through the crowd and went on his way.

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Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he began to teach the people. They were astonished at his teaching, because his message had authority.

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon. He cried out in a loud voice, “Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the holy one of God!”

But Jesus rebuked the demon. “Be silent!” he said. “Come out of him!” At this, the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without harming him.

All the people were overcome with amazement and asked one another, “What is this message? With authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!” And the news about Jesus spread throughout the surrounding region.

After Jesus had left the synagogue, he went to the home of Simon, whose mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. So they appealed to Jesus on her behalf, and he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and began to serve them.

At sunset, all who were ill with various diseases were brought to Jesus, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Demons also came out of many people, shouting, “You are the son of God!” But he rebuked the demons and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

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At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place, and the crowds were looking for him. They came to him and tried to keep him from leaving. But Jesus told them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, because that is why I was sent.”

And he continued to preach in the synagogues of Judea.

Chapter III

On one occasion, while Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret with the crowd pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Jesus got into the boat belonging to Simon and asked him to put out a little from shore. And sitting down, he taught the people from the boat.

When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

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“Master,” Simon replied, “we have worked hard all night without catching anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to tear. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees. “Go away from me, Lord,” he said, “for I am a sinful man.” For he and his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were his partners James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

“Do not be afraid,” Jesus said to Simon. “From now on you will catch men.” And when they had brought their boats ashore, they left everything and followed him.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell facedown and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

“Do not tell anyone,” Jesus instructed him. “But go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering Moses prescribed for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

But the news about Jesus spread all the more, and great crowds came to hear him and to be healed of their

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sicknesses. Yet he frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray.

One day Jesus was teaching, and the Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. People had come from Jerusalem and from every village of Galilee and Judea, and the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.

Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They tried to bring him inside to set him before Jesus, but they could not find a way through the crowd. So they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

But the scribes and Pharisees began thinking to themselves, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Knowing what they were thinking, Jesus replied, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?' But so that you may know that the son of man has authority on the earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home."

And immediately the man stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. Everyone was taken with amazement and glorified God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

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After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

Then Levi hosted a great banquet for Jesus at his house. A large crowd of tax collectors was there, along with others who were eating with them. But the Pharisees and their scribes complained to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus answered, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Then they said to him, "John's disciples and those of the Pharisees frequently fast and pray, but yours keep on eating and drinking."

Jesus replied, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will tear the new garment as well, and the patch from the new will not match the old.

"And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will spill, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, new wine is poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

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One Sabbath Jesus was passing through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick the heads of grain, rub them in their hands, and eat them. But some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

Jesus replied, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, took the consecrated bread and gave it to his companions, and ate what is lawful only for the priests to eat."

Then Jesus declared, "The son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."

On another Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were watching him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and stand among us." So he got up and stood there.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" And after looking around at all of them, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and it was restored.

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But the scribes and Pharisees were filled with rage and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

In those days Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When daylight came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated as apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James son of Alphaeus and Simon called the Zealot; Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Then Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there, along with a great number of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and those troubled by unclean spirits were healed. The entire crowd was trying to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Looking up at his disciples, Jesus said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

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“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the son of man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For their fathers treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort.
Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will hunger.
Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.
Woe to you when all men speak well of you,
for their fathers treated the false prophets in the
same way.

“But to those of you who will listen, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone takes your cloak, do not withhold your tunic as well. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what is yours, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from

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whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Jesus also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

“Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but fail to notice the beam in your own eye? How can you say, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while you yourself fail to see the beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. Indeed, figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor grapes from brambles. The good man brings good things out of the good

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treasure of his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil treasure of his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and acts on them: He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid his foundation on the rock. When the flood came, the torrent crashed against that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

“But the one who hears my words and does not act on them is like a man who built his house on ground without a foundation. The torrent crashed against that house, and immediately it fell—and great was its destruction!”

* * *

When Jesus had concluded his discourse in the hearing of the people, he went to Capernaum. There a highly valued servant of a centurion was sick and about to die. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his servant. They came to Jesus and pleaded with him earnestly, “This man is worthy to have you grant this, for he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”

So Jesus went with them. But when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends with the message: “Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy to have

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you come under my roof. That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to you. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell one to go, and he goes; and another to come, and he comes. I tell my servant to do something, and he does it.”

When Jesus heard this, he marveled at the centurion. Turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.” And when the messengers returned to the house, they found the servant in good health.

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain. his disciples went with him, accompanied by a large crowd. As he approached the town gate, he saw a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.

When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said, “Do not weep.” Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. “Young man,” he said, “I tell you, get up!” And the dead man sat up and began to speak! Then Jesus gave him back to his mother.

A sense of awe swept over all of them, and they glorified God. “A great prophet has appeared among us!” they said. “God has visited his people!” And the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding region.

Then John’s disciples informed him about all these things. So John called two of his disciples and sent them to

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ask the Lord, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we look for someone else?”

When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to ask, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we look for someone else?’”

At that very hour Jesus healed many people of their diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and he gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of me.”

After John’s messengers had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? Otherwise, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Look, those who wear elegant clothing and live in luxury are found in palaces.

“What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

‘Behold, I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

“I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John, yet even the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

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All the people who heard this, even the tax collectors, acknowledged God's justice. For they had received the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

"To what, then, can I compare the men of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to one another:

'We played the flute for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not weep.'

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' The son of man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at this glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

Then one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a sinful woman from that town learned that Jesus was dining there, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair. Then she kissed his feet and anointed them with the perfume.

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When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who this is and what kind of woman is touching him—for she is a sinner!”

But Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

“Two men were debtors to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay him, he forgave both of them. Which one, then, will love him more?”

“I suppose the one who was forgiven more,” Simon replied.

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

And turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not greet me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I arrived. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume. Therefore I tell you, because her many sins have been forgiven, she has loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

But those at the table began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

And Jesus told the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Chapter IV

Soon afterward, Jesus traveled from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna the wife of Herod's household manager Chuza, Susanna, and many others. These women were ministering to them out of their own means.

While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told them this

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parable: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, where it was trampled, and the birds of the air devoured it.

“Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the seedlings withered because they had no moisture.

“Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the seedlings.

“Still other seed fell on good soil, where it sprang up and produced a crop—a hundredfold.”

As Jesus said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant.

He replied, “The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

‘though seeing, they may not see;
though hearing, they may not understand.’

“Now this is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. The seeds along the path are those who hear, but the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

“The seeds on rocky ground are those who hear the word and receive it with joy, but they have no root. They believe for a season, but in the time of testing, they fall away.

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“The seeds that fell among the thorns are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life, and their fruit does not mature.

“But the seeds on good soil are those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, cling to it, and by persevering produce a crop.

“No one lights a lamp and covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he sets it on a stand, so those who enter can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be made known and brought to light.

“Pay attention, therefore, to how you listen. Whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him.”

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were unable to reach him because of the crowd. He was told, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.”

But he replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and carry it out.”

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us cross to the other side of the lake.” So he got into a boat with them and set out.

As they sailed, he fell asleep, and a windstorm came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”

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Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters, and they subsided, and all was calm. “Where is your faith?” he asked.

Frightened and amazed, they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him!”

Then they sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothing or lived in a house, but he stayed in the tombs.

When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, shouting in a loud voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I beg you not to torture me!” For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was bound with chains and shackles, he had broken the chains and been driven by the demon into solitary places.

“What is your name?” Jesus asked.

“Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And the demons kept begging Jesus not to order them to go into the Abyss.

There on the hillside a large herd of pigs was feeding. So the demons begged Jesus to let them enter the pigs, and he gave them permission.

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Then the demons came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside. So the people went out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man whom the demons had left, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Meanwhile, those who had seen it reported how the demon-possessed man had been healed.

Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to depart from them, because great fear had taken hold of them. So he got into the boat and started back.

The man whom the demons had left begged to go with Jesus. But he sent him away, saying, "Return home and describe how much God has done for you." So the man went away and proclaimed all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they had all been waiting for him. Just then a synagogue leader named Jairus came and fell at Jesus' feet. He begged him to come to his house, because his only daughter, who was about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus went with him, the crowds pressed around him, including a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. She had spent all her money on physicians, but no one was able to heal her. She came up behind Jesus and

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touched the fringe of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

But they all denied it. “Master,” said Peter, “the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

But Jesus declared, “Someone touched me, for I know that power has gone out from me.”

Then the woman, seeing that she could not escape notice, came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she explained why she had touched him and how she had immediately been healed.

“Daughter,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

While he was still speaking, someone arrived from the house of the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” he told Jairus. “Do not bother the Teacher anymore.”

But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, “Do not be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.”

When he entered the house, he did not allow anyone to go in with him except Peter, John, James, and the child’s father and mother. Meanwhile, everyone was weeping and mourning for her. But Jesus said, “Stop weeping; she is not dead but asleep.” And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

But Jesus took her by the hand and called out, “Child, get up!” Her spirit returned, and at once she got up. And he directed that she be given something to eat. Her parents

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were astounded, but Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

* * *

Then Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and power to cure diseases. And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. "Take nothing for the journey," he told them, "no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no second tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that area. If anyone does not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that town, as a testimony against them."

So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

When Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, he was perplexed. For some were saying that John had risen from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that a prophet of old had arisen.

"I beheaded John," Herod said, "but who is this man I hear such things about?" And he kept trying to see Jesus.

Then the apostles returned and reported to Jesus all that they had done. Taking them away privately, he withdrew to a town called Bethsaida. But the crowds found out and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about

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the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed healing.

As the day neared its end, the Twelve came to Jesus and said, "Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside for lodging and provisions. For we are in a desolate place here."

But Jesus told them, "You give them something to eat."

"We have only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered, "unless we go and buy food for all these people." (There were about five thousand men.)

He told his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." They did so, and everyone was seated.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus spoke a blessing and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people.

They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

One day as Jesus was praying in private and the disciples were with him, he questioned them: "Who do the crowds say I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that a prophet of old has arisen."

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

Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. "The son of man must suffer many things," he said. "He

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must be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

Then Jesus said to all of them, “If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truthfully, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

About eight days after Jesus had said these things, he took with him Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became radiantly white. Suddenly two men, Moses and Elijah, began talking with Jesus. They appeared in glory and spoke about his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Meanwhile Peter and his companions were overcome by sleep, but when they awoke, they saw Jesus’ glory and the two men standing with him. As Moses and Elijah were leaving, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

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While Peter was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my son, whom I have chosen. Listen to him!"

After the voice had spoken, only Jesus was present with them. The disciples kept this to themselves, and in those days they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

The next day, when they came down from the mountain, Jesus was met by a large crowd. Suddenly a man in the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit keeps seizing him, and he screams abruptly. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It keeps mauling him and rarely departs from him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable."

"O unbelieving and perverse generation!" Jesus replied. "How long must I remain with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

Even while the boy was approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father.

And they were all astonished at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand this statement.

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It was veiled from them so that they could not comprehend it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Then an argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. But Jesus, knowing the thoughts of their hearts, had a little child stand beside him. And he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For whoever is the least among all of you, he is the greatest."

"Master," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not accompany us."

"Do not stop him," Jesus replied, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

As the day of his ascension approached, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead, who went into a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. But the people there refused to welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.

When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?"

But Jesus turned and rebuked them. And he and his disciples went on to another village.

As they were walking along the road, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head."

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Then he said to another man, "Follow me."

The man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

But Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You, however, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me bid farewell to my family."

Then Jesus declared, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Chapter V

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place he was about to visit. And he told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest.

“Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse or bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the road.

“Whatever house you enter, begin by saying, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay at the same house,

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eating and drinking whatever you are offered. For the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

“If you enter a town and they welcome you, eat whatever is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’

“But if you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go into the streets and declare, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off as a testimony against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades!

“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

So he told them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the

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spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

At that time Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and declared, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in your sight.

“All things have been entrusted to me by my father. No one knows who the son is except the father, and no one knows who the father is except the son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him.”

Then Jesus turned to the disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

One day an expert in the law stood up to test him. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the law?” Jesus replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus said. “Do this and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

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Jesus took up this question and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down the same road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

So too, when a Levite came to that spot and saw him, he passed by on the other side.

But when a Samaritan on a journey came upon him, he looked at him and had compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he said, ‘and on my return I will repay you for any additional expense.’

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

“The one who showed him mercy,” replied the expert in the law.

Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

As they traveled along, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to his message. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations to be made. She came to Jesus and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!”

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“Martha, Martha,” the Lord replied, “you are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her.”

* * *

One day in a place where Jesus had just finished praying, one of his disciples requested, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

So Jesus told them, “When you pray, say:

‘Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation.’”

Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose one of you goes to his friend at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine has come to me on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’

“And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Do not bother me. My door is already shut, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’

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“I tell you, even though he will not get up to provide for him because of his friendship, yet because of the man’s persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

“So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

One day Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. And when the demon was gone, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowds were amazed, but some of them said, “It is by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, that he drives out demons.” And others tested him by demanding a sign from heaven.

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and a house divided against a house will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? After all, you say that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

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“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his house, his possessions are secure. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted, and then he divides up his plunder.

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

“When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it passes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ On its return, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and dwell there. And the final plight of that man is worse than the first.”

As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and blessed are the breasts that nursed you!”

But he replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

As the crowds were increasing, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so the son of man will be a sign to this generation.

“The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and now one greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand at the judgment with this generation and

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condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

“No one lights a lamp and puts it in a cellar or under a basket. Instead, he sets it on a stand, so those who enter can see the light.

“Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body is full of darkness. Be careful, then, that the light within you is not darkness. So if your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, you will be radiant, as though a lamp were shining on you.”

As Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was surprised to see that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.

“Now then,” said the Lord, “you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside as well? But give as alms the things that are within you, and you will see that everything is clean for you.

“Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint, rue, and every herb, but you disregard justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.

“Woe to you Pharisees! You love the chief seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to

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you! For you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without even noticing.”

One of the experts in the law told him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us as well.”

“Woe to you as well, experts in the law!” he replied. “You weigh men down with heavy burdens, but you yourselves will not lift a finger to lighten their load.

“Woe to you! You build tombs for the prophets, but it was your fathers who killed them. So you are witnesses consenting to the deeds of your fathers: They killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles; some of them they will kill and others they will persecute.’

“As a result, this generation will be charged with the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, all of it will be charged to this generation.

“Woe to you experts in the law! For you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”

As Jesus went on from there, the scribes and Pharisees began to oppose him bitterly and to ply him with questions about many things, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Chapter VI

In the meantime, a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling one another. Jesus began to speak first to his disciples: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.

“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show

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you whom you should fear: Fear the one who, after you have been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

“I tell you, everyone who confesses me before men, the son of man will also confess him before the angels of God. But whoever denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say. For at that time the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.”

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

But Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me judge or executor between you?” And he said to them, “Watch out! Guard yourselves against every form of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

Then he told them a parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced an abundance. So he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, since I have nowhere to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and will build bigger ones, and there I will store up all

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my grain and my goods. Then I will say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry!”

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be required of you. Then who will own what you have accumulated?’

“This is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storehouse or barn; yet God feeds them. How much more valuable you are than the birds!

“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? So if you cannot do such a small thing, why do you worry about the rest?

“Consider how the lilies grow: They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

“And do not be concerned about what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the Gentiles of the world strive after all these things, and your father knows that you

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need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be added unto you.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide yourselves with purses that will not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning. Then you will be like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds on watch when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve and will have them recline at the table, and he himself will come and wait on them. Even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them alert, those servants will be blessed.

“But understand this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the son of man will come at an hour you do not expect.”

“Lord,” said Peter, “are you addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?”

And the Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their portion at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so

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when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

“But suppose that servant says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and he begins to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not anticipate. Then he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

“That servant who knows his master’s will but does not get ready or follow his instructions will be beaten with many blows. But the one who unknowingly does things worthy of punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from him who has been entrusted with much, even more will be demanded.

“I have come to ignite a fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

“Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Then Jesus said to the crowds, “As soon as you see a cloud rising in the west, you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and

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that is what happens. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It will be hot,' and it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and sky. Why don't you know how to interpret the present time?

"And why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? Make every effort to reconcile with your adversary while you are on your way to the magistrate. Otherwise, he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and the officer may throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the very last penny."

* * *

At that time some of those present told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. To this he replied, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed on them: Do you think that they were more sinful than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Then Jesus told this parable: "A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He went to look for fruit on it,

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but did not find any. So he said to the keeper of the vineyard, 'Look, for the past three years I have come to search for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Therefore cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

"Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone again this year, until I dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, you can cut it down.'"

One Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman there had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was hunched over and could not stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your disability." Then he placed his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and began to glorify God.

But the synagogue leader was indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. "There are six days for work," he told the crowd. "So come and be healed on those days and not on the Sabbath."

"You hypocrites!" the Lord replied. "Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it to water? Then should not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be released from her bondage on the Sabbath day?"

When Jesus said this, all his adversaries were humiliated. And the whole crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things he was doing.

Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? To what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a

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man tossed into his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.”

Again he asked, “To what can I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour, until all of it was leavened.”

Then Jesus traveled throughout the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way toward Jerusalem. “Lord,” someone asked him, “will only a few people be saved?”

Jesus answered, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. After the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will stand outside knocking and saying, ‘Lord, open the door for us.’

“But he will reply, ‘I do not know where you are from.’

“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

“And he will answer, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers.’

“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves are thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And indeed, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last.”

At that very hour, some Pharisees came to Jesus and told him, “Leave this place and get away, because Herod wants to kill you.”

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But Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘Look, I will keep driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ Nevertheless, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day, for it is not admissible for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling! Look, your house is left to you desolate. And I tell you that you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Chapter VII

One Sabbath, Jesus went to eat in the home of a leading Pharisee, and those in attendance were watching him closely. Right there before him was a man with dropsy. So Jesus asked the experts in the law and the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”

But they remained silent.

Then Jesus took hold of the man, healed him, and sent him on his way. And he asked them, “Which of you whose son or ox falls into a pit on the Sabbath day will not immediately pull him out?”

And they were unable to answer these questions.

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When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable: “When you are invited to a wedding banquet, do not sit in the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited. Then the host who invited both of you will come and tell you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ And in humiliation, you will have to take the last place.

“But when you are invited, go and sit in the last place, so that your host will come and tell you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in front of everyone at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Then Jesus said to the man who had invited him, “When you host a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or brothers or relatives or rich neighbors. Otherwise, they may invite you in return, and you will be repaid. But when you host a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, and you will be blessed. Since they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

When one of those reclining with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is everyone who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

But Jesus replied, “A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. When it was time for the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

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“But one after another they all began to make excuses. The first one said, ‘I have bought a field, and I need to go see it. Please excuse me.’

“Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out. Please excuse me.’

“Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, so I cannot come.’

“The servant returned and reported all this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’

“‘Sir,’ the servant replied, ‘what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’

“So the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. For I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will taste my banquet.’”

Large crowds were now traveling with Jesus, and he turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“Which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if he has the resources to complete it? Otherwise, if he lays the foundation and is unable to finish the work, everyone who sees it will ridicule

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him, saying, 'This man could not finish what he started to build.'

"Or what king on his way to war with another king will not first sit down and consider whether he can engage with ten thousand men the one coming against him with twenty thousand? And if he is unable, he will send a delegation while the other king is still far off, to ask for terms of peace.

"In the same way, any one of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

"Salt is good, but if the salt loses its savor, with what will it be seasoned? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile, and it is thrown out.

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

* * *

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this parable: "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, comes home, and calls together his friends and neighbors to tell them, 'Rejoice

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with me, for I have found my lost sheep!’ In the same way, I tell you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who do not need to repent.

“Or what woman who has ten silver coins and loses one of them does not light a lamp, sweep her house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors to say, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who repents.”

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger son said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

“After a few days, the younger son got everything together and journeyed to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in wild living.

“After he had spent all he had, a severe famine swept through that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. he longed to fill his belly with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him a thing.

“Finally he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have plenty of food? But here I am, starving to death! I will get up and go back to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and

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against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’

“So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still in the distance, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

“The son declared, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile the older son was in the field, and as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what was going on.

“‘Your brother has returned,’ he said, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has him back safe and sound.’

“The older son became angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

“But he answered his father, ‘Look, all these years I have served you and never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours

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returns from squandering your wealth with prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

“‘Son, you are always with me,’ the father said, ‘and all that is mine is yours. But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

* * *

Jesus also said to his disciples, “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in to ask, ‘What is this I hear about you? Turn in an account of your management, for you cannot be manager any longer.’

“The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, now that my master is taking away my position? I am too weak to dig and too ashamed to beg. I know what I will do, so that after my removal from management, people will welcome me into their homes.’

“And he called in each one of his master’s debtors. ‘How much do you owe my master?’ he asked the first.

“‘A hundred measures of olive oil,’ he answered.

“‘Take your bill,’ said the manager. ‘Sit down quickly, and write fifty.’

“Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“‘A hundred measures of wheat,’ he replied.

“‘Take your bill and write eighty,’ he told him.

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“The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the sons of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the sons of light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to make friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.

“Whoever is faithful with very little will also be faithful with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been faithful with worldly wealth, who will entrust you with true riches? And if you have not been faithful with the belongings of another, who will give you belongings of your own?

“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all of this and were scoffing at Jesus. So he said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is prized among men is detestable before God.

“The law and the prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the gospel of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for a single stroke of a pen to drop out of the law.

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“Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

“Now there was a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen, who lived each day in joyous splendor. And a beggar named Lazarus lay at his gate, covered with sores and longing to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

“One day the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. And the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham from afar, with Lazarus by his side.

“So he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. For I am in agony in this fire.’

“But Abraham answered, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things. But now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. And besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that even those who wish cannot cross from here to you, nor can anyone cross from there to us.’

“‘Then I beg you, father,’ he said, ‘send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also end up in this place of torment.’

“But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let your brothers listen to them.’

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“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone is sent to them from the dead, they will repent.’

“Then Abraham said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Chapter VIII

Jesus said to his disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks will come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and to be thrown into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

"Watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Even if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times returns to say, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

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And the Lord answered, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

“Which of you whose servant comes in from plowing or shepherding in the field will say to him, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? Instead, won’t he tell him, ‘Prepare my meal and dress yourself to serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what he was told? So you also, when you have done everything commanded of you, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

While Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one of the villages, he was met by ten lepers. They stood at a distance and raised their voices, shouting, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

When Jesus saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they were on their way, they were cleansed.

When one of them saw that he was healed, he came back, praising God in a loud voice. He fell facedown at Jesus’ feet in thanksgiving to him—and he was a Samaritan.

“Were not all ten cleansed?” Jesus asked. “Where then are the other nine? Was no one found except this foreigner to return and give glory to God?”

Then Jesus said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well!”

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When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. Nor will people say, ‘Look, here it is,’ or ‘There it is.’ For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

Then he said to the disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the son of man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, ‘Look, there he is!’ or ‘Look, here he is!’ Do not go out or chase after them. For just as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will be the son of man in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the son of man: People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

“It was the same in the days of Lot: People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But on the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

“It will be just like that on the day the son of man is revealed. On that day, let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve his possessions. Likewise, let no one in the field return for anything he has left behind. Remember Lot’s wife! Whoever tries to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night

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two people will be in one bed: One will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together: One will be taken and the other left.”

“Where, Lord?” they asked.

Jesus answered, “Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.”

* * *

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray at all times and not lose heart: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected men. And there was a widow in that town who kept appealing to him, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’

“For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect men, yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice. Then she will stop wearing me out with her perpetual requests.’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to the words of the unjust judge. Will not God bring about justice for his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he continue to defer their help? I tell you, he will promptly carry out justice on their behalf. Nevertheless, when the son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

To some who trusted in their own righteousness and viewed others with contempt, he also told this parable:

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“Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like the other men—swindlers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and pay tithes of all that I acquire.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance, unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Now people were even bringing their babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. And when the disciples saw this, they rebuked those who brought them.

But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Then a certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus replied. “No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.’”

“All these I have kept from my youth,” he said.

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On hearing this, Jesus told him, “You still lack one thing: Sell everything you own and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

But when the ruler heard this, he became very sad, because he was extremely wealthy.

Seeing the man’s sadness, Jesus said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

But Jesus said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

“Look,” said Peter, “we have left all we had to follow you.”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times more in this age—and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Then Jesus took the Twelve aside and said to them, “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything the prophets have written about the son of man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will flog him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.”

But the disciples did not understand any of these things. The meaning was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend what he was saying.

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As Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road, begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

“Jesus of Nazareth is passing by,” they told him.

So he called out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!”

Those who led the way admonished him to be silent, but he cried out all the louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and directed that the man be brought to him. When he had been brought near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord,” he said, “let me see again.”

“Receive your sight!” Jesus replied. “Your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, glorifying God. And all the people who saw this gave praise to God.

* * *

Then Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, who was very wealthy. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but could not see over the crowd because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, since Jesus was about to pass that way.

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When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today."

So Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. And all who saw this began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinful man!"

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, half of my possessions I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay it fourfold."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

While the people were listening to this, Jesus proceeded to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and they thought the kingdom of God would appear imminently. So he said, "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to lay claim to his kingship and then return. Beforehand, he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Conduct business with this until I return,' he said.

"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.'

"When he returned from procuring his kingship, he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what each one had earned.

"The first servant came forward and said, 'Master, your mina has produced ten more minas.'

Jesus and His Followers

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, you shall have authority over ten cities.’

“The second servant came and said, ‘Master, your mina has made five minas.’

“And to this one he said, ‘You shall have authority over five cities.’

“Then another servant came and said, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have laid away in a piece of cloth. For I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man. You withdraw what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.’

“His master replied, ‘You wicked servant, I will judge you by your own words. So you knew that I am a harsh man, withdrawing what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not deposit my money in the bank, and upon my return I could have collected it with interest?’

“Then he told those standing by, ‘Take the mina from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

“‘Master,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

“He replied, ‘I tell you that everyone who has will be given more; but the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And these enemies of mine who were unwilling for me to rule over them, bring them here and slay them in front of me.’”

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

The Novel Bible

As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent out two of his disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

So those who were sent went out and found it just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked, “Why are you untying the colt?”

“The Lord needs it,” they answered. Then they led the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks over it, and put Jesus on it.

As he rode along, the people spread their cloaks on the road. And as he approached the descent from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of disciples began to praise God joyfully in a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

But some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

“I tell you,” he answered, “if they remain silent, the very stones will cry out.”

As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If only you had known on this day what would bring you peace! But now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will barricade you and surround you and hem you in on every side. They will level you to the ground—you and the

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children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.”

Then Jesus entered the temple courts and began to drive out those who were selling there. he declared to them, “It is written: ‘My house will be a house of prayer.’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

Jesus was teaching at the temple every day, but the chief priests, scribes, and leaders of the people were intent on killing him. Yet they could not find a way to do so, because all the people hung on his words.

Chapter IX

One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the gospel, the chief priests and scribes, together with the elders, came up to him. “Tell us,” they said, “by what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

“I will also ask you a question,” Jesus replied. “Tell me: John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or from men?”

They deliberated among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”

The Novel Bible

So they answered that they did not know where it was from.

And Jesus replied, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

Then he proceeded to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it out to some tenants, and went away for a long time. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants to collect his share of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed.

So he sent another servant, but they beat him and treated him shamefully, sending him away empty-handed.

Then he sent a third, but they wounded him and threw him out.

‘What shall I do?’ asked the owner of the vineyard. ‘I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him.’

But when the tenants saw the son, they discussed it among themselves and said, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants, and will give the vineyard to others.”

And when the people heard this, they said, “May such a thing never happen!”

But Jesus looked directly at them and said, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written:

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‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone?’

Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

When the scribes and chief priests realized that Jesus had spoken this parable against them, they sought to arrest him that very hour. But they were afraid of the people.

So they watched him closely and sent spies who pretended to be sincere. They were hoping to catch him in his words in order to hand him over to the rule and authority of the governor. “Teacher,” they inquired, “we know that you speak and teach correctly. You show no partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

But Jesus saw through their duplicity and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?”

“Caesar’s,” they answered.

So Jesus told them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

And they were unable to trap him in his words before the people; and amazed at his answer, they fell silent.

Then some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to question him. “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man is to marry his brother’s widow and raise up offspring for him. Now there were

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seven brothers. The first one married a wife, but died childless. Then the second and the third married the widow, and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. And last of all, the woman died. So then, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? For all seven were married to her.”

Jesus answered, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy to share in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In fact, they can no longer die, because they are like the angels. And since they are sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God.

Even Moses demonstrates that the dead are raised, in the passage about the burning bush. For he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”

Some of the scribes answered, “Teacher, you have spoken well!” And they did not dare to question him any further.

Then Jesus declared, “How can it be said that the Christ is the son of David? For David himself says in the book of Psalms:

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”’

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Thus David calls him ‘Lord.’ So how can he be David’s son?”

In the hearing of all the people, Jesus said to his disciples, “Beware of the scribes. They like to walk around in long robes, and they love the greetings in the marketplaces, the chief seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. They defraud widows of their houses, and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will receive greater condemnation.”

* * *

Then Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

“Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. For they all contributed out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

As some of the disciples were remarking how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and consecrated gifts, Jesus said, “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

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Jesus answered, "See to it that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be alarmed. These things must happen first, but the end is not imminent."

Then he told them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in various places, along with fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. On account of my name they will deliver you to the synagogues and prisons, and they will bring you before kings and governors. This will be your opportunity to serve as witnesses. So make up your mind not to worry beforehand how to defend yourselves. For I will give you speech and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you will be put to death. And you will be hated by everyone because of my name. Yet not even a hair of your head will perish. By your patient endurance you will gain your souls.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that her desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country stay out of the city. For these are the days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.

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How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! For there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations. And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among the nations, bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the surging of the waves. Men will faint from fear and anxiety over what is coming upon the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. At that time they will see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then Jesus told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

But watch yourselves, or your hearts will be weighed down by dissipation, drunkenness, and the worries of life—and that day will spring upon you suddenly like a snare. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of all the earth. So keep watch at all times, and pray that you may have the

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strength to escape all that is about to happen and to stand before the son of man.”

Every day Jesus taught at the temple, but every evening he went out to spend the night on the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning all the people would come to hear him at the temple.

Chapter X

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death; for they feared the people.

Then Satan entered Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve. And Judas went to discuss with the chief priests and temple officers how he might betray Jesus to them. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. Judas consented, and began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus to them in the absence of a crowd.

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare for us to eat the Passover."

"Where do you want us to prepare it?" they asked.

He answered, "When you enter the city, a man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him to the house he enters, and say to the owner of that house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room, already furnished. Make preparations there."

So they went and found it just as Jesus had told them. And they prepared the Passover.

When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table with his apostles. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before my suffering. For I tell you that I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

And he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Look! The hand of my betrayer is with Mine on the table. Indeed, the son of man will go as it has been determined, but woe to that man who betrays him."

Then they began to question among themselves which of them was going to do this.

A dispute also arose among the disciples as to which of them would be considered the greatest. So Jesus declared, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you shall not be like them. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who leads like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines? But I am among you as one who serves.

You are the ones who have stood by me in my trials. And I bestow on you a kingdom, just as my father has bestowed one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith will not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

"Lord," said Peter, "I am ready to go with you even to prison and to death."

But Jesus replied, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know me."

Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you out without purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

"Nothing," they answered.

"Now, however," he told them, "the one with a purse should take it, and likewise a bag; and the one without a sword should sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that

this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

So they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords."

"That is enough," he answered.

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he came to the place, he told them, "Pray that you will not enter into temptation."

And he withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, where he knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me. Yet not my will, but yours be done."

Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And in his anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When Jesus rose from prayer and returned to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked. "Get up and pray so that you will not enter into temptation."

While he was still speaking, a crowd arrived, led by the man called Judas, one of the Twelve. He approached Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the son of man with a kiss?"

Those around Jesus saw what was about to happen and said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, temple officers, and elders who had come for him, "Have you come out with

swords and clubs as you would against an outlaw? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this hour belongs to you and to the power of darkness.”

Then they seized Jesus, led him away, and took him into the house of the high priest. And Peter followed at a distance.

When those present had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. A servant girl saw him seated in the firelight and looked intently at him. “This man also was with him,” she said.

But Peter denied it. “Woman, I do not know him,” he said.

A short time later, someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.”

But Peter said, “Man, I am not.”

About an hour later, another man insisted, “Certainly this man was with him, for he too is a Galilean.”

“Man, I do not know what you are talking about,” Peter replied.

While he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

Then Peter remembered the word that the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him. They blindfolded him and kept demanding, “Prophecy! Who hit you?” And they said many other blasphemous things against him.

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and scribes, met together. They led Jesus into their Sanhedrin and said, "If you are the Christ, tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you a question, you will not answer. But from now on the son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

So they all asked, "Are you then the son of God?"

He replied, "You say that I am."

"Why do we need any more testimony?" they declared. "We have heard it for ourselves from his own lips."

* * *

Then the whole council rose and led Jesus away to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man subverting our nation, forbidding payment of taxes to Caesar, and proclaiming himself to be Christ, a king."

So Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

But they kept insisting, "He stirs up the people all over Judea with his teaching. He began in Galilee and has come all the way here."

When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilean. And learning that Jesus was under Herod's

jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself was in Jerusalem at that time.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased. He had wanted to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform a miracle. Herod questioned Jesus at great length, but he gave no answer.

Meanwhile, the chief priests and scribes stood there, vehemently accusing him. And even Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in a fine robe, they sent him back to Pilate.

That day Herod and Pilate became friends; before this time they had been enemies.

Then Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him here in your presence and found him not guilty of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. As you can see, he has done nothing deserving of death. Therefore I will punish him and release him."

But they all cried out in unison: "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (Barabbas had been imprisoned for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate addressed them again, but they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

A third time he said to them, "What evil has this man done? I have found in him no offense worthy of death. So after I punish him, I will release him."

But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices for Jesus to be crucified. And their clamor prevailed. So Pilate

sentenced that their demand be met. As they had requested, he released the one imprisoned for insurrection and murder, and handed Jesus over to their will.

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon of Cyrene on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him to carry behind Jesus.

A great number of people followed him, including women who kept mourning and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. Look, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore, and breasts that never nursed!' At that time

‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!”
and to the hills, “Cover us!”’

For if men do these things while the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Two others, who were criminals, were also led away to be executed with Jesus.

When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his garments by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers sneered at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the chosen one."

The soldiers also mocked him and came up to offer him sour wine. "If you are the king of the Jews," they said, "save yourself!"

Above him was posted an inscription:

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there heaped abuse on him. "Are you not the Christ?" he said. "Save Yourself and us!"

But the other one rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same judgment? We are punished justly, for we are receiving what our actions deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!"

And Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over all the land until the ninth hour. The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn down the middle.

Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And when he had said this, he breathed his last.

When the centurion saw what had happened, he gave glory to God, saying, "Surely this was a righteous man." And when all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts. But all those who knew Jesus, including the women

who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.

Now there was a Council member named Joseph, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision or action. He was from the Judean town of Arimathea, and was waiting for the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was beginning.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was placed. Then they returned to prepare spices and perfumes. And they rested on the Sabbath, according to the commandment.

* * *

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzling over this, suddenly two men in radiant apparel stood beside them.

As the women bowed their faces to the ground in terror, the two men asked them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee: 'The son of

man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’”

Then they remembered his words. And when they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But their words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women.

Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. And after bending down and seeing only the linen cloths, he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

That same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. And as they talked and deliberated, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They stood still, with sadness on their faces. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in recent days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“The events involving Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered. “This man was a prophet, powerful in speech and action before God and all the people. Our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to the sentence of death, and they crucified him. But we were hoping he was the one who

would redeem Israel. And besides all this, it is the third day since these things took place.

Furthermore, some of our women astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, but they did not find his body. They came and told us they had seen a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had described. But him they did not see.”

Then Jesus said to them, “O foolish ones, how slow are your hearts to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was written in all the Scriptures about himself.

As they approached the village where they were headed, he seemed to be going farther. But they pleaded with him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.”

So he went in to stay with them. While he was reclining at the table with them, he took bread, spoke a blessing and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus—and he disappeared from their sight.

They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem.

There they found the Eleven and those with them, gathered together and saying, “The Lord has indeed risen and has appeared to Simon!”

Then the two told what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

While they were describing these events, Jesus himself stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a spirit.

"Why are you troubled," Jesus asked, "and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I Myself. Touch me and see—for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

While they were still in disbelief because of their joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" So they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in front of them.

Jesus said to them, "These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

And he told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and in his name repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. you are witnesses of these things.

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my father upon you. But remain in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

When Jesus had led them out as far as Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was carried up into heaven. And they

worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
praising God continually in the temple.

Part 2

Chapter XI

In my first book, O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them with many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a span of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

And while they were gathered together, he commanded them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift the father promised, which you have heard me discuss. For

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John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

So when they came together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he had said this, they watched as he was taken up, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near the city, a Sabbath day’s journey away. When they arrived, they went to the upper room where they were staying: Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. With one accord they all continued in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (a gathering of about a hundred and twenty) and said,

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“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit foretold through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in this ministry.”

(Now with the reward for his wickedness Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong and burst open in the middle, and all his intestines spilled out. This became known to all who lived in Jerusalem, so they called that field in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

“For it is written in the book of Psalms:

‘May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,’

and,

‘May another take his position.’

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism until the day Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. And they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take up this ministry and apostleship, which Judas abandoned to go to his rightful place.”

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Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

* * *

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. And when this sound rang out, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking his own language.

Astounded and amazed, they asked, "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? How is it then that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism; Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

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Astounded and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

But others mocked them and said, “They are drunk on new wine!”

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice, and addressed the crowd: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen carefully to my words. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It is only the third hour of the day! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

‘In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

Even on my menservants and maidservants

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness,

and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved.’

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Men of Israel, listen to this message: Jesus of Nazareth was a man certified by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. He was delivered up by God's set plan and foreknowledge, and you, by the hands of the lawless, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, releasing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its clutches.

David says about him:

'I saw the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I will not be
shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will dwell in hope,
because you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
nor will you let your holy one see decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will fill me with joy in your presence.'

Brothers, I can tell you with confidence that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, to which we are all witnesses.

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Exalted, then, to the right hand of God, he has received from the father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says:

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”’

Therefore let all Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise belongs to you and your children and to all who are far off—to all whom the Lord our God will call to himself.”

With many other words he testified, and he urged them, “Be saved from this corrupt generation.” Those who embraced his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to the believers that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. A sense of awe came over everyone, and the apostles performed many wonders and signs.

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All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they shared with anyone who was in need.

With one accord they continued to meet daily in the temple courts and to break bread from house to house, sharing their meals with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

* * *

One afternoon Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those entering the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

Peter looked directly at him, as did John. "Look at us!" said Peter. So the man gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

Taking him by the right hand, Peter helped him up, and at once the man's feet and ankles were made strong. He sprang to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with

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them into the temple courts, walking and leaping and praising God.

When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While the man clung to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and ran to them in the walkway called Solomon's Colonnade. And when Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why are you surprised by this? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over and rejected him before Pilate, even though he had decided to release him. You rejected the holy and righteous one and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead, and we are witnesses of the fact.

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know has been made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given him this complete healing in your presence.

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But in this way God has fulfilled what he foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from

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the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, the Christ, who has been appointed for you.

Heaven must take him in until the time comes for the restoration of all things, which God announced long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him in everything he tells you. Everyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’

Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have proclaimed these days. And you are sons of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers when he said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his Servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

* * *

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, greatly disturbed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in custody until the

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next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

The next day the rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, along with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and many others from the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought in and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being examined today about a kind service to a man who was lame, to determine how he was healed, then let this be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. This Jesus is

‘the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.’

Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they marveled and took note that these men had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing there with them, they had nothing to say in response. So they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

The Novel Bible

“What shall we do with these men?” they asked. “It is clear to everyone living in Jerusalem that a remarkable miracle has occurred through them, and we cannot deny it. But to keep this message from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in this name.”

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than God. For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

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

On their release, Peter and John returned to their own people and reported everything that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When the believers heard this, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “You made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

‘Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the Lord

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and against his anointed one.’

In fact, this is the very city where Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired with the Gentiles and the people of Israel against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They carried out what your hand and will had decided beforehand would happen. And now, Lord, consider their threats, and enable your servants to speak your word with complete boldness, as you stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

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

The multitude of believers was one in heart and soul. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they owned. With great power the apostles continued to give their testimony about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And abundant grace was upon them all.

There were no needy ones among them, because those who owned lands or houses would sell their property, bring the proceeds from the sales, and lay them at the apostles’ feet for distribution to anyone as he had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (meaning “son of encouragement”), sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Chapter XII

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds for himself, but brought a portion and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and withhold some of the proceeds from the land? Did it not belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How could you conceive such a deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God!"

The Novel Bible

On hearing these words, Ananias fell down and died. And great fear came over all who heard what had happened. Then the young men stepped forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife also came in, unaware of what had happened. “Tell me,” said Peter, “is this the price you and your husband got for the land?”

“Yes,” she answered, “that is the price.”

“How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?” Peter replied. “Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

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

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people, and with one accord the believers gathered together in Solomon’s Colonnade. Although the people regarded them highly, no one else dared to join them. Yet more and more believers were brought to the Lord—large numbers of both men and women.

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and all of them were healed.

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Then the high priest and all his associates, who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They went out and arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out, saying, “Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life.”

At daybreak the apostles entered the temple courts as they had been told and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they returned with the report: “We found the jail securely locked, with the guards posted at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.”

When the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard this account, they were perplexed as to what was happening. Then someone came in and announced, “Look, the men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people!”

At that point, the captain went with the officers and brought the apostles—but not by force, for fear the people would stone them. They brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, where the high priest interrogated them. “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with

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your teaching and are determined to make us responsible for this man's blood."

But Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his right hand as Prince and Savior, in order to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

When the Council members heard this, they were enraged, and they resolved to put the apostles to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a short time.

"Men of Israel," he said, "consider carefully what you are about to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men joined him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and drew away people after him. He too perished, and all his followers were scattered.

So in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone. Let them go! For if their purpose or endeavor is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God."

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At this, they yielded to Gamaliel. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and released them.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Every day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

* * *

In those days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Grecian Jews among them began to grumble against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

So the Twelve summoned all the disciples and said, "It is unacceptable for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint this responsibility to them and will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, as well as Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these seven to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

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So the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew rapidly, and a great number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Now Stephen, who was full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But resistance arose from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and men from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up to his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

Then they prompted some men to say, "We heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God."

So they stirred up the people, elders, and scribes and confronted Stephen. They seized him and brought him before the Sanhedrin, where they presented false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us."

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

* * *

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Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these charges true?”

And Stephen declared: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and told him, ‘Leave your country and your kindred and go to the land I will show you.’ So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God brought him out of that place and into this land where you are now living.

“He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised to give possession of the land to Abraham and his descendants, even though he did not yet have a child. God told him that his descendants would be foreigners in a strange land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ‘But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,’ God said, ‘and afterward they will come forth and worship me in this place.’

“Then God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision, and Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. And Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

“Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He granted Joseph favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and all his household.

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“Then famine and great suffering swept across Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers could not find food. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit. On their second visit, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, and his family became known to Pharaoh. Then Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five in all.

“So Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. Their bones were carried back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a price he paid in silver.

“As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, our people in Egypt increased greatly in number. Then another king, who knew nothing of Joseph, arose over Egypt. He exploited our people and oppressed our fathers, forcing them to abandon their infants so they would die.

“At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful in the sight of God. For three months he was nurtured in his father’s house. When he was set outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

“When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And when he saw one of them being mistreated, Moses went to his defense and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian who was oppressing him. He assumed his brothers would understand that God was using him to deliver them, but they did not.

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“The next day he came upon two Israelites who were fighting, and he tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating each other?’

“But the man who was abusing his neighbor pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ At this remark, Moses fled to the land of Midian, where he lived as a foreigner and had two sons.

“After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight. As he approached to look more closely, the voice of the Lord came to him: ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.’

“This Moses, whom they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ is the one whom God sent to be their ruler and redeemer through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for forty years in the wilderness.

“This is the same Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your

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brothers.’ He was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. And he received living words to pass on to us.

“But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They said to Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us! As for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.’

“At that time they made a calf and offered a sacrifice to the idol, rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

‘Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings
forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
You have taken along the tabernacle of Molech
and the star of your god Rephan,
the idols you made to worship.
Therefore I will send you into exile
beyond Babylon.’

“Our fathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the wilderness. It was constructed exactly as God had directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. And our fathers who received it brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations God drove out before them. It remained until the time of David, who found favor

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in the sight of God and asked to provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for him.

“However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

‘Heaven is my throne
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me, says the
Lord,
or where will my place of repose be?
Has not my hand made all these things?’

“You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your fathers did. Which of the prophets did your fathers fail to persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the righteous one. And now you are his betrayers and murderers— you who received the law ordained by angels, yet have not kept it.”

On hearing this, the members of the Sanhedrin were enraged, and they gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the son of man standing at the right hand of God.”

At this they covered their ears, cried out in a loud voice, and rushed together at him. They dragged him out of the

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city and began to stone him. Meanwhile the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen appealed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Falling on his knees, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Chapter XIII

And Saul was there, giving approval to Stephen's death.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. God-fearing men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. The crowds gave their undivided attention to Philip's message and to the signs

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they saw him perform. With loud shrieks, unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, and many of the paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

Prior to that time, a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and astounded the people of Samaria. He claimed to be someone great, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, heeded his words and said, "This man is the divine power called the Great Power." They paid close attention to him because he had astounded them for a long time with his sorcery.

But when they believed Philip as he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed and was baptized. He followed Philip closely and was astounded by the great signs and miracles he observed.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. On their arrival, they prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money. "Give me this power as well," he said, "so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

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But Peter replied, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in our ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of your wickedness, and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for the intent of your heart. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and captive to iniquity.”

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

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

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south to the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official in charge of the entire treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his return was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to that chariot and stay by it.”

So Philip ran up and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

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“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before the shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can recount his descendants?

For his life was removed from the earth.”

“Tell me,” said the eunuch, “who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

Then Philip began with this very Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road and came to some water, the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is there to prevent me from being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. But Philip appeared at Azotus and traveled through that region, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

* * *

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord. He approached the

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high priest and requested letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women belonging to the Way, he could bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

As Saul drew near to Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

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

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless. They heard the voice but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see a thing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and he did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Here I am, Lord," he answered.

"Get up!" the Lord told him. "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

But Ananias answered, "Lord, many people have told me about this man and all the harm he has done to your

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saints in Jerusalem. And now he is here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

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

So Ananias went to the house, and when he arrived, he placed his hands on Saul. “Brother Saul,” he said, “the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

At that instant, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and his sight was restored. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. And he spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

Saul promptly began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, declaring, “He is the son of God.”

All who heard him were astounded and asked, “Isn’t this the man who wreaked havoc in Jerusalem on those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?”

But Saul was empowered all the more, and he confounded the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

After many days had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul learned of their plot. Day and night they watched the city gates in order to kill him. One night,

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however, his disciples took him and lowered him in a basket through a window in the wall.

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and described how Saul had seen the Lord, who spoke to him on the road to Damascus, and how Saul had spoken boldly in that city in the name of Jesus.

So Saul stayed with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem and speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria experienced a time of peace. It grew in strength and numbers, living in the fear of the Lord and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

As Peter traveled throughout the area, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and put away your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up, and all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated as Dorcas), who was always occupied with works of kindness and charity. At that time, however, she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an

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upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men to urge him, "Come to us without delay."

So Peter got up and went with them. On his arrival, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood around him, weeping and showing him the tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Then Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down and prayed, and turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. Peter took her by the hand and helped her up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her to them alive.

This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. And Peter stayed for several days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.

Chapter XIV

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was called the Italian Regiment. He and all his household were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to the people and prayed to God regularly. One day at about the ninth hour, he had a clear vision of an angel of God who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

Cornelius stared at him in fear and asked, “What is it, Lord?”

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have ascended as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to call for a man named Simon who is

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called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among his attendants. He explained what had happened and sent them to Joppa.

The next day at about the sixth hour, as the men were approaching the city on their journey, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, as well as birds of the air. Then a voice said to him: “Get up, Peter, kill and eat!”

“No, Lord!” Peter answered. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

The voice spoke to him a second time: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

This happened three times, and all at once the sheet was taken back up into heaven.

While Peter was puzzling over the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found Simon’s house and approached the gate. They called out to ask if Simon called Peter was staying there.

As Peter continued to reflect on the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. So get

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up! Go downstairs and accompany them without hesitation, because I have sent them.”

So Peter went down to the men and said, “Here am I, the one you are looking for. Why have you come?”

“Cornelius the centurion has sent us,” they said. “He is a righteous and God-fearing man with a good reputation among the whole Jewish nation. A holy angel instructed him to request your presence in his home so he could hear a message from you.”

So Peter invited them in as his guests. And the next day he got ready and went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

The following day he arrived in Caesarea, where Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was about to enter, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet to worship him. But Peter helped him up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”

As Peter talked with him, he went inside and found many people gathered together. He said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with a foreigner or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was invited, I came without objection. I ask, then, why have you sent for me?”

Cornelius answered: “Four days ago I was in my house praying at this, the ninth hour. Suddenly a man in radiant clothing stood before me and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer

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has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been remembered before God. Therefore send to Joppa for Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, by the sea.'

"So I sent for you immediately, and you were kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has instructed you to tell us."

Then Peter began to speak: "I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism, but welcomes those from every nation who fear him and do what is right. He has sent this message to the people of Israel, proclaiming the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

"You yourselves know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee with the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him.

"We are witnesses of all that he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And although they put him to death by hanging him on a tree, God raised him up on the third day and caused him to be seen— not by all the people, but by the witnesses God had chosen beforehand, by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to judge the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that

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everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard his message. All the circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and exalting God.

Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water to baptize these people? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have!” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

* * *

The apostles and brothers throughout Judea soon heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers took issue with him and said, “You visited uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

But Peter began and explained to them the whole sequence of events: “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision of something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came right down to me. I looked at it closely and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the

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air. Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter, kill and eat.’

“‘No, Lord,’ I said, ‘for nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

“But the voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’

“This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into heaven.

“Just then three men sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to accompany them without hesitation. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s home. He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will convey to you a message by which you and all your household will be saved.’

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as he had fallen upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, as he used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to hinder the work of God?”

When they heard this, their objections were put to rest, and they glorified God, saying, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”

Meanwhile those scattered by the persecution that began with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus,

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and Antioch, speaking the message only to Jews. But some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks as well, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

When news of this reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to abide in the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. So for a full year they met together with the church and taught large numbers of people. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted through the Spirit that a great famine would sweep across the whole world. (This happened under Claudius.) So the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gifts to the elders with Barnabas and Saul.

* * *

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About that time, King Herod reached out to harm some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.

And seeing that this pleased the Jews, Herod proceeded to seize Peter during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He arrested him and put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was fervently praying to God for him.

On the night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, with sentries standing guard at the entrance to the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. "Get dressed and put on your sandals," said the angel. Peter did so, and the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."

So Peter followed him out, but he was unaware that what the angel was doing was real. He thought he was only seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened for them by itself. When they had gone outside and walked the length of one block, the angel suddenly left him.

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from

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Herod's grasp and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

And when he had realized this, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered together and were praying. He knocked at the outer gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer it. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she forgot to open the gate, but ran inside and announced, "Peter is standing at the gate!"

"You are out of your mind," they told her. But when she kept insisting it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded. Peter motioned with his hand for silence, and he described how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. "Send word to James and to the brothers," he said, and he left for another place.

At daybreak there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had searched for him unsuccessfully, he examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent some time there.

Now Herod was in a furious dispute with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they convened before him. Having secured the support of Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their region depended on the king's country for food. On the appointed day, Herod donned his royal robes, sat on his throne, and addressed the people.

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And they began to shout, “This is the voice of a god, not a man!”

Immediately, because Herod did not give glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

But the word of God continued to spread and multiply.

When Barnabas and Saul had fulfilled their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, bringing with them John, also called Mark.

Chapter XV

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." And after they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So Barnabas and Saul, sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of

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God in the Jewish synagogues. And John was with them as their helper.

They traveled through the whole island as far as Paphos, where they found a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, a man of intelligence, summoned Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked directly at Elymas and said, "O child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness, you are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery! Will you never stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord? Now look, the hand of the Lord is against you, and for a time you will be blind and unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

After setting sail from Paphos, Paul and his companions came to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. And from Perga, they traveled inland to Pisidian Antioch, where they entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and sat down. After the reading from the law and the prophets, the synagogue leaders sent word to them:

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“Brothers, if you have a word of encouragement for the people, please speak.”

Paul stood up, motioned with his hand, and began to speak: “Men of Israel and you Gentiles who fear God, listen to me! The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers. He made them into a great people during their stay in Egypt, and with an uplifted arm he led them out of that land. He endured their conduct for about forty years in the wilderness. And having vanquished seven nations in Canaan, he gave their land to his people as an inheritance. All this took about 450 years.

“After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. Then the people asked for a king, and God gave them forty years under Saul son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin. After removing Saul, he raised up David as their king and testified about him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will carry out my will in its entirety.’

“From the descendants of this man, God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. Before the arrival of Jesus, John preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. As John was completing his course, he said, ‘Who do you suppose I am? I am not that one. But he is coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

“Brothers, children of Abraham, and you Gentiles who fear God, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the

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words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. And though they found no ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed.

“When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

“And now we proclaim to you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

‘You are my son;
today I have become your father.’

“In fact, God raised him from the dead, never to see decay. As he has said:

‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings
promised to David.’

“So also, he says in another Psalm:

‘You will not let your holy one see decay.’

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“For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep. His body was buried with his fathers and saw decay. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

“Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. Watch out, then, that what was spoken by the prophets does not happen to you:

‘Look, you scoffers,
wonder and perish!
For I am doing a work in your days
that you would never believe,
even if someone told you.’”

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people urged them to continue this message on the next Sabbath. After the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

On the following Sabbath, nearly the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they blasphemously contradicted what Paul was saying.

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. But since

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you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord, and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord spread throughout that region.

The Jews, however, incited the religious women of prominence and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district. So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

* * *

At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue, where they spoke so well that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who

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affirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.

The people of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews, and others with the apostles. But when the Gentiles and Jews, together with their rulers, set out to mistreat and stone them, they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding region, where they continued to preach the gospel.

In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. This man was listening to the words of Paul, who looked intently at him and saw that he had faith to be healed. In a loud voice Paul called out, "Stand up on your feet!" And the man jumped up and began to walk.

When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices in the Lycaonian language: "The gods have come down to us in human form!" Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates, hoping to offer a sacrifice along with the crowds.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul found out about this, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, shouting, "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and

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everything in them. In past generations, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony to his goodness: He gives you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.”

Even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could hardly stop the crowds from sacrificing to them.

Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, presuming he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. And the next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

They preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith. “We must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church, praying and fasting as they entrusted them to the Lord, in whom they had believed.

After passing through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

From Attalia they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had just completed. When they arrived, they gathered the

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church together and reported all that God had done through them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time there with the disciples.

* * *

Then some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after engaging these men in sharp debate, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, recounting the conversion of the Gentiles and bringing great joy to all the brothers. On their arrival in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and apostles and elders, to whom they reported all that God had done through them.

But some believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and declared, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." So the apostles and elders met to look into this matter.

After much discussion, Peter got up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you that the Gentiles would hear from my

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lips the message of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, showed his approval by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts by faith.

“Now then, why do you test God by placing on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

The whole assembly fell silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul describing the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they had finished speaking, James declared, “Brothers, listen to me! Simon has told us how God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people to be his own. The words of the prophets agree with this, as it is written:

‘After this I will return and rebuild
the fallen tent of David.
Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,
so that the remnant of men may seek the Lord,
and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,
says the Lord who does these things
that have been known for ages.’

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead,

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we should write and tell them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood. For Moses has been proclaimed in every city from ancient times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to select men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, two leaders among the brothers, and sent them with this letter:

The apostles and the elders, your brothers,

To the brothers among the Gentiles in Antioch,
Syria, and Cilicia:

Greetings.

It has come to our attention that some went out from us without our authorization and unsettled you, troubling your minds by what they said. So we all agreed to choose men to send to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to tell you in person the same things we are writing.

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It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond these essential requirements: You must abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they assembled the congregation and delivered the letter. When the people read it, they rejoiced at its encouraging message.

Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers in peace to return to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained at Antioch, along with many others, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in every town where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, to see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work.

Their disagreement was so sharp that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the

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grace of the Lord. And he traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Chapter XVI

Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where he found a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman and a Greek father. The brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, so he took him and circumcised him on account of the Jews in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

As they went from town to town, they delivered the decisions handed down by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

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After the Holy Spirit had prevented them from speaking the word in the province of Asia, they traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia. And when they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not permit them. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." As soon as Paul had seen the vision, we got ready to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

We sailed from Troas straight to Samothrace, and the following day on to Neapolis. From there we went to the Roman colony of Philippi, the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate along the river, where it was customary to find a place of prayer. After sitting down, we spoke to the women who had gathered there.

Among those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl with a spirit of divination, who earned a large income for her masters by fortune-telling. This girl

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followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation!”

She continued this for many days. Eventually Paul grew so aggravated that he turned and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” And the spirit left her at that very moment.

When the girl’s owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the marketplace. They brought them to the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews and are throwing our city into turmoil by promoting customs that are unlawful for us Romans to adopt or practice.”

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered that they be stripped and beaten with rods. And after striking them with many blows, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to guard them securely. On receiving this order, he placed them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly a strong earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. At once all the doors flew open and everyone’s chains came loose.

When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, presuming

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that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out in a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself! We are all here!”

Calling for lights, the jailer rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house. At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. And without delay, he and all his household were baptized. Then he brought them into his home and set a meal before them. So he and all his household rejoiced that they had come to believe in God.

When daylight came, the magistrates sent their officers with the order: “Release those men.”

The jailer informed Paul: “The magistrates have sent orders to release you. Now you may go on your way in peace.”

But Paul said to the officers, “They beat us publicly without a trial and threw us into prison, even though we are Roman citizens. And now do they want to send us away secretly? Absolutely not! Let them come themselves and escort us out!”

So the officers relayed this message to the magistrates, who were alarmed to hear that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. They came to appease them and led them out, requesting that they leave the city. After Paul and Silas came

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out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house to see the brothers and encourage them. Then they left the city.

* * *

When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he declared. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few leading women.

The Jews, however, became jealous. So they brought in some troublemakers from the marketplace, formed a mob, and sent the city into an uproar. They raided Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas, hoping to bring them out to the people. But when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, named Jesus!"

The Novel Bible

On hearing this, the crowd and city officials were greatly disturbed. And they collected bond from Jason and the others, and then released them.

As soon as night had fallen, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true. As a result, many of them believed, along with quite a few prominent Greek women and men.

But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul was also proclaiming the word of God in Berea, they went there themselves to incite and agitate the crowds. The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply disturbed in his spirit to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace with those he met each day.

Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others said, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was proclaiming the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.

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So they took Paul and brought him to the Areopagus, where they asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you are bringing some strange notions to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.”

Now all the Athenians and foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing more than hearing and articulating new ideas.

Then Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and examined your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

“Therefore what you worship as something unknown, I now proclaim to you.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands. Nor is he served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands.

“God intended that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our

The Novel Bible

being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ Therefore, being offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by man’s skill and imagination.

“Although God overlooked the ignorance of earlier times, he now commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to mock him, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this topic.” At that, Paul left the Areopagus. But some joined him and believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others who were with them.

* * *

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to visit them, and he stayed and worked with them because they were tentmakers by trade, just as he was.

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks alike. And when Silas and

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Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself fully to the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed and insulted him, he shook out his garments and told them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

So Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titus Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his whole household believed in the Lord. And many of the Corinthians who heard the message believed and were baptized.

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking; do not be silent. For I am with you and no one will lay a hand on you, because I have many people in this city.” So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching the word of God among the Corinthians.

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews coordinated an attack on Paul and brought him before the judgment seat. “This man is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law,” they said.

But just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio told the Jews, “If this matter involved a wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to hear your complaint. But since it is a dispute about words and names and your own law, settle it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of such things.” And he drove them away from the judgment seat.

The Novel Bible

At this, the crowd seized Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the judgment seat. But none of this was of concern to Gallio.

Paul remained in Corinth for quite some time before saying goodbye to the brothers. He had his head shaved in Cenchrea to keep a vow he had made, and then he sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

When they reached Ephesus, Paul parted ways with Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue there and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a while longer, he declined. But as he left, he said, "I will come back to you if God is willing." And he set sail from Ephesus.

When Paul had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church at Jerusalem. Then he went down to Antioch.

After Paul had spent some time in Antioch, he traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him in and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

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When Apollos resolved to cross over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On his arrival, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Chapter XVII

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the interior and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?”

“No,” they answered, “we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

“Into what, then, were you baptized?” Paul asked.

“The baptism of John,” they replied.

Paul explained: “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

The Novel Bible

On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Then Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But when some of them stubbornly refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way, Paul took his disciples and left the synagogue to conduct daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that everyone who lived in the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the word of the Lord.

God did extraordinary miracles through the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and the diseases and evil spirits left them.

Now there were some itinerant Jewish exorcists who tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those with evil spirits. They would say, "I bind you by Jesus, whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

Eventually, one of the evil spirits answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. The attack was so violent that they ran out of the house naked and wounded.

This became known to all the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, and fear came over all of them. So the name of the

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Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many who had believed now came forward, confessing and disclosing their deeds. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books and burned them in front of everyone. When the value of the books was calculated, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. So the word of the Lord powerfully continued to spread and prevail.

After these things had happened, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must see Rome as well.” He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed for a time in the province of Asia.

About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. It began with a silversmith named Demetrius who made silver shrines of Artemis, bringing much business to the craftsmen.

Demetrius assembled the craftsmen, along with the workmen in related trades. “Men,” he said, “you know that this business is our source of prosperity. And you can see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in nearly the whole province of Asia, Paul has persuaded a great number of people to turn away. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our business will fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited and her majesty deposed—she who is worshiped by all the province of Asia and the whole world.”

The Novel Bible

When the men heard this, they were enraged and began shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Soon the whole city was in disarray. They rushed together into the theatre, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia.

Paul wanted to go before the assembly, but the disciples would not allow him. Even some of Paul’s friends who were officials of the province of Asia sent word to him, begging him not to venture into the theatre.

Meanwhile the assembly was in turmoil. Some were shouting one thing and some another, and most of them did not even know why they were there. The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward to explain himself, and he motioned for silence so he could make his defense to the people. But when they realized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

Finally the city clerk quieted the crowd and declared, “Men of Ephesus, doesn’t everyone know that the city of Ephesus is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Since these things are undeniable, you ought to be calm and not do anything rash. For you have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed our temple nor blasphemed our goddess.

“So if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open and proconsuls are available. Let them bring charges against one another there. But if you are seeking anything beyond this,

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it must be settled in a legal assembly. For we are in jeopardy of being charged with rioting for today's events, and we have no justification to account for this commotion."

After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

* * *

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples. And after encouraging them, he said goodbye to them and left for Macedonia. After traveling through that area and speaking many words of encouragement, he arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months. And when the Jews formed a plot against him as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.

Paul was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. These men went on ahead and waited for us in Troas. And after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we sailed from Philippi, and five days later we rejoined them in Troas, where we stayed seven days.

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Since Paul was ready to leave the next day, he talked to them and kept on speaking until midnight.

Now there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. And a certain young man named Eutychus, seated in the window, was sinking into a deep

The Novel Bible

sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell from the third story and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, threw himself on the young man, and embraced him. "Do not be alarmed!" he said. "He is still alive!"

Then Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, and ate. And after speaking until daybreak, he departed. And the people were greatly relieved to take the boy home alive.

We went on ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, where we were to take Paul aboard. He had arranged this because he was going there on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. Sailing on from there, we arrived the next day opposite Chios. The day after that we arrived at Samos, and on the following day we came to Miletus.

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, because he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

When they came to him, he said, "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, especially in the trials that came upon me through the plots of the Jews. I did not shrink back from declaring anything that was helpful to you as I taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews and

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Greeks alike about repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in town after town the Holy Spirit warns me that chains and afflictions await me. But I consider my life of no value to me, if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus—the ministry of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

“Now I know that none of you among whom I have preached the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole will of God.

“Keep watch over yourselves and the entire flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

“And now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.

“I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have

The Novel Bible

ministered to my own needs and those of my companions. In everything, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus himself: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

When Paul had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept openly as they embraced Paul and kissed him. They were especially grieved by his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

* * *

After we had torn ourselves away from them, we sailed directly to Cos, and the next day on to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. Finding a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we boarded it and set sail. After sighting Cyprus and passing south of it, we sailed on to Syria and landed at Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo.

We sought out the disciples in Tyre and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they kept telling Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. But when our time there had ended, we set out on our journey. All the disciples, with their wives and children, accompanied us out of the city and knelt down on the beach to pray with us. And after we had said our farewells, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home.

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When we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day.

Leaving the next day, we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

After we had been there several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands, and said, "The Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.

Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we fell silent and said, "The Lord's will be done."

After these days, we packed up and went on to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us, and they took us to stay at the home of Mnason the Cypriot, an early disciple.

When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us joyfully. The next day Paul went in with us to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and recounted one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

The Novel Bible

When they heard this, they glorified God. Then they said to Paul, “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. But they are under the impression that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe our customs. What then should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come.

“Therefore do what we advise you. There are four men with us who have taken a vow. Take these men, purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there is no truth to these rumors about you, but that you also live in obedience to the law.

“As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they must abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality.”

So the next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he entered the temple to give notice of the date when their purification would be complete and the offering would be made for each of them.

When the seven days were almost over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, crying out, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches everywhere against our people and against our law and against this place. Furthermore, he has brought Greeks into the temple and

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defiled this holy place.” For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, the commander of the Roman regiment received a report that all Jerusalem was in turmoil. Immediately he took some soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd. When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

The commander came up and arrested Paul, ordering that he be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done.

Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, and some another. And since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. When Paul reached the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the crowd that followed him kept shouting, “Away with him!”

As they were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?”

“Do you speak Greek?” he replied. “Aren’t you the Egyptian who incited a rebellion some time ago and led four thousand members of the ‘Assassins’ into the wilderness?”

The Novel Bible

But Paul answered, "I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Now I beg you to allow me to speak to the people."

Having received permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. A great hush came over the crowd, and he addressed them in Hebrew.

Chapter XVIII

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you.” When they heard him speak to them in Hebrew, they became even more silent.

Then Paul declared, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but raised in this city. I was educated at the feet of Gamaliel in strict conformity to the law of our fathers. I am just as zealous for God as any of you here today.

“I persecuted this Way even to the death, detaining both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and the whole Council can testify about me. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in

The Novel Bible

Damascus, and I was on my way to apprehend these people and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

“About noon as I was approaching Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

“‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. My companions saw the light, but they could not understand the voice of the one speaking to me.

“Then I asked, ‘What should I do, Lord?’

“‘Get up and go into Damascus,’ he told me. ‘There you will be told all that you have been appointed to do.’

“Because the brilliance of the light had blinded me, my companions led me by the hand into Damascus. There a man named Ananias, a devout observer of the law who was highly regarded by all the Jews living there, came and stood beside me. ‘Brother Saul,’ he said, ‘receive your sight.’ And at that moment I could see him.

“Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, and to see the righteous one, and to hear his voice. You will be his witness to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

“Later, when I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord

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saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem quickly, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.'

"Lord,' I answered, 'they know very well that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and watching over the garments of those who killed him.'

"Then he said to me, 'Go! I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

The crowd listened to Paul until he made this statement. Then they lifted up their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He is not fit to live!"

As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, the commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. He directed that Paul be flogged and interrogated to determine the reason for this outcry against him.

But as they stretched him out to strap him down, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it lawful for you to flog a Roman citizen without a trial?"

On hearing this, the centurion went and reported it to the commander. "What are you going to do?" he said. "This man is a Roman citizen."

The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes," he answered.

"I paid a high price for my citizenship," said the commander.

The Novel Bible

“But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied.

Then those who were about to interrogate Paul stepped back, and the commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put a Roman citizen in chains.

The next day the commander, wanting to learn the real reason Paul was accused by the Jews, released him and ordered the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

* * *

Paul looked directly at the Sanhedrin and said, “Brothers, I have conducted myself before God in all good conscience to this day.”

At this, the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.

Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit here to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck.”

But those standing nearby said, “How dare you insult the high priest of God!”

“Brothers,” Paul replied, “I was not aware that he was the high priest, for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”

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Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. It is because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”

As soon as he had said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is neither a resurrection, nor angels, nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

A great clamor arose, and some scribes from the party of the Pharisees got up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” The dispute grew so violent that the commander was afraid they would tear Paul to pieces. He ordered the soldiers to go down and remove him by force and bring him into the barracks.

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

When daylight came, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty of them were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have bound ourselves with a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him down to you on the pretext of examining his case more carefully. We are ready to kill him on the way.”

The Novel Bible

But when the son of Paul's sister heard about the plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him."

So the centurion took him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner sent and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you."

The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside, and asked, "What do you need to tell me?"

He answered, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of acquiring more information about him. Do not let them persuade you, because more than forty men are waiting to ambush him. They have bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him; they are ready now, awaiting your consent."

So the commander dismissed the young man and instructed him, "Do not tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

Then he called two of his centurions and said, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea in the third hour of the night. Provide mounts for Paul to take him safely to Governor Felix." And he wrote the following letter:

Claudius Lysias,

To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

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Greetings.

This man was seized by the Jews, and they were about to kill him when I came with my troops to rescue him. For I had learned that he is a Roman citizen, and since I wanted to understand their charges against him, I brought him down to their Sanhedrin. I found that the accusation involved questions about their own law, but there was no charge worthy of death or imprisonment.

When I was informed that there was a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also instructed his accusers to present their case against him before you.

So the soldiers followed their orders and brought Paul by night to Antipatris. The next day they returned to the barracks and let the horsemen go on with him. When the horsemen arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and presented Paul to him.

The governor read the letter and asked what province Paul was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's Praetorium.

* * *

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Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, who presented to the governor their case against Paul.

When Paul had been called in, Tertullus opened the prosecution: “Because of you, we have enjoyed a lasting peace, and your foresight has brought improvements to this nation. In every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with all gratitude. But in order not to burden you any further, I beg your indulgence to hear us briefly.

“We have found this man to be a pestilence, stirring up dissension among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and he even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. By examining him yourself, you will be able to learn the truth about all our charges against him.”

The Jews concurred, asserting that these charges were true.

When the governor motioned for Paul to speak, he began his response: “Knowing that you have been a judge over this nation for many years, I gladly make my defense. You can verify for yourself that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. Yet my accusers did not find me debating with anyone in the temple or riling up a crowd in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove to you any of their charges against me.

“I do confess to you, however, that I worship the God of our fathers according to the Way, which they call a sect. I

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believe everything that is laid down by the law and written in the prophets, and I have the same hope in God that they themselves cherish, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In this hope, I strive always to maintain a clear conscience before God and man.

“After several years, then, I returned to Jerusalem to bring alms to my people and to present offerings. At the time they found me in the temple, I was ceremonially clean and was not inciting a crowd or an uproar. But there are some Jews from the province of Asia who ought to appear before you and bring charges, if they have anything against me. Otherwise, let these men state for themselves any crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin, unless it was this one thing I called out as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

Then Felix, who was well informed about the Way, adjourned the hearing and said, “When Lysias the commander comes, I will decide your case.” He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard, but to allow him some freedom and permit his friends to minister to his needs.

After several days, Felix returned with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul expounded on righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and said, “You may go for now. When I find the time, I will call for you.” At the same time, he was

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hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe. So he sent for Paul frequently and talked with him.

After two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

Chapter XIX

Three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and Jewish leaders presented their case against Paul. They urged Festus to grant them a concession against Paul by summoning him to Jerusalem, because they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.

But Festus replied, “Paul is being held in Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. So if this man has done anything wrong, let some of your leaders come down with me and accuse him there.”

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After spending no more than eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he sat on the judgment seat and ordered that Paul be brought in. When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges that they could not prove.

Then Paul made his defense: "I have committed no offense against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to stand trial before me on these charges?"

Paul replied, "I am standing before the judgment seat of Caesar, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. But if there is no truth to their accusations against me, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

Then Festus conferred with his council and replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice came down to Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. Since they were staying several days, Festus laid out Paul's case before the king: "There is a certain man whom Felix left in prison. While I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews presented their case and requested a judgment against him. I told them that it is not the Roman custom to

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hand a man over before he has had an opportunity to face his accusers and defend himself against their charges.

“So when they came here with me, I did not delay. The next day I sat on the judgment seat and ordered that the man be brought in. But when his accusers rose to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. They only had some contentions with him regarding their own religion and a certain Jesus who had died, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

“Since I was at a loss as to how to investigate these matters, I asked if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges. But when Paul appealed to be held over for the decision of the Emperor, I ordered that he be held until I could send him to Caesar.”

Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.”

“Tomorrow you will hear him,” Festus declared.

The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the auditorium, along with the commanders and leading men of the city. And Festus ordered that Paul be brought in.

Then Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man. The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him, both here and in Jerusalem, crying out that he ought not to live any longer. But I found he had done nothing worthy of death, and since he has now appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.

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I have nothing definite to write to our sovereign one about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this inquiry I may have something to write. For it seems unreasonable to me to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.”

* * *

Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

Then Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense: “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today to defend myself against all the accusations of the Jews, especially since you are acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. I beg you, therefore, to listen to me patiently.

“Surely all the Jews know how I have lived from the earliest days of my youth, among my own people and in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I lived as a Pharisee, adhering to the strictest sect of our religion.

“And now I stand on trial because of my hope in the promise that God made to our fathers, the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to realize as they earnestly serve God day and night. It is because of this hope, O king, that I

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am accused by the Jews. Why would any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

“So then, I too was convinced that I ought to do all I could to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is what I did in Jerusalem. With authority from the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were condemned to death, I cast my vote against them. I frequently had them punished in the synagogues, and I tried to make them blaspheme. In my raging fury against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

“In this pursuit I was on my way to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice say to me in Hebrew, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

“‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen from me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those sanctified by faith in me.’

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“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. First to those in Damascus and Jerusalem, then to everyone in the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I declared that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds worthy of their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

“But I have had God’s help to this day, and I stand here to testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen: that the Christ would suffer, and as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles.”

At this stage of Paul’s defense, Festus exclaimed in a loud voice, “You are insane, Paul! Your great learning is driving you to madness!”

But Paul answered, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus; I am speaking words of truth and sobriety. For the king knows about these matters, and I can speak freely to him. I am confident that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Can you persuade me in such a short time to become a Christian?”

“Short time or long,” Paul replied, “I wish to God that not only you but all who hear me this day may become what I am, except for these chains.”

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Then the king and the governor rose, along with Bernice and those seated with them. On their way out, they said to one another, "This man has done nothing worthy of death or imprisonment."

And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar."

* * *

When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. We boarded an Adramyttian ship about to sail for ports along the coast of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

The next day we landed at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul with consideration, allowing him to visit his friends and receive their care. After putting out from there, we sailed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. And when we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.

After sailing slowly for many days, we arrived off Cnidus. When the wind impeded us, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. After we had moved along the

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coast with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

By now much time had passed, and the voyage had already become dangerous because it was after the Fast. So Paul advised them, "Men, I can see that our voyage will be filled with disaster and great loss, not only to ship and cargo, but to our own lives as well."

But contrary to Paul's advice, the centurion was persuaded by the pilot and by the owner of the ship. Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided to sail on, if somehow they could reach Phoenix to winter there. Phoenix was a harbor in Crete facing both southwest and northwest.

When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had their opportunity. So they weighed anchor and sailed along, hugging the coast of Crete. But it was not long before a cyclone called the Northeaster swept down across the island. Unable to head into the wind, the ship was caught up. So we gave way and let ourselves be driven along.

Passing to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we barely managed to secure the lifeboat. After hoisting it up, the crew used ropes to undergird the ship. And fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and were driven along.

We were tossed so violently that the next day the men began to jettison the cargo. On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the great storm

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continued to batter us, we abandoned all hope of being saved.

After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete. Then you would have averted this disaster and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because you will not experience any loss of life, but only of the ship. For just last night an angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And look, God has granted you the lives of all who sail with you.’

“So take courage, men, for I believe God that it will happen just as he told me. However, we must run aground on some island.”

On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea. About midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. They took soundings and found that the water was twenty fathoms deep. Going a little farther, they took another set of soundings that read fifteen fathoms. Fearing that we would run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daybreak.

Meanwhile, the sailors attempted to escape from the ship. Pretending to lower anchors from the bow, they let the lifeboat down into the sea. But Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men remain with the ship,

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you cannot be saved.” So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and set it adrift.

Right up to daybreak, Paul kept urging them all to eat: “Today is your fourteenth day in constant suspense, without taking any food. So for your own preservation, I urge you to eat something, because not a single hair of your head will be lost.”

After he had said this, Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and took some food themselves. In all, there were 276 of us on board. After the men had eaten their fill, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they sighted a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. Cutting away the anchors, they left them in the sea as they loosened the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. But the vessel struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was being broken up by the pounding of the waves.

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none of them could swim to freedom. But the centurion, wanting to spare Paul’s life, thwarted their plan. He commanded those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. The rest were to follow on planks and various parts of the ship. In this way everyone was brought safely to land.

Chapter XX

Once we were safely ashore, we learned that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us extraordinary kindness. They kindled a fire and welcomed all of us because it was raining and cold.

Paul gathered a bundle of sticks, and as he laid them on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself to his hand. When the islanders saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "Surely this man is a murderer. Although he was saved from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." But Paul shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The islanders were

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expecting him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

Nearby stood an estate belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and entertained us hospitably for three days. The father of Publius was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after praying and placing his hands on him, he healed the man. After this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured as well.

The islanders honored us in many ways and supplied our needs when we were ready to sail.

After three months we set sail in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered in the island. It had the Twin Brothers as a figurehead. Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there three days. From there we weighed anchor and came to Rhegium. After one day, a south wind came up, and on the second day we arrived at Puteoli. There we found some brothers who invited us to spend the week with them. And so we came to Rome.

The brothers there had heard about us and traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and gave thanks to God.

When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to stay by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

After three days, he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers,

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although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, I was taken prisoner in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because there was no basis for a death sentence against me. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, even though I have no charge to bring against my nation. So for this reason I have called to see you and speak with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

The leaders replied, “We have not received any letters about you from Judea, nor have any of the brothers from there reported or even mentioned anything bad about you. But we consider your views worth hearing, because we know that people everywhere are speaking against this sect.”

So they set a day to meet with Paul, and many people came to the place he was staying. He expounded to them from morning to evening, testifying about the kingdom of God and persuading them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets.

Some of them were convinced by what he said, but others refused to believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit was right when he spoke to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

‘Go to this people and say,
“You will be ever hearing but never
understanding;

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you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”
For this people’s heart has grown callous;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn, and I would heal them.’

“Be advised, therefore, that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”

Paul stayed there two full years in his own rented house, welcoming all who came to visit him. Boldly and freely he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.