



JOHN

21 CHAPTERS

Originated from KJV Bible

John 1

Before time even began, God's amazing Message—His living Word—already existed. This Word was face-to-face with God, and the Word *was* God. He was right there with God from the very start.

Everything in the universe was created through Him; not a lone star, tree, or creature was made without Him. He is the heartbeat of all life, and that life became the bright, guiding light for all people. This wonderful light shines brightly in the deepest darkness, and no matter how dark things get, the darkness can never put it out!

Eventually, God sent a special messenger named John. John's job was to point people toward the Light so everyone would believe the good news. John was not the Light himself; he was just holding up a giant sign saying, "*Look over here!*"

The true Light—the one who brings light and hope to every person born into this world—finally arrived. He stepped into the very world He had made, but the world did not recognize Him. Even His own people turned him away.

However, for everyone who *did* welcome Him and trust in His name, He gave them the incredible right to become children of God. This new family was not formed by normal human birth, but by God Himself.

And then, the most amazing thing happened: the Word became a real human being and moved into our neighborhood! We got to see His glorious splendor—pure, wonderful grace and truth straight from the Father's heart.

John pointed right at Him and shouted to the crowds, *"This is the guy I was talking about! He comes after me, but He is way more important than me because He existed long before I was even born!"*

Because of His endless goodness, we have all received blessing after blessing. While Moses gave us strict rules to follow, Jesus Christ brought us undeserved love and absolute truth. No one has ever physically seen God, but His one and only Son—who is closest to the Father's heart—has fully explained Him to us.

One day, religious leaders in Jerusalem sent priests to question John, asking, "Just who do you think you are?"

John answered honestly, "I am not the Savior."

"Well, are you Elijah? Are you the great Prophet?" they pressed.

"No," John replied.

Frustrated, they demanded, "Give us an answer for the people who sent us! Who are you?"

John smiled and quoted the ancient prophet Isaiah: *"I am just a voice echoing in the wilderness, shouting: 'Clear a path for the Lord!'"*

The Pharisees interrupted, "If you aren't the Savior, Elijah, or the Prophet, why are you baptizing people?"

John answered, "I use water, but standing right here among you is someone you don't even know yet. He comes after me, but He is so great that I am not even worthy to bend down and untie His shoes." This all happened down by the Jordan River where John was baptizing.

The very next day, John saw Jesus' walking toward him and yelled out, *"Look! There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the messy wrongs of the entire world! This is the man I told you about. He existed before me, and I did not even recognize Him at first. But God sent me to baptize with water so that He would be revealed to Israel."*

John added, *"I actually saw God's Spirit drop down from the sky like a gentle dove and rest right on Him. The One who sent me to baptize told me, 'The man you see the Spirit land on is the One who will baptize people with the Holy Spirit.' I saw it with my own eyes, and I promise you: He is the Son of God!"*

The next day, John was standing with two of his close followers. He watched Jesus walk by and whispered, *"Look, the Lamb of God!"*

Hearing this, the two followers immediately left John and started walking behind Jesus.

Jesus spun around, saw them trailing Him, and asked, "What are you looking for?"

They stammered, "Rabbi—which means Teacher—where are you staying?"

Jesus smiled and said, "Come and see." So they went, saw where He lived, and hung out with Him all afternoon (it was about four o'clock).

One of those two guys was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The very first thing Andrew did was track down his brother Simon and yell, "We found the Messiah!" (which means the Christ).

Andrew brought Simon straight to Jesus. Jesus looked right at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John, but from now on you will be called Cephas"—which means a sturdy Rock.

The following day, Jesus decided to head to Galilee. He found a man named Philip and told him, "Follow me." (Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter.)

Philip immediately found his friend Nathanael and announced, "We found Him! Moses and the prophets wrote everything about Him! It's Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph's son."

Nathanael rolled his eyes and scoffed, "Nazareth? Can anything good come out of a place like that?"

Philip just grinned and said, "Come and see for yourself."

As Nathanael walked up, Jesus looked at him and said, "Now here is a true Israelite who is totally honest and has no deceit in him!"

Nathanael blinked in surprise. "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered, "Before Philip ever called you, back when you were sitting quietly under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathanael's jaw dropped. "Rabbi! You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus chuckled and said, "You believe just because I told you I saw you under a fig tree? You are going to see things bigger than that!"

Then He promised them, "Truly, I tell you, you are going to see heaven wide open, with God's angels climbing up and down on the Son of Man!"

JOHN 2

Three days later, a joyful wedding party was happening in a small town called Cana, and Jesus's mother was there. Jesus and his friends were invited to the celebration too!

Midway through the party, the hosts ran completely out of wine. Jesus's mother leaned over to him and whispered, "They have run out of wine."

Jesus gently replied, "Mother, my time has not come yet."

Not giving up, his mother turned to the servants and told them, "Just do whatever he asks you to do."

Nearby sat six enormous stone jars used by the people for washing before meals. Each one could hold a huge amount of water. Jesus told the servants, "Fill those jars to the very brim with water." The servants obeyed, pouring water until it reached the top.

Then Jesus smiled and said, "Now, dip some out and take it to the head waiter."

The servants scooped up the liquid and brought it to the man in charge of the feast. He had no idea where it came from, though the servants who dipped the water knew. He took a sip, and his eyes widened—the water had miraculously turned into the most delicious wine!

Calling the groom over, the head waiter said with a laugh, "Everyone usually serves the best wine first, and saves the cheaper stuff for

later after people have had plenty to drink. But you? You saved the absolute best wine for the very end of the party!"

This wonderful miracle in Cana was Jesus's very first, and it showed everyone his incredible power. Because of this, his disciples honestly believed in him.

After the wedding, Jesus, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples traveled down to the city of Capernaum to rest for a few days.

Soon, it was time for the Jewish Passover holiday, so Jesus traveled up to busy Jerusalem. When he arrived at the massive temple, he was shocked to find it looked more like a noisy marketplace. People were shouting, selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and moneychangers were sitting at their tables making loud trades inside God's holy house.

Feeling a fierce flash of righteous anger, Jesus quickly twisted together a whip out of small cords. He drove the sheep and cattle out of the temple, scattered the moneychangers' coins across the stone floor, and flipped their tables upside down!

To the people selling doves, he shouted, "Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a shopping mall!"

Watching this, his disciples suddenly remembered the old scripture: *"My deep love and passion for your house consumes me."*

The religious leaders stepped forward, demanding, "What right do you have to do this? Show us a miraculous sign to prove God gave you this authority!"

Jesus looked at them and said, "Destroy this temple, and in just three days, I will build it back up."

The leaders scoffed, "It took forty-six years to build this grand temple, and you think you can rebuild it in three days?"

They had no idea that Jesus was not talking about the stone building at all—he was talking about his own body. Much later, after Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered him saying this, and they finally understood and believed both the scriptures and his words.

While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover festival, many people saw the amazing miracles he performed and decided to believe in his name. However, Jesus did not fully trust himself to them. He did not need anyone to tell him what people were like on the inside, because he could see right through them and already knew every human heart.

JOHN 3

Under the cover of night, a respected religious leader named Nicodemus came to visit Jesus. "Teacher," Nicodemus whispered, "we all know God has sent you, because no one could possibly perform such amazing miracles unless God were right there with him."

Jesus looked at him warmly and said, "Let me share a deep truth with you: unless a person is born all over again from above, they can never experience God's kingdom."

Nicodemus was completely puzzled. "How on earth can a grown-up be born again?" he asked. "Can someone crawl back inside their mother's tummy for a second birth?"

Jesus gently explained, "I mean a spiritual birth. To truly enter God's kingdom, you must be born of both water and the Holy Spirit.

Physical birth gives you a physical body, but spiritual birth gives you a spirit. Do not be shocked that I said you need a fresh start. Think about the wind: you can hear it rustling the trees, but you never know exactly where it is blowing in from or where it is rushing off to. That is what it's like when someone is transformed by the Spirit."

Still struggling to grasp it, Nicodemus asked, "How can these things possibly happen?"

Jesus gently teased him, "You're a famous teacher in Israel, and yet this is all brand new to you? Listen, we speak of what we know and have witnessed, yet people refuse to believe us. If I explain simple, everyday things about this world and you do not believe me, how will you ever believe me if I start explaining the hidden secrets of heaven? No one has ever climbed up to heaven except the One who came down from it—the Son of Man."

Jesus then shared a familiar picture from history: "Just as Moses lifted up a bronze snake on a pole in the desert to save the people, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that anyone who trusts in Him will never perish, but instead live forever."

He added the most wonderful promise of all: "God loved the whole world so deeply that He gave His only Son, so that anyone who believes in Him won't be destroyed but will have unending life. God did not send His Son to judge and punish the world, but to rescue it.

If you trust in Him, you escape judgment. But those who refuse to believe are already in trouble because they have rejected God's unique Son. The tragedy is this: light has broken into the world, but people clung to the darkness because their actions were shady. Anyone who does wrong naturally hates the light and runs away from it, terrified that their bad choices will be exposed. But people who live by the truth step right into the light, so everyone can see that God is the one guiding their lives."

After this conversation, Jesus and His friends traveled out into the Judean countryside, where He spent time baptizing people.

Not far away, John the Baptist was also baptizing at Aenon, a place with plenty of fresh water, because people kept flocking to him. (John had not been thrown into prison yet.)

Soon, a debate sparked between some of John's followers and a Jewish person regarding religious cleansing rituals. They hurried to John and complained, "Rabbi, you know that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River—the one you spoke so highly of? Well, he is baptizing people now too, and crowds are leaving you to go to him!"

John smiled and replied calmly, "No one can achieve anything unless God in heaven grants it to them. You yourselves heard me say clearly: I am not the Messiah; I was just sent ahead of Him to clear the path. Think of a wedding: the groom gets the bride, but the best man stands nearby, listening closely to the groom's voice. When he hears the groom speak, the best man's heart overflows with pure joy. That is how I feel right now—my joy is complete. He must become greater and greater, while I become less and less."

John continued, "The One who comes from above is greater than everyone. Someone who is merely from the earth belongs to the earth and only talks about earthly things. But the One coming from heaven is above all! He testifies about what He has seen and heard, even though most people reject His message. Yet, whoever *does* accept His testimony puts a stamp of absolute truth on the fact that God is faithful. The One sent by God speaks God's very words, because God gives Him the Spirit without any limits. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands. Therefore, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. But those who stubbornly reject the Son will never experience true life; instead, God's fierce anger remains hanging over them."

JOHN 4

When Jesus found out that the leaders in Judea were buzzing with gossip—learning that He was making and baptizing even more followers than John did (even though Jesus wasn't doing the baptizing Himself, His helpers were)—He decided it was time to leave Judea and head back to Galilee.

To get there, His route naturally took Him right through the region of Samaria. He came to a little Samaritan town called Sychar, sitting right next to the piece of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph long ago.

Jacob's famous old well was right there. By now, Jesus was completely worn out from walking all day, so He sat down right by the well to rest. It was about noon—dead in the heat of the day.

Soon, a Samaritan woman walked up to the well to haul some water. Jesus looked right at her and asked, "Could you please give me a drink?"

(His disciples had wandered off into the nearby town to grab some lunch.)

The woman was totally surprised. "Hold on," she said. "You're a Jewish man, and I'm a Samaritan woman! Why are you talking to me?" (Back then, Jews and Samaritans usually avoided each other completely.)

Jesus smiled and told her, "If you only knew what wonderful gift God has to offer, and just who is sitting here asking you for a drink, *you* would have asked *Him*, and He would have given you living, refreshing water!"

The woman looked down at the deep hole and said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket, and this well is super deep! Where are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you somehow greater than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well, drank from it himself, and fed all his kids and farm animals with it?"

Jesus answered, "Anyone who drinks regular water from this well is just going to get thirsty all over again. But the water / give will become like an endless, bubbling spring inside of you, bringing your life that never, ever ends!"

"Oh, please, sir!" the woman said excitedly. "Give me this water! Then I will never be thirsty again, and I will not have to lug heavy water pots out here every single day!"

Suddenly, Jesus shifted gears. "Go ahead and call your husband, then come back here," He said.

"I don't have a husband," she replied honestly.

Jesus nodded. "You told the truth when you said you don't have a husband. The reality is, you have already been married five times, and the guy you are living with right now is not your husband. You told the exact truth!"

Her jaw dropped. "Sir, I can tell you're definitely a prophet! Let me ask you a question: our ancestors worshiped God right here on this mountain, but you Jews always insist that Jerusalem is the only place people are supposed to worship."

Jesus told her, "Believe Me, lady, a time is coming—right around the corner—when you won't need *this* mountain or Jerusalem to worship the Father. You guys worship what you do not really understand, but we know what we worship, because salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—in fact, it is already here—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. That is the exact kind of worshiper the Father is looking for! God is spirit, so the people who worship Him must do it genuinely, from the heart and in truth."

The woman said, "Well, I know the Messiah—the one called Christ—is coming eventually. When He finally gets here, He's going to explain everything to us."

Jesus looked right into her eyes and said, "I am He. The one talking to you right now is the Christ."

Right at that exact moment, His disciples came walking back. They were totally shocked to see Him chatting away with a woman, but not one of them dared to ask, "What do You want?" or "Why are you talking to her?"

Meanwhile, the woman completely forgot about her mission—she left her water pot right there by the well, dashed back into town, and yelled to everyone she saw:

"You guys have got to come see a man who just told me every single thing I've ever done in my life! Could this guy be the Christ?"

Hearing that, the townspeople flooded out of the city to go meet Him.

While they were walking over, the disciples urged Jesus, "Master, please, eat something!"

But He just smiled and said, "I have food to eat that you guys don't know anything about."

The disciples started whispering to each other, "Did someone bring Him a snack while we were gone?"

Jesus cleared it up: "My real food—what keeps Me going—is doing the exact will of the One who sent Me and finishing His work. Don't you guys always say, 'Four more months until the harvest'? Well, open your eyes! Look out at the fields! They are golden and ready for harvest right now. The person who harvests the crop gets paid and gathers fruit that lasts forever, so that the farmer and the harvester can celebrate together. That makes the old saying true: 'One person

plants, and a totally different person harvest.' I sent you guys out to harvest a field you did not have to plant or sweat over. Other people did all the hard labor, and now you get to step right into the joy of their work!"

Because of the woman's excited testimony ("He told me everything I ever did!"), a massive crowd of Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus. When they finally reached Him, they begged Him to stay awhile, so He spent time together with them for two whole days.

Even more people believed because of Jesus' own teaching. They turned to the woman and said, "We don't just believe because of what you told us anymore. We have listened to Him with our own ears, and we know for an absolute fact that this man is truly the Savior of the world!"

After spending two wonderful days there, Jesus moved on toward Galilee. (He had often pointed out that prophets usually do not get much respect in their hometowns.) But when He finally arrived in Galilee, the locals welcomed Him with open arms because they had traveled to Jerusalem for the big religious feast and had seen all the amazing miracles He performed there.

So, Jesus stopped by Cana in Galilee—the very place where He had miraculously turned water into wine. Coincidentally, a royal government official lived nearby in Capernaum, and his son was terribly sick.

When the official heard that Jesus had left Judea and was now walking around Galilee, he rushed to find Him, begging Him to hurry down to Capernaum and heal his son, who was on the brink of death.

Jesus looked at him and gently challenged the crowd: "You people won't ever believe unless you see flashy miracles and jaw-dropping wonders."

Panicking for his child, the nobleman pleaded, "Sir, please come down before my little boy dies!"

Jesus told him, "Head on back home. Your son is going to live."

The man trusted Jesus completely at His word, turned around, and started the journey home.

Before he even reached his house, his servants ran out to meet him with huge smiles, shouting, "Your boy is alive and well!"

Relieved beyond words, the father asked them exactly what time the boy had started feeling better. They replied, "The fever completely vanished yesterday at one o'clock in the afternoon."

The father's heart skipped a beat. That was the exact same hour when Jesus had looked at him and said, "Your son lives." Because of this incredible moment, the father—along with his entire household—put their full faith in Jesus.

This was the second major miracle Jesus performed after leaving Judea and returning to Galilee.

JOHN 5

Soon after, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for a special Jewish holiday.

Near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, there was a pool with five covered porches, known in the Hebrew language as Bethesda. A huge crowd of sick people—the blind, the lame, and those with paralyzed limbs—always waited by the water. They believed that at certain times, an angel would come down and stir up the pool, and whoever managed to jump first after the ripples started would be completely healed of whatever sickness they had.

Among the crowd was a man who had been sick and unable to walk for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had been struggling for an exceptionally long time, He asked, "Do you want to get well?"

The sick man answered, "Sir, I don't have anyone to help me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I'm trying to crawl over, someone else always gets in ahead of me."

Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!"

Instantly, the man was healed! He jumped up, rolled up his sleeping mat, and started walking around.

However, this happened on a Sabbath—the holy day of rest. So, the religious leaders stopped the man and scolded him, "It's the Sabbath! It's against our laws for you to carry your mat around today."

The man defended himself, saying, "The man who healed me told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

"Who on earth told you to do that?" they demanded.

The man had no idea who had helped him, because Jesus had quietly slipped away into the large crowd.

Later, Jesus found the man in the temple and said to him, "Listen, you are healthy now. Stop sinning, or something even worse might happen to you."

The man went back to the religious leaders and told them it was Jesus who had healed him. Because Jesus did miracles on the Sabbath, the leaders began harassing Him and even plotted to kill Him.

Jesus defended Himself by saying, "My Father is always working right up to this very day, and so I am working, too."

That made the leaders even angrier. Not only was He breaking their Sabbath rules, but He was also calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Jesus explained it to them clearly: "The Son can do nothing on His own; He only does what He sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son does also. The Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing. In fact, the Father will show Him even greater work than healing, which will absolutely amaze you! Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, the Son also gives life to anyone He chooses. Furthermore, the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, so that everyone will honor the

Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who doesn't honor the Son is honoring the Father who sent Him."

"I tell you the truth," Jesus continued, "those who listen to My message and believe in the One who sent Me have eternal life. They will never be condemned, for they have already crossed over from death to life. A time is coming—and is here right now—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will live. Just as the Father has life in Himself, He has given the Son the power to have life in Himself, too. And He has given Him the authority to judge people because He is the Son of Man."

"Don't be shocked by this," Jesus said. "The time is coming when everyone in their graves will hear His voice and come out. Those who have done good will rise to experience life, but those who have continued in evil will rise to face judgment. By Myself, I can do nothing. I judge only as I am told, and My judgment is completely fair because I am not trying to please Myself, but the Father who sent Me."

"If I were the only one testifying about Myself, My testimony wouldn't count," Jesus added. "But there is another who testifies about Me, and I know that what He says about Me is true. You sent messengers to John the Baptist, and he spoke the truth. Not that I need human praise, but I remind you of this so that you might be saved. John was like a burning and shining lamp, and you were happy to soak in his light for a while. But I have an even greater witness than John: the miracles the Father gave Me to finish. These very works prove that the Father has sent Me!"

"And the Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. Yet you have never heard His voice or seen what He looks like, and His word does not live in your hearts, because you refuse to believe the One He sent. You search for the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But those very Scriptures are right to me! Yet you refuse to come to Me so I can give you real life."

"I am not looking for praise from humans," Jesus said. "But I know you—you don't have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in My Father's name, and you reject Me. But if someone else comes by their own name, you will gladly welcome them! How can you ever believe? You love collecting praise from each other instead of seeking the honor that comes only from God."

"Don't think I am the one who will accuse you before the Father," Jesus concluded. "Moses is the one who accuses you—the very Moses you put your hopes in! If you really believed Moses, you would have believed Me, because he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how can you ever believe My words?"

JOHN 6

Sometime later, Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee, which is also called the Sea of Tiberias. A huge crowd followed Him because they had seen the amazing miracles He did by healing sick people. Jesus went up a hillside and sat down with His disciples. The Jewish Passover festival was coming up soon.

When Jesus looked out and saw the massive crowd heading toward Him, He asked Philip, “Where can we buy enough bread to feed all these people?” He already knew what He was going to do, but He asked just to test Philip.

Philip answered, “Even if we worked for months, we wouldn’t have enough money to buy everyone just a tiny bite!”

Then Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother and one of the disciples, spoke up: “There is a little boy here who has five small barley loaves and two small fish. But what good is that for a crowd this big?”

Jesus said, “Tell everyone to sit down.” There was plenty of soft green grass in that place, so the people sat down—about five thousand men, plus women and children!

Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and handed them out to the disciples, who then passed them to the people sitting on the grass. He did the same with the fish, and everyone ate as much as they wanted.

When everyone was completely full, Jesus told His disciples, “Gather up the leftover pieces so nothing gets wasted.” They picked up the scraps and filled twelve large baskets with what was left over from the five barley loaves.

When the people saw this incredible miracle, they whispered, “This must be the great Prophet promised to come into the world!”

Jesus realized they were about to grab Him by force and try to make Him their king, so He slipped away and went back up into the hills by Himself.

As evening fell, the disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started heading across the water toward Capernaum. It was already pitch dark, and Jesus had not joined them yet. Suddenly, a strong wind began to blow, whipping the waves up into a rough storm.

After they had rowed about three or four miles, they suddenly saw Jesus' walking right across the top of the water, coming closer to the boat! Terrified, they cried out in fear.

But Jesus called out to them, "It is Me! Do not be afraid."

Relieved, they gladly pulled Him into the boat, and instantly the boat touched the shore at the place they were heading.

The next morning, the crowd staying on the other side of the lake realized that only one small boat had been there, and Jesus had not gotten into it with His disciples—they had left without Him.

However, some other boats from Tiberias had landed near the spot where they had eaten the bread after the Lord gave thanks. When the people saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were around anymore, they jumped into boats and sailed across to Capernaum to look for Him.

When they found Him on the other side, they asked, "Rabbi, when did You get over here?"

Jesus answered, "Truth be told, you are not looking for Me because you understood My miracles, but simply because you got to eat free bread until you were stuffed. Do not work so hard for food that spoils. Instead, work for the food that lasts forever, leading to

eternal life—food that the Son of Man will give you. God the Father has put His stamp of approval on Him.”

They asked Him, “What do we need to do to perform the works God wants?”

Jesus replied, “The work God wants you to do is simply to believe in the One He has sent.”

They replied, “Well, what miraculous sign will you do so we can see it and believe you? What is your work? Our ancestors ate manna out in the desert, just like the Scripture says: *‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’*”

Jesus told them, “Listen closely: Moses did not give you bread from heaven. My Father is the One who gives you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

“Sir,” they said, “give us this bread every single day!”

Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Anyone who comes to Me will never be hungry again, and anyone who believes in Me will never be thirsty. But as I told you before, you have seen Me, and yet you still do not believe. Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and I will never turn anyone away. I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of the One who sent me. And this is His will: that I should not lose one of all those He has given me but raise them up on the last day. Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.”

The Jewish leaders began to grumble and complain about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”

They muttered, “Isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his mom and dad! How can he claim, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them, and I will raise them up on the last day. The prophets wrote, ‘*They will all be taught by God.*’ So, anyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me. That does not mean anyone has seen the Father, except the One who comes from God—He has seen the Father. Truly, I tell you, anyone who believes has eternal life. I am that bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, and yet they still died. But this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that whoever eats it will never die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, they will live forever. And the bread I will give is My flesh, which I will give so the world can live.”

This caused a huge argument among the people. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they demanded.

Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have true life in you. Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day. My flesh is real food, and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me, and I live in them. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. It is nothing like the manna your ancestors ate—they ate it and died, but whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

Jesus said all these things while He was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

When many of His followers heard this, they said, “This teaching is way too hard! Who could accept it?”

Jesus, knowing in His heart that His disciples were grumbling about it, asked them, “Does this upset you? What will you think if you see the Son of Man ascending back up to heaven where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; human effort accomplishes nothing. The words I have spoken to you are full of spirit and life. But some of you do not believe.” (For Jesus had known from the very beginning who did not believe and who would betray Him.)

He added, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father enables them.”

From that time on, many of His followers turned back and refused to follow Him any longer.

So, Jesus asked the twelve closest disciples, “Are you guys going to leave, too?”

Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to who else would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe and know for sure that You are the Holy One sent by God.”

Jesus replied, “Didn't I choose you twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.”

He was talking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Even though Judas was one of the twelve chosen disciples, he was the one who would eventually betray Him.

JOHN 7

After traveling around for a while, Jesus stayed away from Judea because some angry leaders there wanted to hurt him, so he spent his time teaching in Galilee instead.

Soon, a big autumn celebration called the Festival of Tabernacles was about to begin. Jesus's own brothers—who did not really believe he was special yet—teased him and said, "You should leave this quiet place and go down to Judea. Everyone at the festival needs to see your amazing miracles! If you want to be famous, you must show the entire world what you can do. Stop hiding!"

Jesus smiled calmly and replied, "My special time to go hasn't arrived yet, but any time is fine for you. The people of the world do not mind you, but they are angry with me because I tell them when they do wrong things. Go on ahead to the festival without me. I'm not ready to go yet."

So, Jesus stayed behind in Galilee. But after his brothers left for the party, Jesus packed up and traveled there too—not in a loud, flashy parade, but quietly, so nobody would notice him right away.

Back at the festival, the religious leaders were looking everywhere for him, asking, "Where is that man?"

The crowds were buzzing with whispers. Some people said, "He's a genuinely good man!" But others argued, "No way, he just tricks people into believing lies." Nobody dared to speak too loudly about him, though, because everyone was afraid of the strict leaders.

Right in the middle of the festival week, Jesus walked right into the busy temple and started instructing the people. Everyone was completely amazed and whispered, "How does this man know so much and teach so well? He never went to the official schools!"

Jesus explained, "My teachings don't come from me; they come from the one who sent me. If anyone genuinely wants to do God's will, they will know my words are the truth. People who talk just to make themselves look important are only seeking their own glory. But I am here to honor the one who sent me, which means I am completely honest and true."

Then Jesus looked right at them and asked, "Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet not even one of you follows it! If you try to live by the rules, why are you trying to kill me?"

The crowd shouted back, "You're acting crazy! Who is trying to kill you?"

Jesus reminded them, "A while ago, I healed a man on the Sabbath day, and you all threw a fit. Yet, if a baby boy is supposed to be circumcised on the Sabbath to keep the law of Moses, nobody gets mad. So why are you furious with me just because I completely healed a man's body on a Sabbath day? Stop judging by how things look on the outside, and start making fair, kind choices!"

Some people from Jerusalem started whispering, "Wait, isn't this the guy everyone is trying to kill? Look at him! He is speaking bravely right in front of everyone, and nobody is stopping him. Do our leaders secretly think he is the promised Messiah after all? But wait, we know where this guy grew up. When the real Messiah finally shows up, nobody will know where he came from!"

Hearing their whispers, Jesus raised his voice and called out across the temple: "You think you know me and where I came from? I did not come here on my own. The one who sent me is real, and he is true—even though you do not know him yet. But I *do* know him, because I came straight from him, and he sent me here!"

Hearing this, some guards tried to grab him, but not a single hand touched him because his special moment had not arrived yet.

Meanwhile, many people in the crowd put their faith in him. They cheered, "When the real Messiah arrives, do you really think he'll do even more jaw-dropping miracles than this man has already done?"

When the Pharisees (the strict religious leaders) heard the crowds whispering such good things about Jesus, they panicked. Right away, they sent temple guards to arrest him.

Jesus looked at the guards and said, "I am only going to be with you for a little while longer, and then I am going back to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you won't find me, because you can't go where I am going."

The leaders whispered among themselves, confused, "Where is he planning to go that we won't be able to find him? Is he going to run away and instruct people in foreign countries?"

On the very last and biggest day of the grand festival, Jesus stood up and shouted so everyone could hear: "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink! If you believe in me, rivers of living water will bubble up from deep inside you!" (He was talking about the amazing Holy Spirit, which people would receive later after Jesus finished his work and went back to heaven.)

When the crowd heard this, many nodded and said, "Without a doubt, this man must be the special Prophet we've been waiting for!" Others cheered, "He is the Messiah!" But a few grumbled, "Wait a minute, the Messiah doesn't come from Galilee! Doesn't the scripture say the Messiah has to be a descendant of King David and born in Bethlehem, David's hometown?"

So, the crowd was totally split into diverse groups because of him. Some wanted him arrested, but still, nobody laid a finger on him.

Finally, the temple guards went back empty-handed to the chief priests and Pharisees, who demanded, "Why on earth didn't you bring him back with you?"

The guards shook their heads and answered, "We've never heard anyone talk the way this man talks. His words are incredible!"

The Pharisees snapped back, "What? Did he trick you guys, too? Have any of our important leaders or Pharisees believed in him? No! Only this ignorant crowd who does not even know the law—and they are completely cursed!"

Suddenly, Nicodemus—the same leader who had secretly visited Jesus under the cover of night—spoke up and said, "Wait a second! Does our law allow us to condemn a man without even listening to him first to find out what he is doing?"

The other leaders glared at him and sneered, "Are you from Galilee, too? Go ahead and search the scriptures—you will see that no prophet ever comes out of Galilee!"

And with that tense argument, everyone turned around and went back to their own homes.

JOHN 8

After spending the night resting quietly on the Mount of Olives, Jesus walked back into the busy temple courts early the next morning. As soon as the people saw Him, they gathered closely around, and He sat down to teach them wonderful things about God.

While He was teaching, some religious leaders—the scribes and Pharisees—pushed their way through the crowd, dragging a frightened woman with them. They shoved her right into the center of the group so everyone could see.

"Teacher," they demanded loudly, "we caught this woman red-handed doing something very wrong. The law of Moses says we should pick up heavy rocks and stone her to death! What do you say we should do with her?"

They were trying to trick Jesus. If He said to let her go, they could accuse Him of breaking God's law. But if He said to stone her, they could report Him to the Roman rulers.

Instead of answering right away, Jesus knelt in the dirt. Completely ignoring them, He calmly began drawing in the sand with His finger, as if He had not heard a single word.

When they kept shouting their questions at Him, Jesus finally stood back up. He looked right into their eyes and said, "Let the person among you who has never, ever done anything wrong be the very first to throw a stone at her."

Then, He quietly bent down and went right back to writing in the dirt.

One by one, the accusers stopped and looked at each other. Their own hearts began to bother them. Starting with the oldest and wisest down to the youngest, they all quietly dropped their rocks and walked away.

Soon, everyone was gone, and Jesus was left standing alone with the woman.

Jesus straightened up once more and looked around. "Where are your accusers?" He asked her gently. "Did no one stay to condemn you?"

"No one, Lord," she whispered.

With a kind and forgiving smile, Jesus told her, "I do not condemn you either. Go on your way and try your best not to sin anymore."

Later, Jesus spoke to the crowd again, shining like a bright light in a dark room. "I am the light of the world," He explained. "Whoever follows Me will never walk in the dark but will have the light of life."

The Pharisees crossed their arms and argued, "You are just talking about yourself! That doesn't prove anything."

Jesus replied, "Even if I speak about Myself, My words are completely true because I know exactly where I came from and where I am going. Plus, I am not alone—My Father in heaven is with Me, and He agrees with everything I say."

"Well, where is this Father of yours?" they mocked.

Jesus shook His head. "You don't really know Me, and you certainly don't know My Father. If you truly knew Me, you would know Him, too."

He said all of this while teaching near the temple treasure boxes. Yet even though the leaders were angry, no one dared to touch Him because His special time to suffer and die had not arrived yet.

Jesus kept warning them, "I am going away soon. You will look for me, but you cannot come where I am going. If you refuse to believe who I am, you will die in your sins."

"What?" the people whispered. "Is He going to hurt Himself?"

"You are from down here on earth," Jesus told them, "but I am from up above. You belong to this world, but I do not. That is why I told you that you would die in your sins if you do not believe I am the Savior."

"Who on earth do you think you are?" they demanded.

Jesus sighed. "I am the exact same person I told you I was from the very beginning. My Father is true, and I only tell the world the messages He gives me."

Many people who were listening that day finally believed in Him.

Jesus looked at these new believers and encouraged them, "If you truly obey My teachings, you are truly My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you completely free!"

"Free?" they argued back, feeling offended. "We are the descendants of Abraham! We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean we will be made free?"

Jesus gently corrected them, "The truth is, everyone who keeps making wrong choices is actually a slave to sin. Slaves do not stay in the family forever, but a true son stays forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free! I know you are Abraham's family, but some of you want to kill Me because My message has no room in your hearts."

"Our father is Abraham!" they insisted.

Jesus shook His head. "If you were truly Abraham's children, you would do the good things Abraham did. Instead, you want to kill a man who is only telling you the truth that God gave Him. Abraham never did anything like that! You are acting just like your real spiritual father."

"We are not bad kids!" they shouted. "God is our only Father!"

"If God were truly your Father," Jesus told them honestly, "you would love Me, because I came straight from God. Why is my speech so hard for you to understand? It is because your real father is the devil, and you just want to do whatever he wants. He was a liar and a murderer from the very beginning. Because I tell you the truth, you refuse to believe me!"

Jesus challenged them, "Can any of you prove I have ever done anything wrong? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe Me? Whoever belongs to God listens closely to God's words. The reason you won't listen is because you do not belong to God."

The angry crowd yelled back, "See? We were right! You are just a crazy Samaritan, and you have a demon inside you!"

"I do not have a demon," Jesus answered peacefully. "I simply honor My Father, but you dishonor Me. I am not looking for glory for Myself, but God is taking care of that. Truly, I tell you, anyone who obeys My words will never experience death."

The leaders laughed meanly. "Now we *know* you have a demon! Abraham died, and all the great prophets died, too. But you have the nerve to say that whoever obeys your words will never taste death? Are you somehow greater than our father Abraham? Who do you think you are?!"

Jesus replied, "If I bragged about Myself, it would mean nothing. It is My Father who honors Me—the very same God you claim is your God. But you do not know Him. I know Him. And your father Abraham was actually thrilled to look forward to My coming day; he saw it in faith and was overjoyed."

"You aren't even fifty years old yet!" they sneered. "How could you have possibly seen Abraham?"

Jesus looked right at them and said with great power, "Before Abraham was ever born, I AM."

That was the last straw for them. They grabbed heavy stones from the ground to throw at Him and crush Him. But in the blink of an eye, Jesus quietly slipped away. He walked right through the middle of the angry crowd, hidden safely by His power, and left the temple behind.

JOHN 9

One sunny day, Jesus and his friends walked past a man who had never been able to see since the day he was born.

The disciples were curious and whispered, "Teacher, why is he blind? Did he do something wrong, or did his parents?"

Jesus smiled gently and replied, "Nobody did anything wrong. He was born this way so that God's amazing power could be shown through him. While it is still daytime, I must do the work of the One who sent me. Night is coming soon when no one can work. And as long as I am in this world, I am its bright light."

Right after saying this, Jesus spat gently on the dust, mixed it into a little bit of mud, and carefully smeared it over the blind man's eyes.

"Now," Jesus said, "go wash your face in the pool of Siloam" (which means 'The One Sent').

The man hurried off, washed the mud away, and suddenly—for the very first time in his life—he could see!

When he walked back into his neighborhood, people stared in amazement. "Hey! Isn't that the guy who used to sit around begging?"

"It sure is him!" some whispered.

Others shook their heads. "No, it just looks like him."

The man beamed and said, "Nope, it really is me!"

"Well, how on earth did you get your eyes open?!" they asked.

He answered, "A man named Jesus made some mud, put it on my eyes, and told me to go wash in the pool of Siloam. So I went, I washed, and now I can see!"

"Where is he now?" they demanded.

"I have no idea," the man replied.

So, the crowd dragged the formerly blind man straight to the religious leaders, the Pharisees. Because Jesus had healed him on a Sabbath—a day when everyone was supposed to rest—the leaders were already upset.

"Tell us how you got your sight back," the Pharisees ordered.

"He put mud on my eyes, I washed it off, and now I can see," the man repeated.

Some of the leaders crossed their arms and scoffed, "This Jesus man can't be from God; he doesn't even follow the Sabbath rules!"

Others scratched their heads and argued, "Wait a minute... if he's a sinner, how could he possibly do such a miraculous thing?" The whole room broke into a noisy argument.

They turned back to the man. "You're the one whose eyes were opened. What do you have to say about him?"

"I think he's a prophet," the man replied bravely.

Still refusing to believe he had ever been blind in the first place; the leaders called in the man's parents.

"Is this your son?" they barked. "You claim he was born blind—so how is it that he can see right now?"

The parents trembled a little, saying, "We know he's our son, and yes, he was born blind. But we honestly do not know how he suddenly got his sight back, or who did it. He is a grown-up now; just ask him yourself!" They said this because they were terrified of the religious leaders, who had threatened to kick anyone out of the church if they believed in Jesus.

For a second time, the leaders hauled the man back in front of them. "Give the glory to God!" they commanded. "We *know* this Jesus is a bad guy."

The man shrugged and said, "Whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know. But I know one thing for sure: I used to be blind, and now I can see!"

"What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" they snapped.

The man sighed, "I told you already, and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Are you secretly wanting to become his followers, too?"

That made them furious! They shouted insults at him, yelling, "You can be his follower if you want to follow Moses! We know God spoke to Moses, but as for this nobody, we do not even know where he came from!"

The man laughed in sheer amazement. "Well, isn't that bizarre! You do not know where he is from, yet he just opened my eyes! Everyone knows God does not listen to bad people, but He listens to anyone who worships Him and does His will. Since the beginning of time, nobody has ever heard of someone curing a person born blind. If

this man were not sent from God, he would not be able to do a single thing!"

"You were born completely full of sins, and you're trying to teach *us*?" they roared, and they threw him right out of the building.

When Jesus heard that they had kicked the man out, He went looking for him. Finding him, Jesus asked, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

The man's face lit up. "Tell me who he is, sir, so I can believe in him!"

Jesus smiled. "You're looking right at him. I am the one talking to you right now."

The man dropped to his knees, overjoyed. "Lord, I believe!" And he worshipped Him.

Jesus looked around gently and said, "I came into this world to bring sight to the blind, and to show those who think they see that they are actually in the dark."

A few Pharisees standing nearby overheard Him and sneered, "What? Are you calling *us* blind too?"

Jesus told them, "If you truly were blind, you wouldn't be guilty of sin. But because you proudly claim, 'We can see,' your guilt remains."

JOHN 10

Listen closely, because this is especially important: Anyone who sneaks into the sheep pen over the fence instead of using the gate is a thief trying to steal the sheep.

But the true shepherd always walks right through the gate.

The gatekeeper opens it just for him, and the sheep listen eagerly to his voice. He calls each of his sheep by their very own name and leads them out into the green grass.

When he has them all outside, he walks ahead of them to show the way, and the sheep happily follow right behind him because they know the sound of his voice so well.

They would never follow a stranger! In fact, they will run away from someone they do not know because those voices sound completely wrong to them.

Jesus told the people this little story, but at first, they were totally confused and had no idea what He meant.

So, Jesus explained it again: "I want you to know the absolute truth—I am the gate that protects the sheep.

Everyone who tried to lead you before I came was just a thief and a robber, and the sheep rightly ignored them.

I am the gate. If anyone comes through to me, they will be safe, able to go in and out freely, and find all the food they need.

A thief only shows up to steal, ruin, and destroy. But I came to give you a wonderful, overflowing life that never ends!

I am the ultimate good shepherd. A good shepherd is even willing to die to keep his sheep safe.

On the other hand, a hired worker who does not own sheep does not really care about them. The moment he sees a hungry wolf approaching, he panics, runs away, and leaves the sheep behind. Then the wolf attacks, scatters the flock, and tears them apart.

The hired helper runs off because it is just a job for him, and he does not absolutely love the sheep.

But I am a good shepherd. I know every single one of my sheep, and they know me just as well—

just like my Father in heaven knows me, and I know Him. And just like I promised, I am laying down my life to protect my sheep.

I also have other sheep that do not belong to this pen. I need to bring them in, too, and they will listen to my voice. In the end, there will not be separate groups; there will be just one big flock and one loving shepherd.

This is why my Father loves me so much: because I freely choose to lay down my life so I can take it up again.

Nobody is forcing me to give up my life; I am doing it completely on my own. I have the authority to lay it down, and the power to pick it back up again. This is the special mission my Father gave me."

As soon as He said these things, a fierce argument broke out among the crowd of Jewish leaders.

Many of them shouted, "He is completely crazy and has a demon inside Him! Why are you even wasting your time listening to a madman?"

But others argued back, "No way! These are not the words of someone controlled by a demon. Besides, can a demon make blind people see?"

It was wintertime in Jerusalem during the Festival of Dedication.

Jesus was taking a walk inside the temple area, strolling through Solomon's beautiful, covered porch.

The religious leaders quickly surrounded Him and demanded, "How much longer are you going to keep us guessing? If you are truly the chosen Messiah, stop playing games and tell us straight out!"

Jesus calmly replied, "I have already told you the truth, but you refuse to believe me. Look at the incredible miracles I do in my Father's name—they prove exactly who I am.

The real reason you do not believe it is simply because you are not part of my flock.

My sheep hear my voice. I know them personally, and they follow me everywhere I go.

I give them eternal life, and they will never, ever be destroyed. No one—absolutely no one—can snatch them out of my hand.

My Father is the one who gave them to me, and He is greater and more powerful than anyone else in the universe. Because of that, no one can ever pull them out of my Father's hand either.

In fact, me and my Father are completely one."

Hearing that, the angry leaders immediately bent down, picked up heavy stones, and moved in to throw them at Him and crush Him.

Jesus stood His ground and asked them, "I have shown you so many wonderful, helpful miracles straight from my Father. For which of those charitable deeds are you trying to kill me?"

They snapped back, "We aren't stoning you for any good deed! We are doing it because of your terrible blasphemy. You are just an ordinary human being, yet you are claiming to be God!"

Jesus answered, "Doesn't your own holy law say, 'I said, you are gods'?"

God called those people 'gods' because His word came to them, and we know the Scriptures can never be broken or proven wrong.

So why are you accusing me of insulting God just because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? After all, the Father set me apart and sent me directly into this world!

If I am not doing the kind of work my Father does, then you do not have to believe me.

But if I *am* doing my Father's works, even if you hate me and refuse to believe my words, at least believe the evidence of my miracles! That way, you will finally understand and realize that the Father is truly in me, and I am in the Father."

Once again, they tried their best to grab Him and arrest Him, but He easily slipped right out of their grasp.

He left Jerusalem and traveled back across the Jordan River to the quiet place where John the Baptist used to baptize people, and He stayed there for a while.

A huge crowd of people came out to find Him there. They talked amongst themselves, saying, "Even though John didn't do any flashy miracles, everything he ever said about this man Jesus was completely true!"

And because of that, a great many peoples there put their trust in Him.

JOHN 11

Once upon a time, in a cozy small town called Bethany, lived a man named Lazarus and his two loving sisters, Martha and Mary. Mary was the very same special lady who had once poured sweet perfume on Jesus's feet and gently wiped them with her hair.

One day, Lazarus got extremely sick. Worried about their dear brother, the sisters sent a quick message to their good friend Jesus: "Lord, please come quickly! The one you love is so sick."

When Jesus heard the news, he smiled and told his friends, "Don't worry, this sickness won't end in sadness. It's happening to show everyone how wonderful God is, and to make the Son of God shine bright." Even though Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus dearly, he did not rush right away. Instead, he stayed right where he was for two whole days.

Finally, Jesus turned to his helpers, the disciples, and said, "Let's go back to Judea."

His disciples gasped and said, "Teacher! Just a little while ago, the people there wanted to throw heavy rocks at you! Are you sure you want to go back?"

Jesus gently explained, "Just like the sun gives us twelve hours of daylight to walk safely without bumping into things, we have work to do right now." Then he added, "Our dear friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up."

Thinking Lazarus was just taking a nice, healthy nap, the disciples replied, "Well, if he's sleeping, he'll feel better soon!"

But Jesus was not talking about a nap—he meant that Lazarus had died. So, Jesus looked at them and said clearly, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that your faith can grow stronger. But now, let's go to him."

Thomas, who was also called the Twin, bravely told the other disciples, "Let's go too, so we can die right along with him."

When Jesus and his friends finally arrived in Bethany, they found out that Lazarus had already been resting in his tomb for four days. Bethany was remarkably close to the big city of Jerusalem, only about two miles away, so many friends had come to comfort Martha and Mary over the loss of their brother.

As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was finally coming down the road, she jumped up and ran to meet him. But Mary stayed quietly inside the house.

"Lord," Martha cried when she saw Jesus, "if only you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died! But even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, He will give you."

Jesus looked at her and promised, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha nodded, "I know he will rise again when everyone wakes up on the last day."

Then Jesus said something amazing: "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after they die. And whoever lives and believes in me will never truly die. Do you believe this?"

Martha wiped her tears and answered, "Yes, Lord! I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was supposed to come into the world."

After saying this, Martha hurried back inside and whispered to her sister Mary out of sight of the crowd, "The Teacher is here, and he's asking for you."

Hearing that, Mary jumped up in a hurry and ran out to find him. (Jesus was still waiting in the exact same spot where Martha had first met him.) The friends who were comforting Mary in the house saw her rush outside and followed her, thinking, *Oh look, she is going to the tomb to have a good cry.*

When Mary finally reached Jesus, she fell right down at his feet, crying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!"

When Jesus saw Mary crying—and saw all their friends crying right along with her—his heart felt very heavy, and he was deeply moved.

"Where have you laid him?" Jesus asked gently.

"Lord, come and see," they answered.

And then, the shortest and most touching sentence in the whole story happened: *Jesus wept.*

"Look how much he loved him!" the people whispered. But some of them grumbled, "Wait a minute! This is the guy who opened the eyes of a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

With a heavy sigh, Jesus walked over to the tomb. It was a dark cave with a giant heavy stone rolling over the front door.

"Roll away the stone," Jesus instructed.

Martha shook her head, worried. "Lord, by now there will be a bad smell. He has been there four days!"

Jesus looked at her gently and reminded her, "Didn't I tell you that if you just believe, you will see the wonderful glory of God?"

So, the people stepped up and rolled the heavy stone away from the doorway. Jesus lifted his eyes up toward the bright sky and prayed, "Father, I thank You that You always listen to me. I'm saying this out loud just for the people standing here, so they can believe that You sent me."

Then, taking a deep breath, Jesus called out with a loud, ringing voice: "*Lazarus, come forth!*"

Suddenly, out stepped Lazarus! He was still wrapped up hand and foot in his burial cloths, with a cloth tied around his face.

Jesus smiled at the amazed crowd and said, "Untie him, and let him go home!"

When the people who had come to visit Mary saw the amazing miracle Jesus had just performed, many of them believed in him with all their hearts. But a few of them hurried off to tell the Pharisees (the religious leaders) everything that had happened.

Right away, the chief priests and Pharisees called a big meeting. "What are we going to do?" they panicked. "This man is doing so many incredible miracles! If we let him keep going, everyone will believe in him, and then the Roman army might come and destroy our holy place and our nation!"

One of them named Caiaphas, who was the big High Priest that year, stood up and said, "You guys don't understand anything! Don't you realize it is much better for just *one* man to die for the people than for the whole nation to be ruined?"

Caiaphas did not realize it, but God was using him to make a special prediction: Jesus was going to die not just for that nation, but to bring together all of God's scattered children everywhere into one big, happy family.

From that exact day on, the leaders started plotting secretly to find a way to put Jesus to stop him. Because of this, Jesus stopped walking around openly in public towns. Instead, he took his disciples and moved to quiet countryside near the wilderness, staying in a small town called Ephraim.

Soon, the joyful springtime holiday called Passover was getting remarkably close. Lots of people traveled up to Jerusalem early to get cleaned up and ready for the festival. While standing around in the big temple courtyard, people looked around and asked each

other, "What do you think? Do you think he will even dare to come to the feast?"

You see, the chief priests and Pharisees had posted a strict rule: *If anyone spots Jesus, they must report it immediately so we can arrest him.* But Jesus had a much bigger plan, and his greatest adventure was about to begin!

JOHN 12

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to the village of Bethany to visit Lazarus—the very same man He had brought back to life from the grave.

To welcome Him, a special dinner was prepared. Martha bustled about serving the food, while Lazarus sat right at the table, enjoying the meal alongside Jesus.

Suddenly, Mary stepped forward carrying a jar of extremely expensive perfume made from pure spikenard. She gently poured it over Jesus' feet, wiping them dry with her long hair. Instantly, the sweet fragrance of the perfume drifted through the entire house, filling every room.

One of the disciples, Judas Iscariot—the very one who would later betray Jesus—spoke up with a frown. "Why wasn't this perfume sold?" he complained. "We could have given three hundred silver coins to the poor!"

Now, Judas do not care about poor people. He said this because he was a thief who carried the group's money bag, and he secretly liked to steal coins from it for himself.

"Leave her alone," Jesus gently instructed. "She was saving this precious perfume for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor around to help, but you will not always have Me."

Meanwhile, word spread quickly through the town that Jesus was staying in Bethany. Crowds of people hurried over—not just to see Jesus, but also to catch a glimpse of Lazarus, whom Jesus had miraculously raised from the dead! Because so many people were believing in Jesus because of Lazarus, the chief priests started plotting to kill Lazarus, too.

The very next day, a giant holiday crowd heard that Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem. Excitedly, they grabbed palm branches and ran out to meet Him along the road, cheering, "Hooray! Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the Lord's name!"

Jesus found a gentle young donkey and hopped on its back, just like the ancient prophet had written long ago: *"Do not be afraid, city of Zion; see, your King is coming, riding on a donkey's colt."*

At the time, the disciples did not fully understand what was happening. But after Jesus had risen in glory, they remembered that all these things had been written about Him and come true.

The crowds who had witnessed Jesus' call Lazarus out of the tomb kept telling everyone the incredible story. That was the main reason so many people rushed out to welcome Him, because they knew about the amazing miracle.

Watching from the sidelines, the frustrated Pharisees muttered to one another, "Look! Our plans are failing completely. The entire world has gone after Him!"

During the festival, some Greek visitors who had come to worship God approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. "Sir," they asked politely, "we would really love to meet Jesus."

Philip ran to tell Andrew, and together the two disciples went to tell Jesus.

Jesus smiled and said to them, "The time has finally come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, I tell you: unless a tiny seed falls into the dirt and dies, it remains just a single seed. But if it dies, it sprouts up and produces a huge harvest of fruit! If you love your life too much, you will lose it, but if you let go of your life in this world, you will keep it forever. If anyone wants to serve Me, they must follow Me. Wherever I am, my servants will be there too, and My Father will honor anyone who serves Me."

Then Jesus added, "My soul is deeply troubled right now. What should I say? Should I pray, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, this is the exact reason I came to this hour! Father, bring glory to Your name."

Instantly, a booming voice echoed down from the sky: "I have brought glory to it, and I will bring glory to it again!"

The people standing nearby heard the sound. Some thought it had thundered, while others whispered, "An angel just spoke to Him!"

Jesus explained, "That voice didn't speak for My benefit, but for yours. Right now, the world is being judged, and the evil ruler of this

world is about to be thrown out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw every single person to Myself." (He said this to hint at the specific way He was going to die.)

The crowd was confused. "Wait a minute," they argued. "God's law teaches us that the Messiah will live forever. How can you say the Son of Man must be 'lifted up'? Who even is this Son of Man?"

Jesus answered, "The light will only be with you a little while longer. Walk in the light while you have it, so that the darkness does not catch you by surprise, because people stumbling in the dark do not know where they are going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so you can become children of the light."

After saying these things, Jesus walked away and hid Himself from them.

Even though He had performed so many jaw-dropping miracles right in front of them, most of the people still refused to believe in Him. This happened just like the prophet Isaiah had written long ago: *"Lord, who has believed our message? To whom has the power of the Lord been revealed?"*

In fact, they could not believe, because Isaiah also wrote: *"God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they won't see with their eyes or understand with their hearts and turn to Me to be healed."* Isaiah said this because he had caught a glimpse of Jesus' glorious majesty.

Even so, quite a few of the Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus. But they were too scared of the Pharisees to admit it openly because they did not want to get kicked out of the synagogue. They cared

more about getting a thumb-up from people than winning approval from God.

Then Jesus raised His voice and said, "Whoever believes in Me isn't just believing in Me, but in the One who sent Me. And whoever looks at Me is seeing the One who sent Me. I have come into the world as a light, so that everyone who believes in Me will not have to stay stuck in the dark.

"If anyone hears My words and doesn't follow them, I am not the one who judges them. After all, I did not come to judge the world, but to save it! There is a judge waiting for anyone who rejects Me and ignores My words: the very words I have spoken will judge them on the last day. For I have never spoken on My own authority. The Father who sent Me gave Me exact instructions on what to say and how to say it. And I know His command leads to eternal life. So, whenever I speak, I say exactly what the Father told Me to say."

JOHN 13

It was time for the big Passover party, and Jesus knew it was time for Him to leave this world and go back to His Father in Heaven. He had loved His friends deeply while He was with them, and He decided to show them that love right up to the very end.

During dinner, the devil had already put a sneaky and unkind idea into Judas's heart—the idea to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that God the Father had put everything into His hands, and that He had come straight from God and was going right back to

Him. So, right in the middle of supper, Jesus quietly stood up. He took off His outer robe, wrapped a towel around His waist like an apron, poured some water into a big bowl, and began washing His friends' feet, wiping them dry with the towel He was wearing.

Soon He came to Simon Peter. Peter pulled his feet back and gasped, "Lord, are You really going to wash my feet?"

Jesus smiled and said, "You don't understand what I'm doing right now, but you will figure it out later."

"No way!" Peter said stubbornly. "You will *never* wash my feet!"

Jesus looked at him and said gently, "If I don't wash you, Peter, you can't be part of my team."

Peter's eyes went wide. "Oh! Well, in that case, Lord—do not just wash my feet! Wash my hands and my head, too!"

Jesus explained, "If you've already taken a bath, you're mostly clean; you only need to wash the dust off your feet. And you guys are clean—well, most of you." (He said "most of you" because He already knew who was going to trick Him and give Him away.)

After He had finished washing everyone's feet, Jesus put His robe back on and sat back down at the table. "Do you understand what I just did for you?" He asked them. "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you're right, that's who I am. So, if I, your Lord, and Teacher, just wash your feet, you should wash each other's feet, too. I gave you this as an example so you can copy it and do for others what I have done for you. Trust me, servants are not bigger than their masters, and messengers are not bigger than the person who sent them. If

you understand these things, you will be super happy if you do them!"

Jesus paused, then added, "I'm not talking about all of you—I know the exact friends I chose. But a special Bible promise must come true: *'The person who shares my food has turned against me.'* I am telling you this now, before it even happens, so that when it does, you will believe who I am. Truly, whoever welcomes someone I send is really welcoming Me, and whoever welcomes Me is welcoming God who sent Me."

When Jesus finished saying this, He felt heavy and sad inside. He spoke up and told them the hard truth: "Truly, I tell you, one of you sitting right here is going to betray Me."

The disciples all stared at each other, totally confused, whispering, "Who could He possibly be talking about?"

Now, John—one of the disciples whom Jesus especially loved—was leaning right against Jesus at the table. Simon Peter nudged John and whispered, "Ask Him which one He means."

So, John leaned closer to Jesus and whispered, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus whispered back, "It's the one I give this piece of bread to after I did it in the bowl." He dipped a piece of bread and handed it straight to Judas Iscariot.

The moment Judas took the bread; a dark and heavy selfishness completely took over his heart. Jesus looked at him and said, "Whatever you're going to do, go do it—and do it fast."

Nobody else at the table had any idea why Jesus had just said that to Judas. Since Judas was the one who held the money bag for the

group, some of them thought Jesus was telling him, "Go buy the food we need for the holiday," or "Give some money to the poor people."

So, Judas took the bread, walked right out the door into the dark night, and left.

As soon as Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is shining bright with glory, and God is shining bright through Him! And since God is glorified in Him, God will also make Him glorious very soon."

Then Jesus looked at the rest of them with a warm, gentle smile and said, "My dear little children, I am only going to be with you for a little while longer. You will look for me, but just like I told the leaders, you cannot come where I am going. So, I will tell you too:

"I am giving you a brand-new rule: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you need to love each other, too. If you love one another like that, *everyone* will know that you are My disciples."

Simon Peter raised his hand and asked, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus answered, "You can't follow Me where I'm going right now, Peter, but you will catch up and follow Me later."

"Lord, why can't I follow you right now?" Peter insisted. "I'll fight for you! I will even lay down my life for you!"

Jesus looked at Peter and shook His head softly. "Will you really lay down your life for Me? Truly, I tell you, before the rooster crows in the morning, you will pretend you don't even know Me—not once, but three times."

JOHN 14

Do not let your hearts worry, friends. You trust in God, so trust in me, too.

In my Father's house, there is plenty of room for everyone. If it were not true, I would have told you straight up. I am going ahead of you to get a wonderful place ready for you.

And once everything is ready, I will come back and take you with me, so we can always be together in the same place. You already know where I am going, and you know the path to get there.

Then Thomas spoke up, "Lord, we don't even know where you're going! How could we know the way?"

Jesus smiled and said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to reach the Father is through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father, too. From now on, you *do* know Him, and you've even seen Him."

Philip chimed in, "Lord, just show us the Father, and we'll be completely happy."

Jesus looked at him gently and said, "Philip, I've been with you for so long, and you still don't know me? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! How can you ask to see the Father? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I tell you are not just my own ideas; the Father living inside me is doing His work through me. Trust me: I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. But if you struggle to believe that, just look at the amazing things I do, and let those miracles convince you.

"I'm telling you the absolute truth: whoever believes in me will do the exact same good work I do—and even bigger ones! because I am going back to tFather And whatever you ask for in my name, I will do it, so that the Father shines brightly through the Son. Yes, if you ask for anything in my name, I will make it happen.

"If you truly love me, do what I tell you. I will ask the Father, and He will send you a special Helper who will stay with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot see Him or understand Him, but you know Him because He lives right beside you and will live inside your very heart.

"I am not going to leave you feeling lonely or lost; I am coming back to you. Very soon, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. And because I live, you will live, too! On that day, you will realize that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. The person who knows my commands and follows them is the one who absolutely loves me. And my Father will love anyone who loves me, and I will love them and show myself clearly to them."

Judas (not Iscariot) asked, "Lord, how are you going to show yourself to us, but not to the rest of the world?"

Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, they will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home right inside their heart. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my words. And remember, the message you are hearing is not mine—it belongs to the Father who sent me.

"I'm telling you all of this while I am still here with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will

teach you everything. He will remind you of everything I have told you.

"I am leaving you with a gift—my own special peace. I do not give the way the grumpy, anxious world gives. So, stop letting your heart be troubled, and do not be afraid.

"You heard me tell you earlier: 'I am leaving, but I will come back to you.' If you really loved me, you would be throwing a party because I said I am going back to the Father, who is greater than I am. I am telling you this ahead of time so that when it happens, your faith will stay strong.

"I don't have much time left to talk with you, because the ruler of this dark world is coming. He has no power over me, but I am doing this to show the world that I love the Father and am obeying His exact commands.

"Now, get up. Let us head out!"

JOHN 15

Think of me as the healthy main vine, and my Father as the expert gardener.

Any branch attached to me that does not grow good fruit gets snapped away, while the branches that *do* grow fruit get gently trimmed so they can sprout even more.

You are already pruned and ready because of the encouraging words I have shared with you.

Stay intricately connected to me, and I will stay close to you. Just like a little branch cannot grow anything on its own unless it is hooked to the vine, you cannot do much without staying connected to me.

I am the vine, and you are my branches. If you stay plugged into me and I in you, you will grow an amazing amount of fruit—because apart from me, you really cannot accomplish anything.

If someone wanders away and refuses to stay connected, they are like a broken branch that dries up, gets tossed aside, and ends up in the bonfire.

But if you make your home in me, and let my words live inside your heart, you can ask for whatever you need, and it will happen.

This is how my Father shines brightly: when you grow a massive harvest of good fruit and prove you are truly my followers.

Just as the Father loves me, I love you just as fiercely. So, stay right here in my love!

If you follow my instructions, you will stay wrapped up in my love—the same way I have followed my Father's rules and live inside His love.

I am telling you all this so that my bubbly, unstoppable joy can fill you right up to the brim.

Here is my absolute biggest rule for you: Love one another, just like I have loved you.

The greatest kind of love you can ever show is to be willing to trade your life to save your friends.

And you guys are my closest friends if you do what I ask you to do.

I am not going to call you my helpers or servants anymore, because a servant is kept in the dark about what the boss is planning.

Instead, I call you my friends, because I have shared every single secret I have learned from my Father right with you.

You did not pick me out, I handpicked *you*. I set you apart so you could step out into the world, do lasting good, and grow fruit that never rots. That way, whenever you ask the Father for something in my name, He will hand it right over.

So let me remind you again: Love each other fiercely.

Now, if the rest of the world gives you a tough time and hates you, just remember they did the exact same thing to me first.

If you belong to their selfish crowd, they will adore you like one of their own. But I pulled you out of that selfish crowd and chose you for something better—and that is why the world throws a fit and hates you.

Think back to what I told you before: A helper is never more important than the boss. If people bullied and harassed me, they are going to bully and harassed you too. But if a few folks listened to my words, they might listen to yours as well.

They are going to treat you this way because of my name, simply because they do not know the One who sent me.

If I had not come here and talked directly to them, they would not fully understand their wrong choices. But now, they have no excuse left for their unruly behavior.

If you hate me, you are hating my Father, too.

If I had not performed jaw-dropping miracles right in front of them that no one else in history ever did, they would not be as guilty. But they have seen the miracles with their own eyes, and somehow, they *still* managed to hate both me and my Father.

Even so, this just proves what was written long ago in their own law books: *"They hated me for absolutely no reason at all."*

Do not worry, though! When the great Helper arrives—the Spirit of Truth sent straight from the Father—whom I will send to stand right by your side, He is going to talk everything about me.

And you are going to talk about me too, because you have been spending time together with me right from the very beginning.

JOHN 16

I am telling you all this ahead of time, so your faith will not get shaken when things get tough. People are going to ban you from their meeting places, and the time is coming when whoever kills you will believe they are doing a good deed for God. They are going to treat you this way simply because they do not truly know the Father, and they do not know me either.

I want to warn you now so that when it all happens, you will remember I told you so. I did not mention this right at the beginning because I was still here with you. But now I am going back to the One who sent me, yet none of you are asking me where I am headed.

Instead, your heart is completely heavy with sadness just because I told you the truth.

Still, I promise you, it is much better for you that I leave. If I do not go away, the great Helper will not be able to come to you. But once I depart, I will send Him straight to you! When He arrives, He will help the world understand the truth about three things: what real sin is because people refuse to trust in me; what real goodness is because I am returning to my Father where you won't see me anymore; and what justice is because the ruler of this dark world has already been defeated.

I have so many more things I could tell you right now, but your mind and hearts cannot quite handle them all yet. However, when the Spirit of truth finally arrives, He will walk with you and lead you into every truth. He will not make things up on His own; He will only speak what He hears, and He will even show you things that are going to happen in the future. He will bring glory to me by taking what belongs to me and sharing it with you. Everything the Father has is mine, which is why I said the Spirit will take my message and show it to you.

In just a little while, you will not be able to see me anymore. But then, after another little while, you *will* see me again, because I am going home to the Father.

Some of the disciples started whispering to each other, "What does He mean by saying, 'In a little while you won't see me, and then in a little while you will see me, because I am going to the Father'? What is this 'little while'? We have no idea what He's talking about!"

Jesus knew they were dying to ask Him about it, so He said, "Are you guys trying to figure out among yourselves what I meant by a little while? I want you to know this: you are going to cry and be deeply sad, while the world will be celebrating and rejoicing. You will have sorrow, but your heart will soon burst with joy!

Think of a mother who is going through the intense pain of having a baby; her time has come, and she is in agony. But the second her baby is born; she completely forgets all the pain because she is so overjoyed that a brand-new human being has entered the world! You are sad right now, too, but I am going to see you again. When I do, your heart will explode with happiness that no one can ever steal away from you.

When that day comes, you will not need to ask me for anything directly. Listen closely: whenever you ask the Father for something in my name, He will give it to you. Up until now, you have not asked for anything using my name but go ahead and ask! Keep asking until you receive, so that your joy can be completely full.

I have been speaking to you in hidden pictures and riddles, but the time is coming very soon when I will drop the riddles and speak to you plainly and openly about Father. On that day, you will talk directly to the Father in my name. I do not even need to tell you that I will beg the Father on your behalf, because Father Himself deeply loves you! He loves you because you have loved me and honestly believe that I came straight from God. I left the Father to step into this world, and now I am leaving this world to go right back to the Father."

The disciples smiled and said, "Look! Now you are speaking clearly without any riddles at all! Now we are sure that you know everything and do not even need anyone to ask you questions. This is how we know for a fact that you came right from God."

Jesus looked at them and smiled, saying, "Do you finally believe? Pay attention—the hour is coming, and is here right now, when all of you are going to scatter in every direction. Each of you will run to your own home and leave me completely alone. But do you know what? I will not really be alone because the Father is right here with me.

I have told you all these things so that, deep inside me, you can have true peace. Out there in the world, you are going to have a tough time and face many troubles. But do not you ever give up or lose heart—cheer up, because I have already conquered the entire world!"

JOHN 17

Jesus looked up into the bright, open sky, smiled, and began to talk softly to His Father in heaven.

"Father," Jesus said, "the special time has finally come. Please show everyone how wonderful Your Son is, so that I can show how wonderful You are! You gave Me the job of caring for people so I could share an amazing, never-ending life with everyone you brought to Me. And the best part of this forever-life is simply knowing

You—the only true God—and knowing Me, the one You sent to Earth."

Jesus continued, "I have done everything You asked Me to do while I was down here. I have finished the big job you gave Me. So now, Father, welcome Me back home and fill Me with the shining glory and happiness we shared together before the universe was even made!"

"I introduced You to the wonderful friends You gave Me out of the big, busy world. They were always Yours, and You trusted Me to take care of them—and they have listened closely to Your word. Now they finally understand that everything I have comes straight from You. I shared Your important messages with them, and they opened their hearts. They truly believe that You sent Me on this rescue mission."

"Right now, I am praying especially for them. I am not praying for the whole noisy world today, but for the special ones You gave Me, because they belong to You. Everything I have is Yours, and everything You have is Mine, and my friends make Me so proud! Soon, I will be leaving the world to come back to You, but they must stay behind a little longer. Holy Father, please wrap them in Your safe, loving name and keep them tightly together as one big, happy family, just like You and I are one."

"While I was walking right beside them here on Earth, I protected them in Your name and kept them safe. Not even one of them got lost, except for the one who chose his own dark path, which had to happen just like the old stories said. Now I am coming home to You, but I am saying these things out loud while I am still here so my friends can feel my joy bubbling over inside their hearts."

"I gave them Your word, and because of that, the world has given them a hard time—mostly because they don't belong to the ways of this world, just like I don't belong here. Father, I am not asking You to beam them up and take them out of the world; instead, I am asking You to keep them safe from the mean and hurtful things around them. They are not defined by this world, just as I am not. Make them strong and clean through Your truth, because Your word *is* the ultimate truth."

"Just as You sent Me out into the world to help people, I am now sending them out into the world to do the same. For their sake, I am making Myself completely ready and pure, so that they, too, can live clean and true lives."

"And you know what, Father? I am not just praying for these few friends standing here today. I am also praying for every single person who will hear about Me from them and choose to believe in Me in the future. I pray that they will all be connected as one—just as You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You. I want them to be woven together into our family so that the entire world will look on and finally believe that You are the One who sent Me."

"I have shared the glowing, beautiful gift You gave Me with them, so they can be one—just like we are one. With Me living in them and You living in Me, they can become completely whole and unified. When the world sees this, they will know for sure that You sent Me, and that You love them just as fiercely and tenderly as You love Me."

"Father, it is my deepest wish that the people You gave Me will someday be right where I am, so they can look upon the stunning

glory You gave Me—because You loved Me even before the very first star was hung in the sky."

"Oh, righteous Father, the rest of the world hasn't really known You. But I know You, and these friends of Mine know that You are the one who sent Me. I have already introduced them to Your wonderful name, and I am going to keep on telling them more about You. That way, the huge, wonderful love You have for Me will live right inside their hearts, and I will live right there with them, too."

JOHN 18

After Jesus finished praying, he and his disciples walked across the Kidron Valley to a quiet garden they visited often. Judas, the disciple who was going to trick Jesus, knew this special spot very well.

Suddenly, Judas arrived with a large crowd of soldiers and temple guards sent by the religious leaders. They carried heavy weapons, blazing torches, and lanterns that flickered in the dark.

Jesus already knew everything terrible that was about to happen to him. Stepping forward into the light, he asked, "Who are you looking for?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus answered calmly. (Judas was standing right there with the confused crowd.)

The moment Jesus said those words, an invisible wave of power pushed the soldiers backward, and they all tumbled straight to the ground!

Jesus asked them again, "Who are you looking for?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they repeated.

Jesus looked at them and said, "I already told you that I am he. If you are here for me, let my friends go free." He said this so that none of his disciples would be hurt.

Quickly, Simon Peter drew his sword, swung it at the high priest's servant, and sliced off his right ear! (The servant's name was Malchus.)

"Put your sword away!" Jesus scolded Peter gently. "Should I refuse to drink the cup of suffering my Father has given me?"

Then the guards and their captain grabbed Jesus, tied his hands tightly, and led him away. First, they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year—the same Caiaphas who had previously told the Jewish leaders that it was better for one man to die for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus from a safe distance. Because the other disciple knew the high priest, he walked right inside the courtyard, while Peter had to wait outside the gate. Realizing Peter was locked out, the other disciple spoke to the woman at the door and brought Peter inside.

As Peter stepped in to warm himself by the burning coal fire with the servants on the chilly night, the woman at the door looked closely at him. "Aren't you one of this man's disciples?" she asked.

"No, I'm not," Peter replied quickly.

Inside, the high priest questioned Jesus about his followers and his teachings.

"I have always spoken openly to everyone," Jesus answered. "I taught in the synagogues and the temple where everyone gathers. I never taught anything secretly. Why are you asking me? Ask the people who heard me; they know what I said."

Right after Jesus said this, one of the guards slapped him across the face, shouting, "Is that any way to talk to the high priest?"

Jesus calmly replied, "If I said something wrong, prove it. But if I told the truth, why did you hit me?"

Since Annas had not gotten any answers, he sent Jesus—still tied up—to Caiaphas the high priest.

Meanwhile, Peter was still standing by the fire trying to stay warm. "Aren't you one of his disciples?" the guards asked him again.

Peter denied it immediately, saying, "No, I am not!"

One of the high priest's servants—who happened to be a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off—pointed right at him. "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?"

Peter denied it a third time, and at that exact moment, a rooster crowed in the distance.

Early in the morning, they led Jesus away from Caiaphas's house to the Roman governor's palace. The religious leaders would not go inside the building because they did not want to become "ceremonially unclean" before eating the Passover meal.

So, Pilate, the Roman governor, came outside to them. "What is your charge against this man?" he asked.

"If he wasn't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you!" they snapped back.

Pilate told them, "Then take him and judge him by your own laws."

"We aren't allowed to execute anyone," the Jewish leaders replied. (This made the prophecy Jesus had spoken about his death come true.)

Pilate went back inside the palace, called Jesus over, and asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus looked at him. "Are you asking this because you figured it out, or did other people tell you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate scoffed. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not part of this world. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over. But my kingdom comes from somewhere else."

"So, you *are* a king?" Pilate asked.

"You say that I am a king," Jesus answered. "I was born and came into the world for this one reason: to tell the truth. Everyone who loves the truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked cynically. Without waiting for an answer, he went back outside to the crowd and announced, "I can't find any reason to declare this man guilty of a crime."

Pilate continued, "You have a custom that I release one prisoner for you during the Passover. Would you like me to release the 'King of the Jews'?"

"No! Not him! Give us Barabbas!" they shouted back. (Barabbas, unfortunately, was a dangerous criminal and robber.)

JOHN 19

Governor Pilate had Jesus whipped with a heavy leather strap. Then the Roman soldiers wove a sharp crown out of thorny branches and pressed it onto His head, dressing Him in a rich purple cape. They laughed and mocked Him, shouting, "Long live the King of the Jews!" while slapping Him across the face.

Pilate stepped back outside to address the angry crowd. "Listen," he announced, "I am bringing Him out to show you that I cannot find a single reason to punish Him."

Jesus walked out, still wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate pointed at Him and said, "Look at the man!"

As soon as the temple priests and guards saw Him, they started screaming, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Pilate replied impatiently, "Take Him yourselves and nail Him to a cross, because I still find no crime in Him."

The religious leaders argued back, "We have our own strict laws, and by our law He must die because He claimed to be the Son of God."

Hearing that, Pilate felt a shiver of fear run through him. He hurried back inside the palace and asked Jesus, "Where do you actually come from?" But Jesus remained completely silent.

"Are you refusing to answer me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize I have the absolute power to either set you free or order you to be crucified?"

Jesus looked up and answered calmly, "You would have no power over me at all unless it was given to you from heaven. Therefore, the man who handed me over to you carries the greater sin."

From that moment on, Pilate tried even harder to find a way to release Him. But the crowd roared back, "If you let this prisoner go, you are no friend of the Emperor! Anyone who claims to be a king is setting himself up as an enemy of Caesar!"

Terrified of losing his political standing, Pilate finally gave in. He brought Jesus out and sat down on the stone judgment seat, in a courtyard called Gabbatha. It was now about noon on Friday before the Passover festival began. Pilate looked at the crowd and said, "Here is your King!"

They shrieked in disgust, "Take Him away! Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

"Shall I really crucify your King?" Pilate asked sarcastically.

The chief priests shouted, "We have no king except Caesar!"

Realizing he was getting nowhere, Pilate finally handed Jesus over to be executed. The soldiers immediately seized Jesus and led Him away.

Carrying His own heavy wooden cross, Jesus walked out of the city to a rocky knoll known as Golgotha, which translates to "The Place of the Skull." There, the soldiers nailed Him to the cross. They also crucified two criminals, one on each side, with Jesus hanging right in the middle.

Pilate wrote a wooden sign to be nailed to the top of the cross. It read: *JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*.

Many people passing by read the sign because the execution site was right outside the city walls. It was written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

The chief priests rushed to Pilate and complained, "Change the sign! Do not write 'The King of the Jews.' Write that He *claimed* to be the King of the Jews."

Pilate steadfastly refused, snapping, "What I have written, I have written."

Once the soldiers finished nailing Jesus to the cross, they gathered up His clothes and divided them into four piles, one for each guard. They also had His tunic, which was seamless because it had been woven as one single piece from top to bottom.

The soldiers whispered among themselves, "Let's not tear it into pieces. Instead, let's throw dice to see who gets to keep it." This fulfilled an ancient prophecy from the scriptures that said, "They divided my clothes among themselves and cast lots for my garments." And that is exactly what the guards did.

Standing bravely near the cross were Jesus' mother, Mary, along with her sister, another Mary who was married to Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus looked down and saw His mother standing nearby, right next to His closest friend and disciple, He said to His mother, "Dear woman, look—here is your son." Then He looked at His disciple and said, "And look—here is your mother." From that very day, that loyal friend took Mary into his own home to care for her.

Knowing that His earthly mission was fully accomplished—and so the ancient scriptures would be completely fulfilled—Jesus whispered, "I am thirsty."

A jar of sour wine was sitting nearby. The soldiers soaked a sea sponge in the bitter liquid, stuck it on the end of a long hyssop branch, and lifted it up to His lips.

As soon as Jesus tasted the wine, He declared, "It is finished!" Then He bowed His head peacefully and breathed His last breath.

Because it was the day before the Sabbath—and an incredibly special, holy Sabbath at that—the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left hanging on the crosses over the weekend. They begged Pilate to order the soldiers to break the prisoners' legs so they would die quickly and could be taken down.

The soldiers came and broke the legs of the two criminals hanging on either side of Jesus. But when they walked up to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not bother breaking His legs.

Instead, one of the soldiers thrust a sharp spear deep into His side, and a sudden stream of blood and water poured straight out.

The person who is writing this account witnessed it with his own eyes, and his testimony is entirely true. He knows he is telling the exact truth so that you, too, will believe. These terrible events happened just as the scriptures had predicted: not a single bone in His body would be broken, and people would gaze upon the one they had pierced.

Later, a man named Joseph from the town of Arimathea quietly went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. Joseph had been a secret follower of Jesus because he was terrified of the Jewish leaders. Pilate gave him permission, so Joseph went and gently took the body down.

Nicodemus—the same man who had once visited Jesus secretly at night—joined Joseph, bringing a massive, hundred-pound mixture of sweet-smelling myrrh and aloes.

Together, the two men carefully wrapped the body of Jesus in clean linen cloths mixed with the fragrant spices, following the traditional Jewish burial customs.

Right near the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a quiet, private garden, and inside the garden was a brand-new tomb carved into the rock where no one had ever been buried before.

Because it was rapidly getting dark and the Sabbath rest was about to begin—and because the tomb was conveniently close by—they laid Jesus to rest right there.

JOHN 20

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark outside, Mary Magdalene walked to the tomb. When she got there, she was shocked to see that the heavy stone sealing the entrance had been rolled away!

Panicking, she sprinted back to Simon Peter and Jesus's closest friend, the other disciple. "They've taken the Lord out of the tomb!" she gasped out of breath. "We have no idea where they've put him!"

Hearing this, Peter and the other disciple took off running toward the tomb together. The other disciple was faster and outran Peter, arriving at the cave first. He peeked inside and saw the linen burial cloths lying on the ground, but he did not go inside.

Right behind him came Simon Peter. Panting, Peter marched straight into the tomb. He saw the linen wraps lying there and tucked neatly by itself in a corner was the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus's head.

Finally, the other disciple stepped inside too. He looked, and suddenly, it all started to make sense—he believed! They had not yet understood from the scriptures that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Satisfied, the two men headed back home.

But Mary stayed behind, standing outside the tomb, crying her eyes out. Through her tears, she bent down to look inside one more time.

To her absolute amazement, she saw two glowing angels dressed in white! One was sitting where Jesus's head had rested, and the other where his feet had been.

"Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked.

"Because they've taken my Lord away," she sobbed, "and I don't know where they've put him."

Wiping her tears, she turned around and saw a man standing there. It was Jesus, but the morning shadows were playing tricks on her eyes, and she did not recognize him at all.

"Ma'am, why are you crying?" the man asked gently. "Who are you looking for?"

Thinking he was just the gardener, she pleaded, "Oh, sir! If you're the one who carried him off, please tell me where you put him, and I'll go get him."

Then the man simply said her name: "Mary."

She spun around and gasped, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

Jesus told her, "Don't hold onto me yet, because I haven't gone up to my Father. Instead, find my brothers and tell them: 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

Mary dashed off to find the disciples, bursting into the greatest news ever: "I've seen the Lord! And here is what he told me!"

Later that Sunday evening, the disciples were hiding out together behind locked doors because they were terrified of the local leaders. Suddenly, Jesus appeared right in the middle of the room and said, "Peace be with you."

To prove it was really him, he showed them his hands and his side. The room instantly erupted with joy as they realized the Lord was truly back!

Jesus smiled and repeated, "Peace be with you. Just as the Father sent me, I am now sending you."

Then he gently breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. If you don't, they remain."

Now, Thomas—one of the twelve disciples, nicknamed the Twin—had not been there when Jesus visited.

When the others excitedly told him, "We've seen the Lord!", Thomas crossed his arms and shook his head. "No way," he said. "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, stick my finger into them, and shove my hand into his side, I refuse to believe it."

A week later, the disciples were gathered in the house again, and this time Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked tight, Jesus suddenly appeared right in the middle of them and said, "Peace be with you."

He walked right over to Thomas and said, "Go ahead. Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and start believing."

Thomas dropped to his knees, completely overwhelmed, and cried out, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus looked at him and said, "You believe because you've seen me with your own eyes? How happy—and blessed—are those who have never seen me with their eyes yet believe anyway!"

Jesus performed many other amazing miracles in front of his disciples that are not even written down in this book. But the stories you *have* read here were written so that you would believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—and that by believing, you would have true, everlasting life because of who he is.

JOHN 21

Later, Jesus appeared to His friends again by the Sea of Tiberias.
Here is how it happened:

Simon Peter, Thomas (who was called the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were all hanging out together.

Simon Peter stood up and said, "I'm going fishing."

The others replied, "We'll come with you!"

They all jumped into a boat and set sail immediately, but they fished all night and did not catch a single thing.

As the sun began to rise, Jesus stood right there on the shoreline, though the disciples did not realize it was Him yet.

Jesus called out across the water, "Hey friends, do you have any food?"

"No," they shouted back sadly.

Then Jesus gave them a tip: "Drop your net on the right side of the boat, and you'll catch some!"

They followed His advice, and suddenly the net was so stuffed with fish they could not even pull it back into the boat!

The disciple whom Jesus loved immediately whispered to Peter, "It's the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard those words, he quickly wrapped his outer garment around himself—since he had been working in just his under-tunic—and jumped right into the water to swim ashore.

The rest of the disciples followed closely behind in the little boat, towing the heavy net full of fish just two hundred cubits away from land.

When they stepped out onto the beach, they were greeted by a warm charcoal fire with fish already grilling on it, alongside freshly baked bread.

Jesus smiled and said, "Bring some of the fish you just caught."

Simon Peter waded back out and hauled the heavy net ashore. It was crammed with one hundred and fifty-three huge fish! And the amazing thing was, even with so many heavy fish, the net did not tear once.

"Come and eat," Jesus invited them.

None of the disciples dared to ask, "Who are you?" because deep down, they all knew it was the Lord. Jesus stepped forward, picked up the bread, handed it to them, and did the same with the fish.

This was the third time Jesus had appeared to His disciples after coming back to life from the dead.

After they had finished eating a wonderful breakfast, Jesus looked right at Simon Peter and asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these other things?"

Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You."

Jesus told him, "Then take care of my little lambs."

A moment later, Jesus asked him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "You know I love You."

Jesus said, "Then take care of my sheep."

Then Jesus asked him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter felt a bit sad because Jesus had asked him three times. He answered, "Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You."

Jesus smiled gently and said, "Then take care of my sheep. Let me tell you a secret, Peter: when you were a young man, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, someone else will tie your clothes, and they will take you where you'd rather not go."

Jesus said this to hint at the way Peter would one day die and bring glory to God. Then He looked at Peter and gave a simple command: "Follow me."

Peter turned around and noticed the disciple Jesus loved following behind them—the same one who had leaned close to Jesus at supper and asked who would betray Him.

Seeing him, Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, what's going to happen to this guy?"

Jesus answered, "If I want him to stay alive until I return, what business is that of yours? You just follow me!"

Because of this conversation, a rumor spread among the believers that this specific disciple would never die. But Jesus did not say he

would not die; He simply said, "If I want him to stay until I return, what is that to you?"

This is the very disciple who watched all these things happen and wrote them down. And we all know that his story is completely true!

Jesus did so many other amazing things, too. If every single one of them were written down in detail, I suppose the entire world would not have enough room for all the books that would need to be made. Amen.