



Father of Love Stories

Bible Stories for Children
Volume 1

The Life of Jesus

Marlise Schneider

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Dedicated to Lukas and Sarah, my precious children.

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Introduction

Children are one of the most precious gifts God has entrusted to us. In their coming into our world, we begin to become aware of all the needs our little ones have, of which we were previously so ignorant. It is our responsibility to bring them to the feet of Christ, so that they may know God. It is important that they be introduced to the truths that we understand to be distinctive and key to the experience of God's people in these last days. All the biblical stories presented to them must be framed within the precious principles with which God has blessed us and that we hold so dear.

Marlise, in her quest to bless our children Lukas and Sarah, began taking notes on the stories she told our kids. Soon, as those notes multiplied, it became clear that they could also be of great value to all those parents who faced similar challenges. Thus, these notes were transformed into a project, of which this is the first volume. Perhaps the reader might ask, why is the first volume of a series of Bible stories about the life of Jesus? Why not begin in chronological order? Why not begin with the story of creation? Since all the biblical stories have the Father and the Son as their central protagonists, would it not be more convenient to introduce them directly and first?

Since Christ reveals the Father (Matthew 11:27), and he who has seen Christ has seen the Father (John 14:9), the need to first present the beauty of the person of Christ became apparent, so that in seeing Christ, our children may know God. And by knowing Him, they will love Him, for He is love (1 John 4:8). Thus, we desire our kids to have a relationship with God based on knowing our heavenly Father through Christ. That is why we start with the life of Jesus before addressing other Bible stories.

In preparing these stories, special attention has been given to ensure that they are based on the understanding of the covenants according to the 1888 Message. Man is unaware of the depth of his sinfulness, his self-sufficiency, and the degree of distrust he has of God. These realities are manifested throughout many biblical stories, as well as the constant longing of God that all mankind, from Adam and Eve until our days, would accept the new covenant. This covenant of God consists in receiving and treasuring His word, in receiving God's forgiveness and in receiving Christ. The new covenant experience is expressed most clearly in the life of Christ.

Each lesson contains a Bible memory verse, which in the author's view, presents the essence of the story. Additionally, the Bible reference is provided for each story, as well as a reference to Ellen G. White writings for those who would like to further look into it. DA refers to *Desire of Ages*, AA to *Acts of the Apostles* and COL to *Christ's Object Lessons*. At the end of the book a thematic index has been provided to make it easier to find specific stories.

It is Marlise's desire that this material will be as much of a blessing to you and your family as the preparation of this material has been to our family.

May God bless you in being parents and teachers of those to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs.

Daniel E. Bernhardt

1. Baby John

***“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”
Luke 1:37***

*Luke 1:5-25, 57-80
DA chapters 4 and 10*

400 years had passed since the last prophet had spoken to Israel. The Israelites were now under the Romans. They had lost their kingdom because of their disobedience to God’s laws, and now they had to obey the Roman Emperor in everything. Yet they were still allowed to live in their land, and to worship their God.

The Israelites were waiting for a hero from God to fix everything – a man they called the Messiah. Some people studied the Scriptures more deeply than others, and these people understood that very soon, the Messiah would come as a baby. One of these men was Zechariah. He was one of the priests, and he had been studying the Scriptures and praying for the coming of the Messiah for a long time.

One day it was his turn to minister in the sanctuary. He did this twice a year. While he was standing before the golden altar in the Holy Place, he saw an angel. Zechariah was afraid.

“Don’t be afraid,” reassured the angel, “God has heard your prayers, and your wife Elizabeth will give you a son, and you will call him John. And you will have joy and gladness.” The angel told him more: “He will be great in the sight of the Lord, he will not drink alcohol, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will join families together again, and he will prepare people for the coming of the Lord (the Messiah they were waiting for!).”

This was such wonderful news! Elizabeth, who was too old to have children, and who had never had any, would now have a baby! And this baby would do such an important work for God! But Zechariah had a hard time believing it. “How can this be?” he asked, “My wife and I are already old.” Didn’t Zechariah remember that Abraham and Sarah had also had a baby when they were old?

The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and He sent me to tell you this good news. Now you will not be able to speak until the baby is born, because you did not believe me.” Because Zechariah didn’t believe this message from God, God couldn’t protect him, and for a few months he lost the ability to speak.

Zechariah had forgotten that we can only do things with the help of God, and that for God, everything is possible. We can’t do anything of ourselves. For nine months he would be reminded of this, because all that time, he wouldn’t be able to speak a word. Without God’s help, he couldn’t even speak by himself.

While Zechariah was with the angel in the Holy Place, the people were waiting for him outside. They were worried because he was taking so long. Had something happened to him in the Sanctuary? They were so relieved when they saw him come out! When Zechariah came out of the Tabernacle, he was supposed to pray for the people, but he couldn’t speak a word. The people saw that his face was shiny, and they understood that something important had happened in the Holy Place. Zechariah quickly wrote down the story so that the people would know what had happened.

Nine months later, Zechariah and Elizabeth’s baby boy was born. When he was eight days old, they made a special party for him. The people wanted the baby to be called Zechariah, like his father. But Elizabeth kept saying, “No, that’s not his name; his name is John.” So the people asked Zechariah, who still couldn’t speak, to write

down the baby's name. "His name is John," wrote Zechariah. Suddenly, Zechariah was able to speak again. He praised God and prophesied about his son's future work. All the people around them were amazed, and they could see that John was a very special baby.

Zechariah and Elizabeth raised their little boy John in the desert, away from the towns and the many bad influences. But the people knew about him and the miracle of his birth. They were always reminded that, with God's help, everything is possible; but of ourselves, we aren't able to do anything. Will you trust God today, and let Him help you?

2. Mary Believes God's Words

***"Behold the handmaid of the Lord;
be it unto me according to thy word." Luke 1:38***

Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1: 18-25

DA chapter 10

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant with Baby John, the angel Gabriel came to a young woman called Mary. The angel had a very joyful message for Mary: "You are highly favored, and the Lord is with you; you are blessed among women." When the angel saw that Mary was a bit troubled, he reassured her: "Don't be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will become pregnant, and you will give birth to a baby boy. His name will be Jesus. He will be great; He will be called the Son of the Highest, and God will give Him the throne of David. His kingdom will never end."

Mary listened carefully, and then politely asked, "How will this be? I am not married yet." The angel explained, "The Holy Spirit will

come to you, and the baby will be called the Son of God.” The angel also told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was already pregnant with Baby John even though she was too old to have a baby. “For with God nothing shall be impossible,” the angel assured her.

Mary gladly accepted what the angel told her. She answered the angel, “I am God’s servant. Let it be as you have said.” Then the angel left.

Mary traveled to Judah where Elizabeth and Zechariah lived, and spent a few months with them. She knew they would understand what was happening to her. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, baby John leaped inside Elizabeth’s tummy. Elizabeth and Mary both praised God. They knew what a wonderful blessing they were being given to be the mothers of such special babies.

But while Elizabeth understood what was happening to Mary, other people did not. One of these people was Joseph, the man who was going to marry Mary. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was grieved. He didn’t want to shame her in front of others, so he decided to quietly cancel the wedding. But while he was thinking about this, he had a dream. In that dream, the angel of God came to him and said, “Joseph, don’t be afraid to make Mary your wife. The baby inside her was given to her by the Holy Spirit. She will have a baby boy, and you will call Him Jesus. He will save His people from their sins. It happened this way to fulfil the prophecies.”

When Joseph woke up, He did what the angel told him. He believed what the angel had said, and he married Mary.

Both Mary and Joseph believed God’s words. They knew that many people would not understand what was happening, and that they would speak badly about them, but they didn’t let that stop them from obeying God. And God blessed them with one of the biggest

blessings that God's followers had been praying for: the coming of Jesus, the prince of Heaven, as a baby on earth. We can also ask God to help us trust Him just like Mary and Joseph did. Sometimes, trusting God will mean doing something that is difficult, or something that others might not understand. But God will help us; He never asks us to do something without giving us all the help we need. He is just waiting to bless us, if only we'll accept His words! Will you accept His words today?

3. Jesus is Born

At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Matthew 11:25

Luke 2: 1-20

DA chapter 4; COL page 83

Mary's tummy was already very big and heavy. Her baby would be born anytime soon. But just then, she and Joseph received the news that they would have to travel to Bethlehem. This was because the Roman government was doing a census. A census is when a government counts all the people in a country. To carry out the census, everyone had to go back to the towns and cities of their ancestors. Since Mary and Joseph were from the family of David, they had to go to Bethlehem.

The trip must have been very uncomfortable for Mary. Women who are pregnant get tired easily. Since they were poor, they didn't have horses or carriages for their trip. Maybe they had a donkey, or maybe they had to walk. The journey took them several days. Most

people did it in around four days, but with Mary pregnant, it must have taken them around a week to do it. So when they finally arrived at Bethlehem, the city was packed with people. They couldn't find any room to sleep in; the inn was completely full. Someone offered them a stable, so they could at least be under a roof. And there, in a stable with animals, Baby Jesus was born. Mary wrapped the baby in some cloths and then used a manger as a crib.

The Son of God was just born in this stable. He was the special baby that Israel had been expecting for hundreds of years, and which the Scriptures told about, but no one except Joseph and Mary were there to welcome Him. But Joseph and Mary were not alone; all the angels were watching. The angels wanted to tell the whole world this good news, but as they searched for believers who might be ready to receive this news, they found very few people. The priests and leaders of the Jews, the ones who knew the Scriptures the best, were not ready. These men would never have accepted a baby who was born in a stable; they wanted a prince in a palace. So the angels looked some more, until they found a group of shepherds who were out watching their sheep that night. These shepherds had read the Scriptures and had been praying for the coming of the Messiah. They were ready to receive the good news!

The shepherds were watching the sheep when suddenly, an angel came to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. The shepherds were afraid, but the angel assured them, "Don't be afraid, I have joyful news! Today in the city of David, a Savior has been born. He is Jesus Christ the Lord! But you need to know that you'll find Him wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

Suddenly the shepherds saw a massive group of angels up in the sky. The angels started singing beautiful praises to God: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and goodwill unto men."

When the beautiful singing was finished and the angels were gone, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to see Jesus. They found Joseph, Mary and the baby in the stable. After this, they told everyone they saw about what they had seen and heard.

Of all the people in Israel, God sent His messenger angels only to a group of shepherds. These shepherds were not preachers or leaders, but they loved God and believed His Word. The leaders and priests of Israel were so proud, and so full of wrong ideas about God, that they were unable to receive the joyful message of the angels. God gives His messages to people who are open to receiving His Word, whether they are important leaders and preachers, or whether they are just ordinary people. We need to ask God for a heart open to His Word, like the shepherds had. Will you ask Him for this today?

4. The Dedication of Jesus

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Luke 2: 21 – 39
DA chapter 5

When Jesus was forty days old, Joseph and Mary took Him to the temple. Every Jewish parent had to dedicate their firstborn baby at the temple. The priest who received them never realized how very special this family was. All the priest could see was that they were poor: they were dressed in very simple clothes and had only

brought two turtledoves, which those with no money brought instead of a lamb.

Just like he did with countless other babies, the priest held baby Jesus up before the altar, gave Him back to His mother, and then wrote “Jesus” on the roll of the firstborn. For him, that was the end of this baby’s dedication.

This moment was truly special. Jesus, the Son of God, was being presented in the temple. The whole temple was all about the Son of God. Every altar, every piece of furniture, every ceremony, all pointed to the Son of God. And now here He was, as a tiny baby, being offered to the world, and the priest didn’t even realize it because he had not been praying or studying the Scriptures carefully.

But someone did notice Jesus. There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon who had been praying for the coming of the Messiah for many years. Some time before, God had told him through the Holy Spirit that he would be able to see the Messiah before he died. That day, Simeon went to the temple – and there he saw Joseph, Mary and the baby, and God let him know who they were.

Joyfully, he walked over to them. The priest had just given the baby back to Mary, and Simeon gently took the baby from her arms. He lifted the baby towards heaven, and he praised God and gave thanks: “O God, what You said has come true! I have seen He who will save us! He will be a light to the foreigners, and He is the glory of our country! Now I can die in peace.”

Then he blessed Mary and Joseph and said, “This boy will cause some to rise and others to fall. He is a miracle from God, but many will be against Him. This is so men’s thoughts can be seen.”

Just then a prophetess called Anna came in. She also gave thanks to God and spoke to everyone she could about the baby. “This is who we have been waiting for!” Anna had been a widow for over eighty years, and she was in the temple every day, praying and fasting. God was also able to show her who baby Jesus was.

God had just sent His Son into the world to become our example and our Redeemer, and very few people noticed His coming. Only those whose hearts were open to God’s Word and His truths were able to receive Jesus at His birth. Let’s ask God to help us to have open hearts and minds to understand His Word and His truth today.

5. The Wise Men

***But as many as received Him,
to them gave He power to become the sons of God,
to them that believe on his name. John 1:12***

*Matthew 2
DA chapter 6*

When Jesus was born, very few people in Israel were ready to receive Him. Very few Israelites had studied the Scriptures properly and were waiting for Him. Yet in faraway lands, there were others who did understand the prophecies, and who were expecting the Messiah. The old holy books said that the Messiah would do great works almost 490 years after the command to rebuild Jerusalem, and it was getting close to that time. Surely Christ the Messiah would be born soon!

There were some rich wise men in a far-off country who wanted with all their hearts to see this child, and they believed God would

give them a sign somehow. One night they saw an unusually bright star in the sky. They remembered a prophecy that said, “there shall come a star out of Jacob...” Because they welcomed the light and wondered what it meant, they were further told in dreams that they were told to go search for the newborn Prince.

They packed rich gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the baby, along with all the things they would need for their long trip to Israel. For many nights they traveled, by faith looking towards the star and following it, until they arrived at Jerusalem.

The wise men began to ask, “Where is this baby, the King of the Jews?” Yet no one seemed to know anything. How surprising this must have been for the wise men! How could the Israelites not know that their king had been born?

King Herod heard about these men. Fear filled him. Would this new baby grow up and take his throne? He would never allow that! King Herod called the priests and asked them to explain the prophecies to him. The priests felt very uncomfortable. They had heard reports of the angels’ visit to the shepherds, but they had rejected it. They were too proud to believe that He would have been born and God would tell lowly shepherds and foreigners, and not them. Because of this, they told Herod as little as possible. But Herod thought that everyone was planning against him to take his power. “Are these priests hiding something from me? Are they hiding the baby? Are they trying to protect this baby, and will they later on do something to me?” Herod wondered.

Then Herod called the Wise Men. “When did you first see the star?” He asked them. He wanted to know how old this baby was. Then he sent them to Bethlehem. “After you’ve found Him, please come back to me, so that I can worship Him, too,” he lied. He didn’t want to worship the baby; he wanted to kill Him.

The wise men followed the star to Bethlehem. The star finally stopped over the house where baby Jesus was. Overjoyed, they worshiped Him, and they left their rich gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh with Mary and Joseph. That night, God gave the wise men a dream, telling them, “Don’t go back to King Herod.” The wise men obeyed God and used a different road to go back to their country.

God also gave a dream to Joseph, “Get up, take Mary and the baby, and go to Egypt. Stay in Egypt until I tell you, because Herod will try to find the baby and kill Him.” Joseph immediately obeyed. They traveled during the night so no one would see them leave.

King Herod waited for some time. When he realized that the wise men weren’t coming back to see him, he was furious. He ordered that all the children who were two years old or less, in Bethlehem and in the places around Bethlehem, had to be killed. If only the Israelites had been praying and studying, they would have received Jesus, Herod would have known that Jesus wasn’t here to take away his throne, and God would have been able to protect the Israelites from this terrible thing that happened. God wanted to keep the Jewish baby boys safe, but He could not, because the Jews pushed God away through their unbelief.

Meanwhile, baby Jesus was safe with his parents in Egypt. They lived in Egypt for a few years, until King Herod died and God told Joseph that it was safe to go back to Israel again. The gifts of the wise men helped Joseph to pay for all the things they needed while traveling to Egypt and living there. How grateful Joseph must have been for the way that God took care of them! After King Herod died, Joseph took his family back to his town in Nazareth, and there Jesus grew up.

The wise men were not Jews, but they listened to God’s Spirit speaking to their hearts, and they believed in Jesus. They followed

what they understood from the Scriptures, and they were true children of God. On the other hand, the arrogant Jewish leaders thought themselves the most honored of God, but even though they had grown up with the Scriptures, they were not ready to receive Jesus because they did not believe. God wants each of us to be His children, and to believe in what He tells us. Will you, like the wise men, believe God?

6. The Boy Jesus

***And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,
and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52***

Luke 2:40, 52

DA chapter 7 and 9

Jesus spent his childhood and youth in Nazareth, a little mountain village. People in other cities thought that Nazareth was poor and some of the people there were wicked. Yet there Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and man.

As a child, Jesus was always willing to help others. From a very young age, He understood that He was here on earth to bless people. He often shared His own water and food with those who needed it, even if that meant He would have nothing to eat. Jesus would encourage anyone who was treated badly by others. He was polite, patient and truthful.

Even though there was a school in his town with Rabbis as teachers, Jesus didn't go to those schools. The teachings in these schools had become corrupt; instead of teaching the truths of the Bible, they

taught their own ideas. Because of this, Jesus learnt the Scriptures at home, with His mother, and He learnt them diligently.

As well as learning the Scriptures, Jesus also studied nature. By studying plants and animals, He gained new ideas on how to explain the teachings of God. Unseen angels were there, helping Him understand the truths of God. When He was older, the Rabbis, and even the older brothers of Jesus from Joseph's first marriage, tried to get Him to study in the schools, but He gently and politely refused. Whenever the Rabbis talked with Jesus about the Scriptures, they could see that Jesus understood the Scriptures even better than the Rabbis themselves did.

All children can learn about God like Jesus did: praying, learning from the Bible, observing nature, and being kind and supportive to others. Angels will be there to help them understand. The more that children learn, the more their characters become like the character of Jesus: beautiful, kind and pure. Jesus was a child, too, and He learned just like any child can grow and learn.

Satan was not happy that Jesus never sinned. He constantly tempted and disturbed Him, but Jesus stayed close to His Father, God, and avoided those temptations. There were wicked things going on in Nazareth, but Jesus never joined in. Whenever He was tempted, Jesus would quote a verse from the Scriptures, and that would help Him to not give in to temptation.

The parents of Jesus were poor, so from an early age, He had to work with them and help them. This actually helped Him to fight temptation, because it kept Him busy. He learnt carpentry with Joseph, and worked carefully, neatly and honestly. This kind of work also made His body strong and healthy.

Even though He was busy and worked hard, Jesus was cheerful. He would often sing Psalms and heavenly songs. Elderly people,

children and animals were drawn to Him and felt comforted by His presence. When He was old enough, He would sometimes read the Scriptures in the Synagogue on the Sabbath, and His words would help the people to understand the verses better. Yet Jesus never tried to be a leader in His town. He was quiet and humble. He never defended Himself when others treated Him badly, but took it patiently.

Each child should remember that Jesus was a boy once, and He obeyed his parents and was humble to learn from God and His elders. With the help of Jesus, each child can develop a beautiful character, just like Jesus did. Will you ask Him for help to develop a character like His?

7. Young Jesus in Jerusalem

***Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;
who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,
despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the
throne of God. Hebrews 12:2***

Luke 2:41-51
DA chapter 8

Every year, Joseph and Mary would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. When Jesus was 12 years old, they took Him with them. Between the ages of 12 and 13, a Hebrew boy stopped being a child and became a youth, and was expected to participate in the feasts.

The journey to Jerusalem took several days, but it was done in large groups. The people enjoyed travelling together. They could talk and

share together. On the way, they would sing Psalms, such as: “Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem... Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.” (Psalm 122:2-7).

During the Passover, Jesus watched all the ceremonies carefully and thoughtfully. While most of the people there did not think about what each of these ceremonies meant anymore, to Jesus each one had a deep meaning. He was so absorbed by what was happening and what He was seeing, that He chose to be alone more than with His parents.

As He watched the offerings and sacrifices, He began to understand that the lamb represented *Him*, and that *He* had been brought to this world to suffer and die for all people, just like that lamb. He realized He was also given by God to be the unleavened bread and the first fruits, that there might be a much greater harvest than people realized – the bringing together of all peoples to God. He remembered the Scriptures He had learnt, and began to understand His mission on earth. God helped Jesus to understand all these things.

By the temple there was a room in which the Rabbis taught classes. Jesus went in and listened to them. As He listened, He also asked questions. The teachers noticed that Jesus was looking to understand the truth and to get to know God. They also realized that Jesus understood the Scriptures very well. The questions Jesus asked showed the teachers that their own understanding of Scripture was not always correct. They were amazed at the intelligent questions of Jesus. Jesus spoke to them humbly and respectfully. The Rabbis, who were the religious leaders of Israel, were expecting a different Messiah than what God was going to give Israel. Their wrong ideas would lead them, and those who follow them, to disaster. Through Jesus, God was trying to reach the Rabbis, so that they would accept the Son of God and understand the higher destiny of Israel.

Meanwhile, the Feast days were completed, and most of the people began to travel back to their homes from Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary, too, began to travel home. They assumed that Jesus was with some of their friends. They traveled for a whole day, and in the evening, they realized that Jesus was not with them, and that He wasn't with any of their friends, either.

Mary and Joseph were desperate. How could they have left without Jesus? They returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. After 3 days, they found Him in the temple, speaking with the teachers. "Son, why did you do this to us?" Mary asked Jesus, "Your father and I were so worried looking for you!"

But Jesus had only been doing what He had to do; He was the Son of God, and He had been spending all His time in the temple. It was Joseph and Mary who had lost sight of Him and left without Him. Jesus gently answered His mother, "Didn't you know that I had to be doing my Father's business?" As He said this, He pointed upward. He now showed that He understood that His true Father was God, and not Joseph.

Yet, when it was time to go, Jesus went back to Nazareth with His parents. He was obedient to them and helped them in everything. He kept on living with them for several years, waiting patiently and quietly for God to tell Him when He should start His ministry. As He waited, He kept on studying the Scriptures and thinking about them. He also worked as a carpenter. Even after knowing that He was the Son of God, He was still gentle, quiet and humble, and did not try to become a leader, not even in His own village. He was simply a blessing to everyone around Him.

Joseph and Mary never forgot the day they lost Jesus. They had been given a duty by God to watch over this special child, and they had not done it. They lost sight of Him for one day, and it took them

three days to find Him again. They then blamed Jesus when it was them that had forgotten Him! It's the same with us. If we let go of Jesus, even if for a short time, it can take a long time to feel close to Him again – and then we get upset at Jesus for not being there for us! Let's always look unto Jesus, and not lose sight of Him!

8. John in the Desert

Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Matthew 3:2

Luke 1:80; 3:1-18; Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8
DA chapter 10

Zechariah and Elizabeth were truly grateful to have baby John. His birth had been a miracle, because they were already too old to have children. Zechariah and Elizabeth followed all the instructions that the angel had given them. They fed John the right foods. They taught him the Scriptures from when he was very little, and they didn't send him to the schools of the Rabbis, because the Rabbis were teaching wrong things there. They also lived near the wilderness, away from people, so that John would be able to learn more from the nature around him, and less from people who might lead him to do wrong things. John grew strong and healthy, and with a beautiful character. The way his parents raised him helped prepare him to do the work that God wanted him to do.

When John grew up, he lived a simple life. He wore clothes made from camel's hair, and a leather sash around his waist. This is the way prophet Elijah, from the Old Testament, had dressed 900 years before the time of John. He also ate the food he could find in the desert: locusts and wild honey, and he drank pure water. He was not interested in riches or fame. He just wanted to do God's will.

Even though he lived in the desert, John would go and meet people and speak to them. Once people began to hear him, they began to come to him in large groups. The people were eager to hear his message. He had to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. And he knew that when the people met the Messiah, they would feel how sinful they were, because the presence of Jesus helps us to see our sins more clearly. He told the people, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." If the people began to confess their sins and be sorry for them, they would be ready to love Jesus. If they refused to leave their sins, they would end up hating Jesus.

John invited the people to repent, and he baptized all those who did. By baptizing them, he was helping them to see that they were being cleansed from sin. He told the tax collectors to always be honest, and the soldiers to not be violent. Yet he realized that not everyone who came to be baptized was really sorry for their sins. There were priests who came to him just because they wanted the people to like them, and they wanted the new Messiah to become their friend, but they did not plan to leave their sins. John warned these men of the danger they were in. He tried to help them see that God needed to change their hearts. Anyone who does not allow the Spirit of God to help them improve their character, will not feel comfortable in the presence of God, and will not be able to live in Heaven. This is why John the Baptist spoke so much about the character of God's followers. He told the people that if they were part of God's kingdom, they would be kind, gentle, humble, truthful, and not violent.

Many people listened to John and followed him. John always reminded those people that someone greater than he would come. This greater person would be the Messiah, and when He came, the people should follow Him instead of John. He told the people that the Messiah would be so holy that he, John, didn't even feel worthy of tying His sandals.

The teachings of John to the people are also important to us today. John was helping the people to be ready for the first coming of Jesus. But his message can also help us get ready for the second coming of Jesus. We need to repent of our sins, and look to Jesus and follow Him, just like John encouraged the people to do. Will you accept this invitation?

9. Baptism of Jesus

And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matthew 3:17

Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22.

DA chapter 11

Jesus heard about John the Baptist and what he was teaching the people. Because He had studied the prophecies of Daniel, He knew that it was time to leave the carpenter shop and begin His mission. Jesus said good-bye to His mother and went to where John the Baptist was preaching. Jesus was now thirty years old.

Even though Jesus and John were cousins, they had never met each other, talked together, or visited each other in their homes. Everything they did was because God told them to do it, and not because they had made plans with each other.

Jesus arrived to the River Jordan, where John was baptizing people, and He asked John to baptize Him. But when John saw Him, He could see how pure and noble Jesus was. “Why do you come to me to be baptized? I need to be baptized by you!” John exclaimed. He knew that Jesus had no sins to repent from, and no sinful life to

bury under the waters, the way people do when they are baptized. But Jesus gently said to him, "Let it be this way; we need it done to fulfil all righteousness." Jesus wanted to be our example and to show us how to live. If we want to give our lives to God, we need to be baptized, just like Jesus was baptized. John understood, and he agreed to baptize Jesus.

As soon as Jesus came out of the waters, He bowed down at the river bank to pray. He understood how difficult it would be to convince people of God's love and of the ways of His kingdom, and He prayed for power to do this, and for people's hearts to be open to God. Just then, God answered His prayer. The heavens were opened, down shown bright beams of light, and a glowing dovelike form came down upon the head of Jesus. This dovelike form represented the character of Jesus; He is meek and gentle, just like doves are.

Not everyone who was there was able to see this special descending light – only those who believed John's message could see it-, but they could feel that something important was happening. They could see that Jesus' face was shining, and they watched quietly. From the open heavens, a voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God the Father said this to Jesus, to strengthen Him in His mission, and to remind us all that, just like He loves His beloved Son, He also loves us, because He sent us His own Son. We are His beloved children, too.

John saw and heard everything. Pointing to Jesus, he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." From this day onwards, John did all he could to lead the people to Jesus, and away from himself. He had found the Messiah to whom the people needed to go. Would the people believe that Jesus was God's Son, and follow Him? Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son? Do you choose to follow Him today?

10. Tempted in the Desert

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Matthew 4:4

*Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13.
DA chapters 12 and 13*

After Jesus was baptized, He was led by God's Spirit to the wilderness. He spent forty days in the desert, praying to be prepared for His work among the people. During those forty days, He didn't eat or drink anything.

At the end of the forty days, Jesus was extremely weak, because He hadn't eaten anything for so long. Satan decided this was a good time to go to Jesus and tempt Him. When people are hungry and weak, they sin much more easily. If Satan could just get Jesus to sin, then the whole world would be lost forever. He had tried to make Jesus sin throughout His childhood and youth, but Jesus had never given in to temptation.

Satan approached Jesus. There were round stones all around them, and they looked like bread. Satan knew that Jesus was very hungry, so he suggested, "If you are the Son of God, then command these stones to be turned into bread." There was nothing wrong with wanting to turn stones into bread; later on in His ministry, Jesus provided wine and food for people. But right now, this was not the right thing to do. By turning stones into bread, Jesus would only be blessing Himself, not others. He had come to be a blessing to others, and not to serve Himself. But most importantly, Satan was asking Him to turn the stones into bread so that He could prove that He was the Son of God. Jesus didn't need to prove anything! God had already said that Jesus was His beloved Son. Jesus only had to

believe God's words. Trying to prove anything would mean that He didn't trust God's words, and that would be a sin. Jesus refused. He used a Bible verse to answer Satan: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

Satan tried again. This time, he took Jesus up to the highest part of the temple. He tempted Jesus by using a Bible verse. He said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. Because the Scriptures say that God shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you." Jesus knew that God's angels could take care of Him if He jumped down. But jumping down would have meant doing something dangerous just to prove that God could protect Him; Jesus knew He shouldn't do anything if God hadn't told Him to do it, even if God could protect Him. And also, jumping down was not going to bless anyone. And if Jesus jumped down just so others could see that God protected Him and that He was God's Son, then He would be sinning. He didn't need to prove to anyone that He was God's Son; God had already said it, and He just needed to trust in God's words. Again, Jesus answered with the Scriptures: "It is written: You shall not tempt the Lord your God." He refused to "tempt" God to protect Him from something He did not need to do in the first place.

Satan tried one more time. He took Jesus to the top of a high mountain. From there, he showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world. He showed Jesus the beautiful buildings, the fields, the lush forests, the peaceful lakes, and all the beauty of the earth. Of course, he made sure that the ugly parts were hidden: the dirt, the mess, the sick people, the crimes, the violence. He told Jesus, "I will give you all this, because it is mine. If you will worship me, I will give it to you." Jesus knew that He would have difficult times ahead trying to teach people who wouldn't listen and that He would suffer greatly, and Satan was offering Him a shortcut. But it was the wrong kind of shortcut. Jesus could only save the world if He could show people

what God's character was like; and to do that, He would have to patiently endure, so people could see that God didn't want to hurt them. Actually, because they were influenced by Satan, it was the people that wanted to hurt God! Satan never wanted to accept that Jesus was God's Son. Jesus again answered with a Bible text, and He also sent Satan away. "Get behind me, Satan. It is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, and only Him will you serve."

Satan had done his best to make Jesus doubt that He was God's Son, but he had failed. He had tried his hardest to make Jesus sin, but he had not been able to. Jesus had held on to God's words, and by quoting the Scriptures, He had been able to stop the temptations. As soon as Satan left, Jesus fell to the ground, exhausted. The temptations had been terribly difficult to bear, and He was very weak. God sent angels to care for Him and strengthen Him. They brought Him food, water, and encouraging words. "Your Father loves You, and all of Heaven is overjoyed that you didn't give in to those terrible temptations," they said to Him. After He felt better, He was ready to work among people, blessing them and teaching them about the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was able to overcome temptation and avoid sinning. And whatever He has done, He wants to do for us. He can help us overcome temptation, too. All we need to do is ask Him for His help. Will you?

11. The Twelve Disciples

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. John 15:16

Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; 3:13-19; Luke 5: 27-28; 6:12-16; John 1:19-51.

DA chapters 14, 28 and 30

Who was John the Baptist? The people wondered. Even the leaders of Israel came to ask John if he was the Messiah. John answered them truthfully, “No, I’m not the Messiah. I’m here to prepare people for His coming.”

Jesus had just spent forty days in the desert, and now He came back to the Jordan River, where John was preaching. He quietly joined the people who were listening to him. As soon as John saw Jesus again, he pointed to Him and said to the people, “Behold, the lamb that takes away the sins of the world!” It was his job to lead the people to Jesus. But when the people looked at Jesus, many were disappointed. He didn’t look like a shiny, mighty king. Why did this man look so humble? Could he overthrow the hated Romans?

Jesus was not there to become a powerful leader; He was there to show people what God is like, and what His kingdom is like, but the people didn’t understand this. Even John the Baptist was confused; he also thought that the Messiah would be full of power and glory. When he read the Scriptures, he had read about the second coming of Jesus, and confused it with the first coming. Yet he still believed that Jesus was the Messiah, because he remembered God’s words at the baptism.

Andrew and John were two disciples of John the Baptist. When they heard John saying that Jesus was the lamb of God, they followed Jesus. Jesus kindly asked them, “What are you looking for?” They

answered, "Rabbi, where do you live?" This meant that they wanted to spend time with Jesus, and learn from Him. So Jesus said, "Come and see." He took them to where He was staying, and they spent the day with Him. Andrew and John were the first disciples of Jesus; they could see that Jesus had a beautiful character, and they wanted to follow Him.

Andrew wanted to share his happiness at having found the Messiah. He ran to his brother Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" Simon rushed to meet Jesus. Jesus lovingly told him, "You are Simon, but you will be called Peter." Peter means stone, and that became his name from then on.

The next day, Jesus went to Galilee and met Philip. He said to him, "Follow Me." Philip obeyed Jesus and became His disciple, too. Then Philip went to his friend Nathanael, who was also called Bartholomew. Nathanael had already seen Jesus when John the Baptist pointed to Him, and he wasn't sure whether Jesus could be the Messiah. He went to a quiet garden to pray, that God could help Him know whether Jesus really was the Messiah. While Nathanael was praying, Philip found him and said, "We have found Him. He's Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" asked Nathanael. Nazareth was not a good town. But Philip simply said, "Come and see!" Nathanael agreed to meet Jesus, so he could decide for himself whether Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus saw Nathanael coming and said, "Here is a man in whom there are no lies!" "From where do you know me?" Nathanael asked, surprised. Jesus replied, "I knew you before Philip called you, when you were praying under the fig tree." Nathanael believed in Jesus now, and he became his disciple, too.

As the weeks went by, Jesus called more men to follow Him and be His disciples. He was joined by James the brother of John, whose father was called Zebedee, Thomas Didymus, James the younger and his brother Jude, also called Thaddeus or Lebbeus, and Simon

the Zealot. Most of these men were poor and humble, and several of them were fishermen.

Then there was Judas; he asked to join Jesus as His disciple, and Jesus accepted him. Judas was more educated than most of the disciples, and they liked it that he was joining them. Jesus also invited Levi-Matthew to follow him. Levi-Matthew was a tax collector, and he knew that nobody liked tax collectors. He was so happy when Jesus came to him and said, "Follow Me," that he instantly left everything and followed Jesus, even though it meant that he might lose all his riches.

The day came for Jesus to ordain His disciples. To ordain means to give a special blessing to them, that they might be able to preach and heal. Jesus called them to Him, knelt in the middle and placed His hands on their heads while He prayed, dedicating them to be His ministers, or His apostles. Jesus loved His disciples deeply. It made Him glad that they had decided to follow Him. He knew they had character defects, but He also knew that, if they allowed God's Spirit to work in their hearts, their characters would become beautiful, and they would be able to do wonderful things for the kingdom of God, with God's help.

Jesus calls each of us to follow Him, too. Will you accept Him and follow Him?

12. The Sermon on the Mount

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33

Matthew 5, 6, 7.

DA chapter 31

Jesus had just ordained His disciples. He took the twelve men to the quiet seaside, where they found a comfortable spot to sit and talk. There was so much that Jesus wanted to tell them! As Jesus spoke to them, other people saw Him and decided to join them, too. Jesus never sent anyone away who wanted to be near Him, so He allowed all these people to listen as well. But soon there were so many people there, that there was not enough room for them all!

Calmly, Jesus stood up and walked over to the mountainside. In this larger space, He could sit down and be seen and heard by the whole crowd. His disciples sat around Him, and the rest of the people found comfortable spots, too. They were eager to listen to what this wonderful teacher had to tell them. On this mountainside, Jesus taught what we call the *Sermon on the Mount*. In this sermon, He spoke to the people about the Kingdom of God and how we can become true children of God.

What are the children of God supposed to be like? Jesus taught, “If you feel poor in spirit, you are blessed, and the Kingdom of God is yours.” The first thing we need is to feel that we don’t have anything good in us; we are sinners, poor in spirit, and we need God. God is the source of our goodness, and we are blessed if we realize we need more of His spirit. Jesus continued, “You are blessed if you repent and feel sad for your sins. You will be comforted.”

Then Jesus explained what the character of God's followers is like. It is His character, too. "You are blessed if you are meek; the earth will be yours. You are blessed if you really want God's righteousness; God will give it to you. You are blessed if you are merciful; you will be treated with mercy. You are blessed if you have a pure heart; you will see God. You are blessed if you are a peacemaker; you will be called a child of God."

The people listened, amazed. Jesus was telling them that true happiness came from receiving a beautiful character from God. The people had always believed that true happiness came from being rich, famous and important. But those things could never bring them happiness; only God could.

Then Jesus explained that God's true followers will be mistreated by people who refuse to follow God. "You are blessed if you are persecuted because of me," Jesus said, "You will have a great reward in heaven. Remember that the prophets before you were also persecuted." How do we react when people treat us badly? If we respond the way Jesus did, then others will be able to know God and realize that they're sinners and need God's healing.

Then Jesus said, "My followers are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world." What happens if you put salt on food? It tastes better, doesn't it? In the same way, people should notice that there is something lovely in God's children. What happens when there's a light turned on? Everyone can see it. You can't hide light, even if it's small. In the same way, God's children can't hide the love of Jesus from others; people will notice it.

Jesus continued, "I have not come to destroy or change God's law; I've come to fulfil it." Did you know that we can break God's law simply by thinking wrong thoughts? Jesus explained that if you hate someone, it is as if you are killing that person. Keeping God's law means not only doing the right things, but also thinking the right

things. Jesus invited the people, saying, “Be perfect, just like your Father in heaven is perfect.” God, through His Spirit, can help us to keep His law perfectly.

The people were used to seeing the Pharisees act proudly whenever they gave offerings or fasted. The Pharisees made sure that everyone knew what they were doing. But Jesus said, “Do these things so that only your Father in heaven knows about it.” We should do things out of love for God, and not because we want other people to think we are so wonderful.

“Don’t spend your time gathering riches on earth,” Jesus continued, “Things on earth get destroyed or stolen. Spend your time gathering the riches of heaven, and make the things of God the most important to you.” There’s nothing wrong with having money and nice things. Riches can be a big blessing. But if they become more important to us than the kingdom of God, then they are like idols, and cause us to trust in them instead of God. “Your heart will be where your treasure is,” said Jesus.

Then Jesus assured the people that they could rely on God to take care of them. “Don’t worry about your food,” He said, “Doesn’t God care for the birds of the air? You’re more important than a bird; God will take care of you. Don’t worry about your clothing. If God clothed the grass of the field with beautiful lilies, won’t He clothe you as well? God knows what you need. Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and He will give you all these things as well. Don’t worry about tomorrow.” Jesus also said, “If you ask, you will receive. Don’t you, who are sinful, love to give good things to your children? Then how much more does your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?”

Jesus said that it’s important to love each other and not be angry at others. “Before you bring an offering to God, make sure you are at peace with your brother,” He taught. Later, He said, “Don’t judge

others, or you will end up being judged in the same way.” We only need to love and accept people, not judge them.

Then Jesus asked, “Can you get grapes out of thorns, or figs out of thistles?” Of course not! Only a fig tree can give figs. People are the same; they will be known by their fruits, or their character.

“Those who do my Father’s will shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” said Jesus. And how can we do God’s will? By depending on Jesus, who is the Rock. “If a house is built on rock, it will be strong even when storms hit,” said Jesus, “But if a house is built on sand, it will fall when storms come.” We need to depend on Jesus, just like the house that is built on the rock.

The people were amazed at what they heard. This sounded so different from what the Pharisees and priests taught, but Jesus taught clearly, and they could see that it was the truth. Now it was up to them to think about these wonderful things and to choose to accept them. We have this choice, too. Do you choose to seek God’s kingdom first, to allow God to do His will in your life?

13. Water Turns to Wine

***His mother saith unto the servants,
Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. John 2:5***

John 2:1-11
DA chapter 15

Mary was overjoyed. There would soon be a wedding in Cana, a town close to Nazareth, and her son Jesus would be coming to this

wedding with His disciples. She was very happy to see Jesus again, and to hear about what He had been doing since He left Nazareth.

During the wedding feast, Mary heard that there was a problem. "The wine is finished!" someone told her. "Oh, no!" she thought. It was a great shame on the bridegroom's family if they ran out of grape juice, because it was really important to have enough food and drink for all the guests.

"I know Jesus can help!" thought Mary. She also thought that maybe, if Jesus made wine for this family, the people might want to crown Him king. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Quickly she went to Jesus and said to Him, "They have no wine."

Jesus looked at His mother kindly. He gently let her know that He could only do this if God wanted Him to do it. He would not do something against God's will, not even if His own mother wanted Him to. He would do God's will first. But Mary believed that Jesus could perform a miracle, so God allowed Him to do it, to strengthen the faith of Mary and of Jesus' disciples.

Mary went to the servants and said to them, "Do everything that Jesus tells you to do." Jesus looked and saw six large stone waterpots. He told the servants, "Fill those waterpots up with water." The servants filled each jar up to the brim, until they were completely full.

"Draw it out now, and serve it to the ruler of the feast," commanded Jesus. The servants did exactly as Jesus had said, but they didn't tell the ruler of the feast how they had gotten this wine. When the ruler tasted it, he went over to the bridegroom and said, "Most people serve the best wine first, and when the people have had enough, they then serve the lower quality wine. But you've saved the best wine for the end!" He didn't know where the wine

came from, but he could see that it was better than the wine they'd had before.

God honored the faith of Mary, and allowed Jesus to do this miracle. Because of Mary's faith, the servants obeyed Jesus completely, and the guests had plenty of wine to last for the whole feast. Jesus' disciples were also amazed at what had happened, and their faith in Jesus was strengthened.

This was the first miracle of Jesus. Through this miracle, He strengthened the faith of His followers. By performing a miracle in a wedding, He showed them that God cares about families and their happiness. If we follow Jesus, He can bring joy to our families, too. We just need to trust and follow Him. Will you?

14. Cleansing the Temple

***But the Lord is in his holy temple:
let all the earth keep silence before him. Habakkuk 2:20***

John 2:12-22
DA chapter 16

It was time for the Passover again, so Jesus and His disciples travelled to Jerusalem for the feast. People came to Jerusalem from all over Israel, and even from other countries, to worship God during this special time.

Something sad had happened in the temple court: the priests had noticed that all the people who came from far away couldn't bring animals with them for the sacrifices, so they decided to sell these

animals themselves in the temple court. Was this something that the priests needed to do? No, it wasn't. There were other places where people could buy animals. But now the temple court looked like a noisy, dirty marketplace. There was no reverence, and it was impossible to worship God in a place like this. Anyone who came into the temple would hear and smell the animals. They would see people arguing over the expensive prices for the animals. They would hear the clinking of coins. It was difficult to get to the altar, and almost impossible to concentrate and pray. How could anyone worship God in this mess?

With sadness, Jesus looked at what was happening. He found small cords of rope and held them in His hand as He looked at the people with a serious look on His face. The priests and salesmen saw this, and suddenly they felt afraid. They knew that what they were doing was wrong, but they did not want to admit that they were wrong. Instead of repenting and asking Jesus to help them, they began to run out of the temple with their animals. Jesus went over to the tables that were covered with piles of money, and He turned them over, spilling all the coins onto the floor. The money on those tables had been gained by cheating and deceiving people, so it was not right for the priests and salesmen to keep it.

"Take these things away!" commanded Jesus, "Don't turn my Father's house into a marketplace." Jesus did not hurt anyone with the cords He held in His hands, but the guilty men were as afraid as if those cords had been a sword, and they ran out as quickly as they could.

Now the temple was quiet. There were some people who had not run away from Jesus; they watched Him quietly. Now they felt that the temple was a holy place again, because Jesus was in there. He had cleansed the temple from all the noise, confusion and deceit that had been happening there, and now people could come in and worship God again. Jesus gladly stayed and taught the people who

decided to remain and worship. He also healed every sick person who came to Him.

The priests that ran away from Jesus felt terribly ashamed. After a while, they crept back to the temple. They were surprised to hear people singing praises to God and thanking Jesus for healing them. The priests didn't like to see what Jesus was doing. They were not happy that He had shown them that they needed to repent, and they did not like to see that the people loved Jesus so much. They tried to argue with Jesus, but it was clear that He had the authority to clean up the temple.

Jesus, the Messiah, cleansed the temple when He began His ministry. He wanted people to be able to come to the temple and find the presence of God there, and to be blessed. This is why His presence sent away the people and the businesses that were stopping others from being able to worship God.

The Bible also says that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises to also cleanse the temples of our bodies, so that He can live in us and help us live holy lives. Let's ask Him to cleanse the temples of our bodies, and thank Him that He is ready to take away anything that might stop us from being able to get close to God. He will do this if we let Him do it, and if we trust Him.

15. Nicodemus

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3

John 3:1-17

DA chapter 17

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and he was an important Jewish leader. Most of the priests and leaders hated Jesus, but Nicodemus felt differently. He really wanted to meet Jesus and speak with Him. He wasn't sure if Jesus was the Messiah, but he could see there was something special in Jesus. He decided to visit Jesus during the night, so no one would see him and give him trouble.

Jesus gladly received Nicodemus. He knew what Nicodemus needed. Even though this man was an important teacher, he still didn't understand how it is that God saves us.

Jesus told him, "To see the kingdom of God, you need to be born again." *Born again?* Nicodemus was confused. He asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? How can someone go back into his mother's tummy?"

Of course, Jesus didn't mean that we need to turn into babies again! Jesus patiently said to Nicodemus, "Don't be surprised that I say you must be born again. To enter the kingdom of God, your heart needs to be cleansed from sin, and you need the Spirit of God in you, guiding what you do and think. If the Spirit of God is in you, you will do the things of God. If not, you will do the things of this world." Jesus was saying that we need to let the Holy Spirit change our hearts so much that we will act, think and feel like new people – as if we have been born again.

Nicodemus felt uncomfortable. Was Jesus telling him that he needed to change? *“I’ve been a good Pharisee my whole life,”* thought Nicodemus, *“I’ve followed all the rules, and I’ve done all the right things. Why does Jesus say I need to change? Isn’t it enough to follow all the rules?”*

No, it wasn’t enough. None of those things mattered unless God’s Spirit was in his heart. Jesus gently explained to Nicodemus, “Do you know how the Spirit of God works in you? It is similar to the wind; you don’t know where the wind came from, but you can feel it. In the same way, you don’t know how it is that God changes you, but you can see that your character changes little by little. You will notice that each day you are kinder and more loving. This is the work of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus nodded as he began to understand. *“Even though I’ve done many good things, my heart is not pure. I need to be born again,”* he thought. He asked Jesus, “How can these things happen?”

Jesus responded, “Remember when the Israelites were in the desert and the snakes bit them? How were they saved? They were saved by looking at a bronze snake on a pole. By choosing to look there, they showed that they believed in God’s words. I will be hung up in the same way as that bronze snake, so that whoever believes in me can have eternal life. This is how much God loves all human beings: He gave His Son so that, if they believe, they will be saved.”

Nicodemus nodded seriously. All his life, he had gone to the temple to show God how good he was, but now he knew that was useless. From now on, he would go to the temple to learn more about God and His Son. He wanted God’s Spirit to work in him and change his character.

Nicodemus thought carefully about all that Jesus explained to him. For three years, he quietly followed Jesus. But after Jesus died and was raised again, Nicodemus became one of Jesus' strongest followers. He never forgot the special conversation he had with Jesus that night, in which the Savior explained to him how it is that people are saved. Will you, too, let Jesus send His Spirit to your life, to change you? He really wants to do it!

16. The Samaritan Woman

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:14

John 4:1-42

DA chapter 19

Jesus and His disciples arrived at Samaria. *"We won't stay here long,"* the disciples thought. Though both the Jews and Samaritans worshipped God, they fought about *how* and *where* to worship Him. The Jews and Samaritans didn't like each other, so there was no reason to stay.

But Jesus had other plans. They reached a well of water, and Jesus said to His disciples, "Please go and buy some food. I will wait for you here." The hungry disciples gladly went to buy some food.

While Jesus sat waiting at the well, a woman came to draw water from the well. Jesus said to her, "Please give me some water." The woman was surprised. "Why are you asking me for a drink? You're a Jew, and I'm from Samaria!" Why was this Jewish man talking to her? Jews never spoke to Samaritans!

Jesus replied, "If you knew who was talking to you, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman was a bit confused. "Sir, how can you draw water, if you don't have anything to do it with? The well is deep," she said.

Jesus patiently answered, "I'm talking about living water. Whoever drinks water from this well will be thirsty again, but I have water that is everlasting." Jesus was trying to tell her that if she accepted Him, she would feel so satisfied that she wouldn't wish for anything else. The woman said, "Sir, please give me of this water, so that I won't be thirsty anymore and won't need to come and draw water again."

Jesus gently answered, "Go, call your husband, and come back." "I don't have a husband," she replied. "You're right," said Jesus, "Because you've had five husbands, and the man who's with you now is not your husband."

The woman was amazed. How did Jesus know all this? She felt a bit afraid, and didn't want to talk about her sinful life. She wanted to talk about something else. "Sir, I think you're a prophet," she said, "Please tell me, where should we worship? We Samaritans want to worship on this mountain, but the Jews want to worship in Jerusalem."

Jesus answered, "One day, you won't worship neither here in this mountain, nor there in Jerusalem. It's not the place that's important. What matters is that you should worship and love the true God."

The woman looked at Jesus and said, "I know that the Messiah is coming, and He will tell us all things." "Yes," said Jesus, "I am He, the one who is speaking to you." The woman was overjoyed. She believed what Jesus told her. She left her water jug and ran to find

her friends and family, to bring them to listen to Jesus. “Come, see a man who told me all the things I ever did! Isn’t He the Messiah?” she joyfully told her family and friends.

Just as she was leaving, the disciples came with the food. They were confused to see Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. They didn’t think that Jesus would be interested in talking to Samaritan people, but soon a large group of people was at the well, eagerly listening to Jesus. They begged Him to stay with them for a few days. Jesus gladly stayed with them for two more days, teaching them about God’s kingdom. He slept in their homes and ate their food. Many people in Samaria believed in Him from then on.

The disciples learnt that God has children everywhere, and that the Jews weren’t the only ones who were supposed to receive God’s salvation. Jesus came to save Samaritans too, and people from all nations. God loves every single person from every country, and He offers salvation to each of us, no matter where we come from. He offers salvation to you and me, too. Will you accept it?

17. Jesus Heals the Nobleman’s Son

***And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.
Ephesians 1:19***

*John 4: 43-54
DA chapter 20*

There was a rich man living in Capernaum. He was a Jew, and one of the king’s officers. His son was seriously ill, and none of the doctors could help him anymore. When this man heard about

Jesus, he began to hope that Jesus could heal his son. If Jesus didn't heal him, his son would surely die.

Deep down, this nobleman wondered if Jesus was really the Messiah. He thought, *"If Jesus heals my son, I will believe that He is the Messiah. But if my son dies, then I won't believe in Jesus at all."* He traveled to Cana, where Jesus was, and asked to speak to Him.

Jesus knew what was in this man's heart. He felt sad that this man would only choose to believe if Jesus did what he wanted Him to do. We're supposed to believe because we believe God's words, not because God does whatever we want. It's selfish to believe only if things go the way we want them to. Jesus tried to gently help the man to see this. He said to him kindly, "You won't believe unless you see miracles."

The nobleman heard Jesus and understood that he was being selfish, and that his lack of faith in Jesus as the Messiah might cause his son to die. He knew now that Jesus could read his thoughts, and that anything was possible for Him. He begged Jesus, "Please come, or my child will die." Jesus kindly answered him, "Go your way; your son lives."

The man's faith in Jesus was now strong. He believed Jesus' words, and he went home trusting peacefully that Jesus had healed his son.

When he arrived home the next day, the servants received him joyfully. "Your son is well!" they said to him happily. "When did this happen?" he asked. "On the seventh hour," they told him. This was the same time in which Jesus had told him, "Your son lives."

How joyful and grateful he was to see his son healthy again! This man and his whole household became followers of Jesus.

The words of Jesus are for us, too. We don't need to wait for Jesus to do what we want Him to do before we believe in Him; that would be selfish. We simply need to believe His words and trust Him. He will gladly help us. Will you let Him?

18. Selfless John

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. John 3:27

*John 3:22-36; Matthew 11:1-11; Luke 7:18-28.
DA chapters 18 and 22*

Jesus' fame grew as He traveled from place to place, teaching and healing. Little by little, the people started flocking around Jesus, and fewer and fewer people stayed to listen to John the Baptist. John's disciples noticed this, and they were not happy about it.

John's disciples wanted him to keep on having many followers. They complained to him about what Jesus and His disciples were doing. "They're baptizing, and people are coming to them," they said with envy.

This was a temptation for John. Would he feel jealous of Jesus? Would he want all the attention and honor for himself, and not for Jesus? No, he wouldn't. John refused to feel sorry for himself. He was so close to God that he understood that, if the people were going to Jesus, then he had done his job. John gently said to his disciples, "I can only have what heaven gives me. I am not the Messiah; my job has been to show the people who the Messiah is, and this job I have done." John was filled with joy to see that the

people were choosing to be around Jesus, and he was content to live in quietness.

But John was not destined for a long life of peacefulness, and his faith was to be tested. A short time after Jesus began His ministry, something unpleasant happened to John. King Herod put him in prison. The king had respected John, but he had recently taken his brother's wife and John had declared that this was wrong. Because of this Herodias, the king's new wife, didn't like John at all. She convinced Herod to put John in prison, even though he had never done anything wrong.

Time went by, and John was still in prison. John's disciples came often to visit him. They told him what Jesus was doing, and they kept asking, "Why isn't He helping you get out of prison?" John wondered the same thing. He felt sad in the dark cell, and was often tempted to doubt Jesus, because he expected Jesus to become a king and defeat the Romans. But John would also remember God's words during the baptism of Jesus – *this is my beloved Son, in whom I delight* – and this helped him hold onto his faith. He also felt sad that his disciples doubted Jesus, and he worried for them. Finally, John decided to send his disciples to Jesus with a question.

John's disciples came to Jesus and said, "John is asking, are you the One who should come, or should we look for another?" Jesus kindly invited them to stay and watch Him for the whole day. John's disciples saw Jesus, hour after hour, blessing people. He healed many sick, taught the people, and comforted them. At the end of the day, Jesus said to John's disciples, "Go and tell John what you have seen. Those who don't lose their faith in me will be blessed."

After John's disciples left, Jesus began to talk to the people about John. He reminded the people that John had always spoken the truth, and he had always preached what God wanted him to preach. He had never changed his beliefs and ideas just so that

people would like him. “There has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist,” said Jesus, because John had been so humble and faithful to God.

John listened carefully to what his disciples told him about Jesus. What Jesus was doing reminded him of a prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 61:1: *“He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor and to heal the broken-hearted...”* John’s heart was brightened. Now he felt peace, because he was sure that Jesus was the Messiah. *“I will trust God completely, no matter what happens to me,”* thought John, *“I won’t feel sorry for myself if God allows me to stay in prison.”*

John also finally understood that Jesus would never become a powerful earthly king. *“He won’t come to change our country; He came to change our hearts and characters; He wants to make us loving like Him,”* thought John serenely. John thanked God for helping him realize more of what God was truly like.

John had spent so much time with God, that he had learned to be unselfish. He was not proud, and he was not jealous. He understood that, whatever we have, it is because God has given it to us. He gladly accepted God’s plan for him, even if it meant being in a dark prison. This is the kind of faith in God that all of God’s followers need. We can ask Jesus to give us this faith in Him, too.

19. The Death of John

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38- 39

Matthew 14:1-11; Mark 6:17-28.

DA chapter 22

John was in prison. King Herod, who had put him there, knew that he should let John go free; he actually liked John and believed that he taught the truth. But Herod was influenced by his wife, Herodias, and wanted to please her. She had made him put John in prison. She didn't like what John was teaching. She didn't want to repent and change her ways. Herod decided that he would soon let John go free, but just not yet.

Then came Herod's birthday. He had planned a big feast and invited many important visitors. During the feast, Herod and his guests drank a lot of alcohol, and ate so much food that they could not think clearly. Suddenly, the daughter of Herodias, called Salome, came into the room and began to dance for the guests. She was young and stunningly beautiful, and Herod liked her very much. Because of all that he had eaten and drunk, he couldn't think straight, and he did something terribly foolish: he offered to give her anything she wanted.

Salome rushed to her mother, and asked, "Mother, what should I ask for?" "Ask for the head of John the Baptist on a big dish," answered Herodias. Salome was shocked. She didn't want to ask for that! But her mother insisted, and finally, that's what Salome asked from Herod.

Herod's guests heard what Salome asked for, and the whole room went quiet. Every person in that room knew that John the Baptist was a good, innocent man, and that he should not die. But everyone had drunk and eaten so much, that they couldn't think clearly, and no one had the courage to stop King Herod from doing such a terrible thing. If at least one guest had defended John, King Herod would have felt strong enough to say, "No, John will not be killed. I will not do that." King Herod felt awful, but he felt he had to keep his promise to Salome in front of all these guests, or he would look weak, and John was killed.

Herodias was happy at first, but soon she became miserable. The people of Israel loved John and thought that Herodias was a horrible woman for asking for his head. And as for king Herod, he had no peace. God gave him time to repent of his sins, but sadly, he didn't. He lived an unhappy life even though he was a king.

What happened to John was completely unfair. If only Herod and his guests had allowed the Spirit of God to work in them, this death would never have happened. John's story is very sad, but God wants His people to also learn from John's experience. People who love God should be comforted, like John was comforted, when they have to suffer because of selfish and foolish people who refuse to let God guide them. God didn't leave John, and He won't leave us. John had to die even though he hadn't done anything wrong, just like Jesus did, and many other followers of Jesus after them. But when Jesus comes back to take us to heaven, John will be raised to life and enjoy being with God forever. Like John, we can trust God even when bad things happen. Will you trust God no matter what?

20. Miracle Fishing

**So when they had brought their boats to land,
they forsook all and followed Him. Luke 5:11**

Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5: 1-11
DA chapter 25

It was dawn by the Lake of Gennesaret, in the Sea of Galilee. Peter and Andrew were disappointed. “We couldn’t fish anything during the night,” they said, “And during the day, it’s impossible to catch any fish.” Their friends on the other boat, James and John, hadn’t caught anything, either. As they came back to shore, they saw that Jesus had arrived.

Jesus had come to rest and pray by the shore, but it wasn’t long before people from all over came to Him. So many people wanted to be near Him for healing and comfort. They wanted to listen to His words. Soon there were so many people around Jesus that He climbed onto Peter’s boat so He could be better seen and heard by the crowd. From the boat, Jesus taught the people beautiful truths about God’s kingdom and His love for them.

When Jesus was finished speaking, He turned to Peter and said, “Go out into the sea and cast your nets.” Peter was discouraged after the long night he’d spent without being able to catch any fish. He also knew that during the day, the fish wouldn’t come near the nets. But he trusted Jesus, and said to Him, “Lord, we’ve worked all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the net.” And he did so.

Suddenly, the net began to fill with fish. In fact, it was so full that Peter and Andrew needed help. They called out to James and John to bring their boat and help them. Even with two boats, the net was

so full that the boats were in danger of sinking! This could only be a miracle!

Peter forgot the nets and knelt by Jesus' feet. "Leave me, because I am a sinner," he told Jesus. Peter really, really wanted to be with Jesus, but he felt that he was so sinful that he couldn't be with someone as pure and good as Jesus. But of course Jesus wanted Peter to be with Him! He kindly said, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will catch people instead of fish." Jesus invited Peter to join Him in His work of bringing people to God. Peter gladly said yes to Jesus.

Peter, Andrew, James and John had been listening to Jesus before this, but none of them had left their fishing work to follow Him fully. They had felt doubts about Jesus because the priests didn't like Him, and because He wouldn't save John the Baptist from prison. But now they had no more doubts. They trusted Jesus completely.

Jesus then invited Andrew, James and John to follow Him, too. All four men left their boats and nets and followed Jesus from then on. Just like Jesus called these men, He is also calling us to follow Him and learn from Him. Will you accept His invitation?

21. Healing at the Pool

*And you he made alive,
who were dead in trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2:1*

*John 5
DA chapter 21*

It was Sabbath morning, and Jesus was walking near a pool called Bethesda. All around the pool, there were porches, and under these porches lay many sick people. The people believed that, once in a while, an angel would ripple the pool waters, and that whenever this happened, whoever got inside the water first would be healed of any disease. All these sick people lay there, waiting for the ripples and hoping to get into the water before anyone else did. They hoped to be the first and the fastest. Does this sound like the way God would do things? Of course not! These were just untrue stories that the people believed, and many suffered because of this.

Jesus looked around and saw all the suffering, sick people around the pool. He longed to heal them all right then, but it was not the right time, because it would cause too many problems with the Jewish leaders. But He knew there was one man He needed to heal that Sabbath morning: the sickest, weakest and most hopeless man of all. This man was paralyzed, which means he could not move his arms and legs. He'd been paralyzed for 38 years, and he knew that soon he was going to die.

Jesus bent over him and looked at him kindly. "Would you like to be healed?" He asked him. The man felt encouraged that someone wanted to help him, but then he felt sad. He said to Jesus, "Sir, there's no one to help me into the pool. There's always another person who gets into the water before I do."

Jesus simply replied, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." The man didn't know Jesus and had never heard of Him, but he saw something in Jesus that made him decide to simply obey His words. He decided to try to get up, and he did. Suddenly, his whole body was healthy and strong again. His legs and arms worked! He stood up and gladly picked up his sleeping mat, like Jesus had told him to. But when he looked up to thank Jesus, Jesus was gone.

“Where did He go? I hope I see Him again!” thought the healed man. He walked out, happily carrying his bed. On the way, he saw several Pharisees, and excitedly told them what had happened. The Pharisees should have been happy to see him healthy and strong again, but instead, they felt angry. They asked him, “Why are you carrying your bed on the Sabbath day?” The Pharisees had invented laws that said that people were not allowed to carry things on the Sabbath day, even though this was not what the Scriptures taught about the Sabbath.

The healed man said to them, “The One who healed me told me to take up my bed and walk.” He hadn’t even remembered that it was the Sabbath, but he didn’t feel guilty of having done anything wrong.

“Who is this man who did this?” the Pharisees asked. “I don’t know who He is,” replied the healed man. But of course, the Pharisees knew very well that it was Jesus.

A little later, the man went to the temple to bring an offering. And there, at the temple, he saw Jesus. He was overjoyed, and said, to the Pharisees, “This man – He is the One who healed me!” He was so happy to see Jesus again and to thank Him.

Jesus said to him kindly, “You have been healed. Don’t sin anymore, or something worse might happen to you.” The healed man left joyfully, forever grateful for what Jesus had done for him.

The Pharisees saw all this and were annoyed and upset. As soon as they could, they brought Jesus before the Jewish leaders. They wanted to punish Him for breaking the Sabbath laws that they had invented. “Why did you heal on the Sabbath?” they asked Him.

Jesus looked at all of these important Jewish men and answered gently and respectfully. “I am doing what God, my Father, is asking

me to do. I do not do anything that He doesn't want me to do," He answered. He encouraged the leaders to study the Scriptures about the Messiah.

The leaders were angry that Jesus had broken their manmade Sabbath rules. They were upset that He said He was God's Son. They did not want a Messiah like Jesus; they did not want a Messiah who taught them that their hearts needed to change. They only wanted a Messiah who would make the Jewish nation into a rich and powerful country.

If only the priests and leaders had listened and believed Jesus the way the paralytic man had! The paralytic man simply listened to Jesus and believed Him, and his belief made it possible for him to obey Jesus' words, and he was completely healed. The priests and leaders could have been completely healed from their envy, selfishness and sins too, if only they had believed Jesus! Each of them had a choice to make, and sadly, very few chose to believe in the words of Jesus. We have that choice, too. Will we believe Jesus' words, like the paralytic man did, or will we reject Him like the priests and leaders did?

22. Jesus Rejected in Nazareth

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.
Isaiah 61:1

Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6
DA chapter 24

Jesus had been away from His home in Nazareth for many months. Now He came to visit His family and the people He had grown up with. All these people knew Him, and they had also heard about the miracles He had performed, and the things He taught.

On Sabbath morning, Jesus went to the synagogue, and there they asked Him to read the Scriptures out loud. He read some verses from Isaiah. These verses said that the Messiah would come to preach to the poor, to comfort sad people, to free them from sin, and to help them see truth. Jesus read while the people listened attentively. Then He closed the scrolls, and said, "Today this Scripture is being fulfilled right here."

At first, the people were filled with joy and wonder. Could Jesus really be the Messiah they had been hoping for? Then they doubted. How could anything good come out of Nazareth? And how could Jesus be the one they were waiting for? They had known Him since He was a boy. Yes, Jesus had never done anything wrong, but He was so poor. They had seen Him working as a carpenter. They knew His family. How could He be better than them? He would never free them from the Roman government like they hoped. No, He could not be the one.

Jesus knew what they were thinking, and it made Him sad. He tried to gently show them what was happening in their hearts. "Prophets are not usually accepted in their own country," He reminded them, "When there was a famine in Israel during Elijah's time, God sent Him to live with a widow in a place called Zarephath, away from Israel, even though there were many widows in Israel, too. And during Elisha's time, there were many lepers in Israel, but God was only able to heal Naaman, who was from Syria." In these stories, the people of Israel had not received God's blessings because they had no faith, but people from other countries had believed God, and they had been blessed. The same thing would happen to the

people of Nazareth; if they didn't believe in Jesus, then they would not be able to be blessed by Him. The blessings would go to people from other places who would believe in Jesus.

The people of Nazareth were furious when they heard this. They did not like to be told that they were wrong. They didn't like to hear that non-Israelites might get more blessings than them. Satan controlled them now, and they pushed Jesus out of the synagogue and towards a cliff. They wanted to throw Jesus down this cliff and kill Him. But before they could push Him down, angels from God protected Jesus and took Him away to a safe place.

Jesus was saddened that He could not do for His hometown what He had done for so many other towns. He longed to comfort them with God's truths and heal their sick. But He had to leave, because they wouldn't accept Him as the Messiah.

Yet He gave them one more chance. Just before the end of His ministry several months later, Jesus came back to Nazareth. The people had been able to hear many more stories about His ministry, and they knew He had a power that no normal person has. They listened to His words again, but most of them still felt angry when they remembered Jesus' last visit to Nazareth, and they refused to believe that He was the Son of God. Very few people in Nazareth opened their hearts to Jesus, and Jesus was only able to perform a few miracles. The rest of the town lost His blessings because they were too proud to believe in Him.

How sad that the people of Nazareth lost the chance to receive Jesus as the Messiah! With Jesus around, they noticed how sinful they were, and they didn't like that. They wanted a Messiah who would make them rich and powerful instead. Sadly, they wanted to be free from the Romans, but not free from their sins. We have the same choice today. Do we want to receive the freedom from sin

and beauty of character that Jesus wants to give us, or do we prefer the things of this world? Which do you choose?

23. At Capernaum

***Heal Me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me,
and I shall be saved: for you are my praise. Jeremiah 17:14***

Luke 4:31-44; Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:21-39

DA chapter 26

Jesus spent a lot of time in Capernaum, and He went there many times. Do you remember when He healed the nobleman's son? After that, the people of Capernaum loved Jesus. Every time He came, they would bring Him their sick to be healed, and they would gladly listen to His teaching. When Jesus taught them, the people were surprised. "He teaches as though He has authority," they said. Jesus would explain things simply and clearly, and suddenly the Scriptures seemed so much easier to understand. This didn't happen when the priests and Pharisees taught. The people knew what Jesus said was the truth. And as they listened, they felt loved and comforted by Him.

One Sabbath, Jesus was preaching in the synagogue. He was teaching about the Kingdom of God that would free people from Satan. Suddenly, a man who was possessed by a demon came rushing to Jesus, shouting, "Let us alone, Jesus of Nazareth! Have you come to destroy us? I know you are the Holy One of God." It wasn't the man who was saying these words; the demon inside him was saying them. The man couldn't say any words by himself; he could only think them and hope that Jesus would understand that he wanted to be freed from this demon.

Jesus understood exactly what this man wanted. He rebuked the demon, and said, “Stop doing that! Come out of him!” The demon didn’t want to leave, but it had to obey Jesus. It tried to kill the man before leaving him, but Jesus didn’t allow it. After crying loudly, the demon left the man. Finally, the man was free! He praised God for his deliverance, forever grateful to Jesus for helping him.

After this, Jesus went to the home of Peter to rest. Peter’s mother-in-law was in bed, sick with a great fever. Jesus went to her. He touched her hand and said to the disease, “Leave her!” Peter’s mother-in-law was healed instantly. She was feeling so well, and was so grateful, that she quickly got out of bed and prepared food for Jesus and all His disciples.

While Jesus stayed in this home, people brought Him their sick, all throughout the day, and even during the night. Jesus lovingly healed them all, even though it took Him most of the night to do it. And early in the morning, He got up, walked to a place far away from people, and prayed.

This was what Jesus did so many times. He gladly helped anyone who had faith in Him, and He received power from His Father every day to do this. We, too, can trust Jesus to help us and heal us, especially from the sin in our lives. If we pray and come close to Him, He will gladly give us the help we need.

24. A Leper is Healed

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, "I will; be thou clean".

Mark 1:41

Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16

DA chapter 27

Leprosy was the scariest and worst disease during Bible times. It was highly contagious, so if someone had leprosy, they had to leave the towns and cities and live far away from other people. A leper could only live with other lepers, so sometimes groups of lepers would live together outside the city.

One of these lepers heard about Jesus. Jesus had healed so many people. Could He heal a leper, too? The man began to hope, and finally, he believed that Jesus could help him. He needed to come close to Jesus, but at the same time, he wasn't allowed to be where there were other people. Jesus was always surrounded by people! Did he dare get close?

One day he saw that Jesus was teaching a large group of people beside a lake. The leper, from afar, listened and watched. He saw Jesus healing sick people. Suddenly he was *sure* that Jesus could heal him. He just needed to see if Jesus *wanted* to heal him. He came closer and closer. The people saw him and felt afraid, and they began to get away from him. The leper didn't mind. He only saw Jesus. He knelt at Jesus' feet and said, "Lord, if it's your will, you can make me clean."

Jesus looked at him with compassion, and touched him. No one could touch a leper, but Jesus could. "Yes, it is my will – be made

clean,” Jesus replied. Instantly the man was completely healed. He felt such joy and gratitude in his heart!

Jesus told the man, “Don’t tell anyone about this until after you’ve gone to the priests with an offering.” There was a law that said that if a leper thought he was healed and wanted to return to his family, he had to bring an offering and see the priests first, so they could decide whether he was clean. Jesus wanted the man to obey this law, so that the priests could see that He respected them and was not against them. But there was another reason why Jesus told the man to not tell anyone until after he had seen the priests: He knew that the priests would not be happy to know that He had healed a leper. If the priests knew that Jesus had healed this man, they might even tell him that he still had leprosy, and stop him from returning home. But the healed man was so happy that he couldn’t keep quiet. He told everyone he met what Jesus had done for him!

Leprosy reminds us of sin. Just like it was impossible for the doctors to heal leprosy, and only Jesus could do it, it is also impossible for us to get rid of sin by ourselves. We can only do it with Jesus’ help. And Jesus wants, more than anything else, to make us clean from the leprosy of sin. Will you let Him?

25. The Opened Roof

Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. Matthew 9:2

Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
DA chapter 27

Jesus was in Capernaum again, teaching in the house of Peter. When people heard that Jesus was there, they began to gather.

Inside the house were Jesus and His disciples, and Pharisees and teachers of the law. The rest of the people came as close as they could, but soon the house was full and overflowing, and many people had to stand outside.

Suddenly, four men brought a paralyzed man in a bed. They wanted Jesus to heal their friend who had been paralyzed for many years. They tried to break through the crowd of people and enter the door, but there were just too many people; it was impossible. Then one of them had an idea: "Let's go up to the roof!" The four friends climbed up to the roof, carrying their friend. They opened the roof and let him down carefully, to the feet of Jesus.

The paralyzed man knew that he had gotten sick because he had lived a very sinful lifestyle. Yet, when he heard of Jesus, he began to hope that, by meeting Jesus, he would find forgiveness for his sins. Even if he never got cured, he at least wanted to know that God forgave him for the bad things he had done. The Pharisees had never told this man that God loved and forgave him; they had told him that God was angry with him because of all the sins he had committed. Jesus knew all this; the first thing he said to the man was, "Son, be glad; your sins have been forgiven."

His sins were forgiven? This made the paralyzed man so happy, that he didn't ask for anything else. Finally, he had the peace of knowing that God forgave him!

But the Pharisees who were there were not happy. They were thinking, "We told this man that he is sick because God is angry with him. And now look – Jesus says his sins are forgiven! That's wrong! Only God can forgive sins! Who is Jesus to do this?"

Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. He looked at them and said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? After all, what is easier? Is it easier to say 'your sins are forgiven you', or is it easier

to say ‘arise and walk’? But now something will happen for you to know that I have the power to forgive sins.” Jesus then turned to the paralytic man, and said, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

This man had come to Jesus with the help of four men who carried him. But now that Jesus had spoken, he looked so different! His bones and muscles were strong again! He stood up and was able to carry his bed all by himself. The people saw this and were amazed. “Praise God!” they said.

The Pharisees didn’t believe that Jesus had the power to forgive sins, but when Jesus both forgave *and* healed the man, it was completely clear that His power came from God. How sad that the Pharisees didn’t accept this and instead were jealous of Jesus. Instead of asking Jesus to forgive them and heal them, too, they left Peter’s home and planned to kill Jesus.

Jesus still has the power to forgive us our sins. He wants to do it. And He wants to heal us from the terrible things that sin does to us. Let’s go to Him today and ask Him to help us!

26. The Sabbath

Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.

Matthew 12:12

Luke 6:1-5; Mark 2: 23 – 28; Matthew 12:1-8

DA chapter 29

God had made the Sabbath as a special day for people to spend with Him. Sadly, as the years went by, the Sabbath was ruined

because the priests and Pharisees had invented all sorts of very tiresome rules for the Sabbath. These rules turned the Sabbath into a day that people dreaded. The people were so worried about doing the wrong thing on the Sabbath, that they couldn't enjoy it. They couldn't rest and feel God's peaceful presence. They couldn't remember that God wanted to heal them and forgive them *especially* on the Sabbath. They thought God was always ready to get angry at them, and this made them afraid. Jesus knew that this was happening. That's why He taught people how to keep the Sabbath.

One Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples were walking past a field of grain. The disciples were hungry and picked some of the grain to eat as they walked. This was allowed; if someone was passing by a field of grain or a fruit tree and needed to eat, it was ok to pick enough to eat right there and then, to satisfy their hunger. But the Pharisees taught that this should not be done on the Sabbath, because, to them, picking grain or fruit was the same as working. "Look at what your disciples are doing – they're working and breaking the Sabbath!" someone said to Jesus.

What is more important – satisfying the needs of people, or keeping needless laws? To explain this, Jesus reminded them of a story in the Scriptures. He said, "Remember when David and his men ate the bread from the Sanctuary?" The priests knew this story well. David was running away from King Saul who wanted to kill him. But David wasn't hiding alone; he had a whole army of soldiers with him. One day they were really hungry and they didn't have any food with them. They saw that the Lord's house was nearby, and David remembered that there was bread there. This bread was special; it was an offering, and only the priests were allowed to eat it. But David finally went in and got that bread for his hungry men. He did not want to be irreverent or disrespectful, but he believed that God allowed them to eat this bread because they were so hungry and there was nothing else to eat. And God allowed it.

Jesus continued saying, “Now, right here, is someone greater than the temple. I am Lord also of the Sabbath.” Why did Jesus say that He was greater than the temple? Because the temple, and everything in it, was there to teach the people about Him. It didn’t make sense for people to follow all sorts of Sabbath rules and ceremonies if none of these helped them to learn about God and to come closer to Him.

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” taught Jesus. The Sabbath was meant to be a day of blessing and joy for people, not a day of burdens and restrictions. It is a day for us to remember the power of Christ to create and to save us. Yes, there are things we don’t do on the Sabbath, but that is because we want to have more time to be with God and to think about His Word. God tells us not to do those things to protect His connection to us on this special day so that we are blessed. The Sabbath is a day of peace and rest, because Jesus comes closer to us than on other days. Will you accept this special day that God wants to give you?

27. Sabbath Healing

***He heals the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.
Psalm 147:3***

*Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Mark 3:1- 6; Matthew 12:9-14
DA chapter 29*

Jesus and His disciples had just eaten grains of wheat from the fields on Sabbath, which the Pharisees said was breaking the Sabbath. But no, Jesus had not broken the Sabbath; He and His

disciples had simply been eating because they needed food. He explained that helping people and satisfying their needs is a good thing to do on the Sabbath.

A bit later that day, Jesus was able to teach more about what the Sabbath is about. He went to the synagogue, and He saw that there was a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees wanted to see what He would do. Jesus knew that they would think He was breaking the Sabbath if He healed the man. He said to the man, "Stand up here." Then he looked at the Pharisees and asked them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?"

Everyone was quiet. Jesus looked at them sadly. He knew the Pharisees refused to accept what He was saying. The Jews believed that if you *could* do something to help someone, but you *didn't do it*, then that was the same as doing evil. So of course, they knew that healing on the Sabbath was the right thing to do. Wouldn't it be evil to let the man continue to be sick, when Jesus could heal him? Also, how could the man enjoy the Sabbath if he was sick? Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man did, and he was instantly healed.

Another Sabbath, Jesus was invited to eat at the home of a Pharisee. A man came to Jesus to be healed. He had a disease called dropsy; his body was all swollen and sore. Jesus again asked the Pharisees who were there, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day?" Of course, the Pharisees could not say "no," so Jesus healed the sick man right there.

Jesus then reminded them that if one of their sheep fell into a pit on the Sabbath, they would of course pull it out right away; they wouldn't leave the sheep to die in the pit just because it was the Sabbath. Why, then, would they want a sick person to continue

suffering on the Sabbath day when he could be healed? Isn't a person more precious than a sheep?

Yet another Sabbath, Jesus was in a synagogue again. There was a woman there who had been sick for eighteen years. She was all bent over and couldn't stand up straight. Jesus called her to Him, and He said, "Woman, you are now free from your disease." Then He laid His hands on her, and she was instantly healed. She could now stand up straight, and she was joyfully glorifying God!

The priests should have been happy to see this woman healthy again, but instead, they said angrily, "There are six days to work, and six days for healing; people shouldn't come to be healed on the Sabbath day."

Jesus sadly asked, "Don't each of you take your oxen and donkeys out to drink water on the Sabbath? This woman is more than an ox or donkey; she is a daughter of Abraham. What better day than a Sabbath for her be freed from her disease?" When Jesus said this, the priests were ashamed, because they knew He was right. The rest of the people rejoiced because of the wonderful things that Jesus did.

The Sabbath is a holy day, a special day. It is holy because God sends His Spirit in extra measure on this day. And where the Spirit of God is, there is healing and comfort. Jesus did most of His miracles on the Sabbath, because of this flowing of the Spirit from God to us. The Sabbath is a wonderful day for giving us freedom from sin and disease, and God can give us special joy and comfort on this day, just like Jesus gave to these people that He healed. Will you accept this special day that God wants to give you to spend time with Him?

28. The Centurion's Servant

***Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.
Matthew 8:13***

*Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
DA chapter 32*

The Jewish teachers believed that God only cared about Jewish people, and that salvation was only for the Jews. This, of course, was not true. God had chosen the Jewish people to receive His law and to share it with people from all the world. God's plan was that foreigners who visited Israel would see the love and joy of the Jewish people, the wisdom of their law and government, and they would want to know their God. Through the Jews, God would bless the world. But tragically, this didn't happen. The selfishness of the Jews made it harder for people who were not Jews to understand the love of God.

One day, a Centurion came to Jesus. A Centurion is a powerful Roman soldier who is in charge of 100 soldiers. This Centurion had a servant that he loved very much. One day, his servant became sick with palsy and was about to die. The Centurion felt deep sadness and was willing to do anything for his servant to be healed. He remembered that he had heard about a man called Jesus, who healed people, and he believed that Jesus could heal his servant.

But the Centurion remembered that he was a Roman, and not a Jew. Would Jesus want to help someone who wasn't a Jew? This Centurion had always been kind and helpful to the Jewish leaders, but he didn't know if he, as a Roman, could ask Jesus for help. Then he thought, "*Maybe Jesus will be willing to help me if the Jewish leaders ask Him to.*" He went to the Jewish leaders and asked them to speak to Jesus for him.

The priests and leaders came to Jesus and told him what the Centurion wanted. "Please help him," they encouraged Jesus, "He has always been kind and helpful to us. He even built us a synagogue."

Jesus agreed to help. He began to walk toward the Centurion's home. On the way, a messenger from the Centurion met Jesus and said, "The Centurion says that He is not important enough for you to come to his home. You don't need to come." Jesus did not turn away; He was more than willing to go and heal the Centurion's servant, so He kept on walking towards the man's home.

When the Centurion heard that Jesus was still coming to his home, He went to meet Jesus on the way himself. "Lord, I didn't think I was worthy to meet you myself," he said to Jesus, "But all you need to do is speak, and I know my servant will be healed. I believe you have authority from heaven, just like I have authority from Rome. I only need to tell my soldiers and my servants to do this or that, and it gets done. I believe it's the same with you; if you just command it, it will happen."

Jesus was marveled at what He heard. He said to the people who were watching, "I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel." And to the Centurion, He said, "In the same way that you have believed, let it be done for you." At that very moment, the Centurion's servant was healed.

This Centurion knew almost nothing about God. It was very difficult for him to learn about the true God because of his life as a soldier, the idols he grew up worshiping, and the way the Jews refused to share God with non-Jews. He even noticed that the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus, and that was confusing to him. But in spite of that, he believed. He showed more faith than even the Jewish teachers, who should have known better. We can choose to have this faith,

too. Do we believe the things that God tells us, in the Bible, that He can do for us? If we only believe, it will be done for us.

29. Raising the Son of the Widow of Nain

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Ephesians 5:14

Luke 7:11-17
DA chapter 32

Jesus had just finished talking with the Centurion. He felt joy after having helped this man who believed in Him even though he was a Roman soldier. After this, Jesus and His disciples started walking to the village of Nain, which was 20 miles away. All day, as He walked, people followed Him, listening to Him and bringing Him their sick to be healed. The people who walked with Jesus were full of joy.

As they reached Nain, they saw something that suddenly made them all feel very sad. Another group of people was about to bury a dead young man. The dead man was the only son of his mother, and his mother was a widow; her husband was also dead. This woman had no more family. She would be alone, with no one to care for her. The people who were with her could feel her sadness as they walked towards the grave.

The group that was with Jesus met the group that was going to bury the young man. Jesus walked over to the mother, and said to her gently, "Don't cry." He could feel her sadness, and wanted to comfort her. Then, He walked over to the bier and touched it.

Anyone who touched the bier or a dead person was considered unclean. But Jesus did not become unclean by touching it, because He had authority over death.

Everyone was suddenly quiet. They watched to see what Jesus would do. He could heal so many diseases. Could He raise someone from the dead as well?

Then Jesus spoke loudly and clearly: “Young man, I say to you, arise!” The young man opened his eyes, and Jesus took his hand and helped him sit up. Then the young man began to speak. How happy the mother was to be able to hug her son again!

The people had come to a sad funeral, but now everyone was praising God with joy. They knew that this power that Jesus had could only come from God.

Jesus wants to comfort us and give us life, just like He comforted the mother and gave life to her son. When He comes to take us to heaven, we can be sure that He will have the power to raise people from the dead. We can trust that He is life, and He gives life to everyone who believes in Him. If we believe this, we will be comforted when sad things happen. Let’s thank God for His power to give life and comfort to us!

30. The True Family of Jesus

***For whosoever shall do the will of God,
the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother. Mark 3:35***

Matthew 12:22-50; Mark 3:20-35; Luke 11:14-23
DA chapter 33

Jesus went around healing, teaching and comforting people. His actions showed everyone what God our Father is like. But sadly, the very leaders, who should have been overjoyed to meet Jesus, were upset with Him. They began to spread lies about Jesus. “He uses the power of Satan to cast out demons,” they said to people.

Was this true? Of course not! Jesus kindly asked, “How can Satan chase away Satan? How can Satan fight against himself?” Jesus continued, “Whoever is not on my side is against me. You can’t be on my side and be against me at the same time.”

Jesus looked at the Pharisees who had told this lie about Him. They were too proud to admit that they were wrong. He warned them, “If you continue rejecting the truth that God is showing you, you will commit the sin against the Holy Spirit.” If people refuse to listen to what the Holy Spirit is telling them, then eventually God won’t be able to reach their hearts anymore. It is very dangerous to reject the Holy Spirit when He’s trying to tell us that we need to repent of something.

Jesus taught the people some more. “It’s not enough for me to cast out an evil spirit. The evil spirit might leave, but if it comes back and finds the person’s heart empty, it will come in again, and it will bring in seven other wicked spirits.” Jesus wanted to cast out the evil from people’s hearts, but it was also important for them to accept Him into their hearts. If Jesus fills a person’s heart, then evil won’t be able to come into it. Without Jesus, a person can end up even worse than before.

The brothers of Jesus, the sons of Joseph, heard about what Jesus was teaching. They heard that He was working hard and healing people, but that the Pharisees were upset with Him. “Why doesn’t He agree with the Pharisees? Why doesn’t He try to get them to like Him?” they wondered. As they heard what Jesus was doing, they

felt embarrassed. “We need to stop Him,” they said. They went to Mary and asked her to come with them. Maybe, with her help, they could stop Jesus from doing all these things. They did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Jesus was still teaching the people when His disciples announced, “Your mother and brothers are looking for you.” Jesus knew why His mother and brothers had come; they had come to stop Him from doing God’s work among the people. Of course, He kindly received His family members, but He also said to the people, “My mother and my brothers are those who do the will of my Father in heaven.” Jesus loved His mother and brothers, and they were very special to Him, but they were not the only people that Jesus could be close to. Those people who want to do the will of God are the ones who can be closest to Jesus.

If we allow Jesus to come into our hearts to help us do God’s will, He will be even closer to us than a brother, a parent or a friend. All His children will become like family to us, and we will have more loving and kind brothers and sisters than we can imagine, because we will all be filled with the love and kindness of Jesus! Do you want to be part of that family?

31. Peace, Be Still

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25
DA chapter 35

It had been a very busy day for Jesus. He had been teaching and healing for many hours. The sun was going down, and He hadn't eaten or rested the whole day.

"Let's cross the lake to the other side," Jesus said to His disciples. They said good-bye to the people, and got on the boat. Jesus was very tired, and He lay down and soon fell fast asleep. The disciples rowed the boat, and some of the people that had been listening to Jesus climbed onto other boats to follow Him across the lake.

It was a lovely, calm evening on the lake. But suddenly, the sky turned dark, a strong wind began to blow, and a huge storm started. The storm was so strong that the boats began to sink. The disciples were strong fishermen and knew exactly what to do during a storm, but they soon realized that there was nothing they could do to stop from sinking.

Suddenly they remembered Jesus. They called for Him, but He didn't answer. Where was He? The boat was already sinking! Suddenly lightning flashed, and through that light, they saw where Jesus was: He was sleeping peacefully. They cried out to Jesus, "Master, don't you care that we're about to die?" Their cries woke Jesus up. "Save us, Lord, we're dying!" they said to Him.

Jesus stood up, lifted His hand to the sky, and commanded, "Peace, be still!" The storm immediately stopped, and the sea was suddenly calm again. The clouds rolled away, and the stars shone again. Jesus looked at His disciples sadly and said to them, "Why were you afraid? Where is your faith?"

The disciples were quiet. The people on the other boats were quiet. All of them had seen Jesus standing up and calming the storm. "What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey Him?" they whispered among themselves.

Jesus had always been at peace. He trusted in His Father, and because of this trust, He had been given the power to calm the storm. But His disciples didn't have the same faith. They had trusted in their own ability to survive the storm, until finally they were forced to accept that they couldn't save themselves. Only then, after they had realized their weakness, did they remember to ask Jesus for help.

"Where was your faith?" Asked Jesus. If they had had faith in Jesus all along, they would never have come to the point where they were about to sink. If they had called on Jesus as soon as the storm started, they would have been safe and in peace all the time, just like Jesus had been.

Do we trust Jesus all the time? Do we stay close to Him all the time, or do we only go to Him when we realize we can't do things by ourselves? Those who have true faith will ask Jesus to be with them all the time. By ourselves we can do nothing, but through Jesus, all things are possible.

32. The Demon-Possessed Men

Go home to thy friends, and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. Mark 5:19

Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39
DA chapter 35

After the big storm had passed, Jesus and His disciples continued all night crossing the lake in their boat. In the early morning they came to shore. It seemed like a quiet beach because it was far from

the nearest town, but as soon as Jesus and His disciples got off the boat, they saw something terrible.

Two men came running out of a cave. Broken chains hung from their arms and legs; they were bleeding from cuts they had done to themselves; their hair was long, tangled and dirty, and they didn't have any clothes on. They raged like dangerous animals. They were demon-possessed. No one could come to this beach, because these men were so dangerous.

The disciples ran back to their boat, but Jesus stood still, right where He was. When He raised His hand, the two demon-possessed men did not dare come closer to Him, but they were highly agitated, and foam came out of their mouths. Jesus commanded the evil spirits to come out of the men.

The two men felt that Jesus could help them, and they tried to kneel and worship Jesus, but the demons wouldn't let them speak. Instead, the demons spoke through the men. The demons said, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, the Son of God? Please don't torment me!"

"What is your name?" asked Jesus. The demons kept on speaking, "My name is Legion, for we are many." There wasn't just one demon inside each of these men; there was a whole group of them. These demons knew that they had to leave the men immediately, and they were not happy. Just farther off, there was a huge herd of pigs that belonged to the people from the nearby town. "Let us go into those pigs," the demons begged. Jesus allowed them to do this. Immediately, the herd of pigs went wild and ran towards a nearby cliff. All the pigs jumped off the cliff and into the water, and drowned.

The pig herders saw everything that happened, and they quickly ran to tell the owners and the rest of the townspeople. “The pigs are all dead!” they said.

The pig owners were very upset, because by losing the pigs, they lost a lot of money. They were so angry for losing their wealth, that their first thought was to blame Jesus. If only they had understood that Jesus couldn’t protect their pigs because these pigs had become like idols to them! “It’s His fault that the pigs are dead! Let’s ask Him to leave right away!” they said. The owners didn’t even realize that it was Satan’s demons who had destroyed their pigs, not Jesus.

At that moment, the people were so upset about the loss of their wealth that they didn’t get a chance to be fully amazed at the change in the demon-possessed men. When the townspeople arrived to send Jesus away, these two men were already wearing clothes, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and listening to His teachings. Instead of raging, foaming and attacking, they were still and quiet, and their faces looked peaceful and kind. The people had been afraid of coming to this beach because of these men, but now this place was safe.

Jesus knew that the townspeople needed more time to think about what had happened. They were rejecting Him today, but they might change their mind if they were given another chance. He agreed to leave immediately, and He and His disciples began to climb onto their boats. But before leaving, He gave the two men a special job to do. “Go home to your friends and tell of the great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had compassion on you,” said Jesus gently. The men wanted to go with Jesus; they felt safe and loved near Him, and they wanted to listen to His teachings. But they agreed to do what Jesus asked them to do. They became the first missionaries for Jesus.

The two men didn't know much about the teachings of Jesus, but they gladly shared what they knew: they told of what Jesus had done for them. A few months later, Jesus came back to this same place. This time, no one sent Him away. In fact, Jesus had to stay here for three days, because there were thousands of people who wanted to listen to Him. They wanted to learn about the compassionate Son of God who had helped two demon-possessed men.

The testimony of what Jesus did for the two men brought many people to Jesus, so they could be blessed and helped. Do you want to help people? We don't need to wait until we know difficult theology; all we need is to share what Jesus has done for us like these two men who were cured of demons. Will you share with others so they can have the opportunity to know God through Jesus?

33. The Sick Woman and Jairus' Daughter

*For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light we shall see light. Psalm 36:9*

Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5: 21-43; Luke 8: 40-56
DA chapter 36

One day, a man came quickly to Jesus, knelt by His feet, and said, "My little daughter is about to die; please come and lay your hands on her, so that she can be healed, and live." This man was Jairus, a rich man and the ruler of the synagogue.

Of course, Jesus agreed to help Jairus. Together, they began to walk towards his home. The disciples and many other people followed Him. In fact, so many people were with Jesus that it was difficult to move forward. Jesus would stop now and then to heal or to comfort someone. Jairus was very worried that they were moving so slowly. He wanted Jesus to reach his daughter as soon as possible!

Suddenly, Jesus stopped and asked, “Who touched me?” The disciples couldn’t understand why Jesus was asking this. Wasn’t everybody bumping into Jesus and touching Him? “Lord,” they said, “There are people all around you, and you’re asking who *touched* you?”

Jesus kindly replied, “I know somebody has touched me, because power came out of me.” Jesus kept looking at the crowd, toward a woman who had been trying to hide among the people.

“It was me,” said the woman, and she knelt down in front of Jesus, “I’ve been sick and bleeding for 12 years. I spent all my money on doctors, but none of them could help me. When I heard about Jesus of Nazareth, I knew He could heal me. I didn’t want to disturb you, Lord, so I tried to only touch the edge of your coat. I knew that would be enough for me to be healed, and it was! Thank you so much!” She cried as she spoke.

Jesus looked at her and spoke kindly. He said, “You were healed because you had faith. Go in peace.” Jesus wished that everyone would have faith in Him like this woman did, so He wanted people to see her and hear her story; that’s why He had stopped and asked who touched Him. The woman went home fully healed, comforted, and joyful.

Just then, one of Jairus’ servants arrived with a sad message: “Mr. Jairus, there’s not need to disturb the Master any longer. Your daughter has died.” Jairus felt very sad, but Jesus looked at him and

said, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe, and she will be healed.” Jairus decided to trust Jesus. Together, they kept on walking to his home.

The home of Jairus was full of noisy people. These people were mourners and musicians, and their job was to make a lot of sad noises when someone died. The noise was so loud that Jesus asked them to be quiet. “She’s not dead, but asleep,” He assured the people. Those who were there laughed at Jesus when He said that. They had all seen that the girl was dead. Why was Jesus saying that she wasn’t?

Jesus asked to go inside the house with only Jairus, his wife, and Peter, James and John. He went to the child’s bed, held her hand, and said, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” The little girl was instantly brought back to life, and she was completely healed. Her parents hugged her and cried, grateful to Jesus. “Don’t forget to give her some food,” Jesus smiled as He spoke to her mother, “She hasn’t eaten for many days.” While she was sick, the little girl hadn’t been able to eat anything, but now that she was healthy again, she could enjoy a delicious meal. Imagine the wonderful, joyful dinner this family enjoyed that night together!

Where Jesus is, there is always healing, comfort, life and joy. Both the sick woman and Jairus knew that they needed Jesus, and that He could help them with their problems. We need Jesus, too. Let’s ask Him to be with us and bring us life, health and joy.

34. The Restorer

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

Matthew 9:27-34

Jesus had just been at the home of Jairus. He had healed and brought back life. Every day He would do something to help people and to show that God brings joy, healing and peace.

Jesus was on His way to another house. As He was walking, two blind men began to follow Him. They cried out, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" They had heard that Jesus was a healer, and they hoped that Jesus would be willing to heal them, too. Jesus kept walking until He reached the house. When He went inside, the two men followed Him into the house.

Jesus knew what they wanted, but it was important to show the people around them just how much faith these two blind men had. Jesus could have healed them on the way to the house, but He made them wait and allowed them to follow Him so that their faith could be clearly seen. Now that they were with Jesus in the house, Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" This was a chance for these men to speak out loud about their faith in Jesus. "Yes, Lord, we believe you can do this," they said.

Then Jesus touched their eyes, and He lovingly said, "May it be unto you according to your faith." And because these men believed that Jesus could heal them, their eyes were opened. Now they could see!

Jesus told them, “Make sure not to tell anyone.” But of course, the men couldn’t keep silent – everyone in their area heard about how Jesus had healed them!

Right after these two men left Jesus, someone brought Him another man to heal. This man was demon-possessed and could not speak. He needed to be healed by Jesus, and He needed freedom from the demon. Jesus instantly cast out the demon, and the man began to speak.

The people were amazed. “This has never happened in Israel!” they said. It was very clear that Jesus had a power that came from God. How could anyone think that He was not the Son of God, the Messiah? Everywhere He went, people found healing, comfort and freedom. Being around Jesus was wonderful.

But the priests didn’t think it was wonderful. They were jealous. They saw that the people were listening more and more to Jesus, and less and less to them, and they didn’t like that. They refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, even though it was undoubtedly clear that He was. They began to tell people lies. “He is casting out devils through Satan,” they said. But Jesus answered, “Why would someone fight against himself? Why would Satan chase away Satan?” Only God could do the miracles that Jesus was doing. With their lies, the priests were shutting out the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. They were rejecting what God was trying to tell them.

The priests, and everyone watching, had the chance to have faith in Jesus. They could choose, like the two blind men and the demon-possessed man, to believe that Jesus loved and wished to restore them, or they could choose to believe lies about Jesus and miss out on His wonderful blessings. We have the same choice. Do you choose to have faith in Him?

35. Learning to Be Workers for Jesus

***Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.
Isaiah 58:8***

*Matthew 10; 14:1-2, 12-13; Mark 6:7-13, 30-32; Luke 9:1-10
DA chapters 37 and 38*

The twelve disciples followed Jesus everywhere. They listened to His teachings, watched Him healing the sick, and had conversations with Him. By watching him, they were learning how to work so that they could do what Jesus did – teach the people so they could know God and understand His plan for mankind.

Now it was time for them to learn to work for Jesus, but separated from Him. They would be sent out to tell others about the gospel, and when they returned, they would tell Jesus all that had happened.

Jesus said, “Go out in pairs to the towns and cities. Tell the people that the kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils, and do it in my name. And don’t take anything with you except a walking stick and the clothes you’re wearing.” Jesus wanted them to comfort people who were sad or afraid and to let them know that God loved them. His workers had to trust that God would provide what they needed.

Jesus also said, “You will sleep and eat in homes where people invite you. If the people don’t want to have you there, then you need to leave quietly, and shake the dust off your feet. If the people don’t want to give you anything, respect them, and don’t even keep the dust from their town on your feet!” The disciples didn’t need to

get angry at people who treated them badly. They just needed to be calm, rest in the Father's love, and treat others gently.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Later on, you might end up speaking to kings and leaders. Don't worry about what you will say; the Spirit of God will let you know exactly what to say. Just trust in God."

Now the disciples were ready. They went on their first missionary trip, two by two. When they returned, they were very excited to tell Jesus all that had happened to them. They told Jesus about the miracles they'd done, and they also told Him about some mistakes they had made. Jesus listened to them tenderly, and gave them advice.

Jesus looked at His disciples and said, "Come, let's go to a quiet place where we can rest." The disciples were tired after their missionary journey, and they wanted to be alone with Jesus. There were others who also needed to rest with Jesus: the disciples of John the Baptist. John had just died, and his disciples had buried him. They were heartbroken and went to Jesus for comfort. These disciples also joined Jesus in this time of rest.

Jesus and the disciples crossed the lake to a beautiful green area that was far from the towns. Here they rested. They talked about the work of God and how to do it better. The disciples felt happy to spend this time with Jesus. They watched how Jesus prayed to His Father early every morning, and they realized they needed to do that, too.

This is how the disciples learnt to work for Jesus. We can learn how to work for Jesus, too. He is more than happy to teach us how to share His love with others. Will you let Him teach you?

36. Food for Five Thousand

**The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them
their meat in due season. Psalm 145:15**

Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13
DA chapter 39

Jesus, His disciples, and the disciples of John were enjoying some peaceful time of rest together by the lake, away from the people. But this rest did not last long. All too soon, the people found out where Jesus was and followed Him. Some came in boats, and some walked to Jesus. In a short time, there was a big crowd around Jesus. They wanted to listen to Him, and they brought their sick for Him to heal. Many of these people had come from far away, because they were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

Jesus loved each of these people and wanted to help them. He gladly taught them about the kingdom of God. The people enjoyed listening to Him so much that some of them even forgot to sit down! Jesus did not get a chance to rest or eat the whole day, because the people longed to be near Him.

In the afternoon, the disciples said to Jesus, "It's almost evening, and the people haven't eaten all day. They need to go and buy food. Send them home." Jesus looked at His disciples and said, "You give them something to eat." Then He looked at Philip and asked, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Would Philip and the other disciples have faith that Jesus could feed all these people?

Sadly, Philip didn't think it would be possible to feed so many people. "The salary of eight months wouldn't be enough to give each of these people a little bit of food," he answered.

Andrew thought a little bit differently. He said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fishes. But this is like nothing for so many people." He believed that Jesus could do something with this little bit of food, but he didn't know how He would do it.

Even this little bit of faith from Andrew was enough for Jesus. "Bring the food to me," Jesus said. Then He asked the disciples to divide the people in groups and make them sit down. There were 5,000 men in the crowd, as well as many more women and children. Once everyone was sitting down, Jesus began His miracle. He looked up to Heaven, blessed the food, began to split the bread and the fish, and gave it to His disciples. The more He broke the food, the more food there was. The disciples took the food from Jesus and gave it to the people.

The people gladly sat down to rest. They were hungry and tired, and were thankful to receive the simple food that Jesus gave them. When they had finished eating, there were twelve baskets of food left over. Jesus asked the people to take this food with them and share it with others.

The disciples learnt, through this story, that when we are with Jesus, He will give us the things we need. If we are following Jesus faithfully, we don't need to worry about our food or clothes; He will make sure that we have them.

This story also taught the disciples how to help others. Remember that, just before the crowd arrived, the disciples had been talking with Jesus about how to work for God's kingdom? Now Jesus showed them how. What did Jesus ask the disciples to do? He asked them to give food to the people. But where did this food come from? It came from Jesus. Jesus provided the food, and the disciples took the food from Him so that they could give it to the people. And

what happened with the leftover food? The people took it home and shared it with others, too!

What is food, or bread, in the Bible? It is God's Word. The bread is Jesus, too. Jesus wants us, His followers, to share His Word, His truths, with others. We need to do it just like in this story: if we want to share the message of God's wonderful love with others, we need to receive it ourselves first, from Jesus. If we are with Jesus, He will give us the right words, and will show us the right way, to share His message with others. There will be plenty to share. Will you come to Jesus so that He can feed you and give you something to share with others?

37. A Night on the Lake

***Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.
Hebrews 12:2***

*Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6: 45:52; John 6:14-21
DA chapter 40*

The people were excited. Jesus could feed thousands of people with only five loaves and two fishes! Surely He had to be the Messiah! No one could do something like this unless they had the power of God to do it. Imagine what a country could do with a king who could provide food like that!

“Let's make Him king now,” the people said to each other. Some of the men spoke with the disciples. “Look, Jesus isn't trying to become king at all. He is so humble and modest that He won't push Himself to be king. We should be the ones to crown Him king. Let's

do it!” The people, along with the disciples, began to discuss how to make Jesus king.

Jesus knew what they were doing, and He felt sad. He had not come to start an earthly kingdom; He had come to bring God’s kingdom to people, so that they could be saved from their sins. He could not allow them to force Him to become an earthly king. He asked the people to return home.

Jesus looked at His disciples and said to them, kindly but firmly, “I want you to go on to the other side of the lake now. I’ll stay here and meet you there tomorrow.” The disciples were not happy to do this. They wanted to stay and crown Jesus king! Why was Jesus sending everyone away? They wanted to force Jesus to let them all stay so that they could make Him king. But when they looked at Him, they saw that He was not going to change His mind. They obeyed Him and got inside the boat, but they were very unhappy.

After everyone left, Jesus spent the night there by Himself, praying. He knew that His disciples would be very letdown when they realized that He would never become an earthly king. He knew the disciples were disappointed right now and had been upset to leave. He prayed that God would strengthen them and help them understand the truth about why Jesus had come to earth.

Inside the boat, the disciples talked about their unhappiness. Why couldn’t Jesus let them make Him king? And why didn’t the priests and rabbis like Him? As they talked, they felt more and more unsatisfied. When they got on the boat, the night was calm and peaceful. But the more the disciples talked about how upset they felt, the cloudier the sky got. Suddenly a fierce storm fell on the disciples. For several hours they struggled against the storm, trying to save themselves and their boat. Finally, they realized there was nothing else they could do. Unless God saved them, they would all drown.

Just then, lightning flashed, and they saw something coming towards them on the water. They were terrified and cried out, thinking it was a spirit. But it was not a spirit – it was Jesus! He called out, “Be of good cheer, it’s me – don’t be afraid!” They were amazed to see that Jesus was walking on the water, just as easily as if He had been walking on land, and He was coming to be with them.

The disciples felt such relief and joy! Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, if it’s you, let me come with you on the water.” “Come,” invited Jesus. Peter looked at Jesus as he got off the boat, and began to walk easily on the water. But suddenly he stopped looking at Jesus. Instead, he looked at his friends. He wanted to see how they looked at him as he walked on the water. He also looked at the huge, scary waves. These waves didn’t let him see Jesus. Suddenly, he felt afraid and began to sink. Peter looked at Jesus again and cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Jesus stretched out His hand and saved Peter. Gently He asked, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Together, they walked towards the boat and got inside. Peter was quiet. He thought of how everything had been fine as long as he had been looking at Jesus, but as soon as he thought of himself and stopped looking at Jesus, everything had gone wrong. By himself he could do nothing; when he looked back at his friends to see if they were looking at him, he almost drowned. When he looked at the huge waves and stopped looking at Jesus, he almost drowned. He needed Jesus, and he needed to keep his eyes and thoughts on Jesus. So do we; if we stop looking at Jesus and stop thinking about Him and His words, we will be in danger.

As soon as Jesus had sat down in the boat, the wind stopped blowing, and the ship suddenly came to the shore that Jesus had wanted to reach. The disciples, and the rest of the people who were

in the boat, were amazed. They bowed at the feet of Jesus, and with feelings of gratefulness, they said to Him, "You are truly the Son of God!"

"You of little faith," Jesus had said. When we keep our thoughts on Jesus, we have faith. When we depend on Jesus to live our lives, we have faith. When we look at others, at our problems, or at ourselves, we lose our faith, because we don't see Jesus. Let's ask Jesus to give us His faith, so that we can be strengthened and helped by Him! Let's not forget Him and let our problems sink us underwater!

38. The Phoenician Woman

***For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:
for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.***

Romans 10:12

Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

DA chapter 43

The Israelite people believed something that made God very sad: they thought that God only loved and blessed Israelite people. Because of this, the Israelites did not teach people from other countries about God. Next to Israel, there was a country called Phoenicia, and the people in this country worshiped idols. They had not been able to learn much about the true God. But Jesus wanted to teach His disciples that God loved *all* people. "I have come to save the *world*," Jesus often said. God loved the whole world, and not just the Israelite people.

One day Jesus took His disciples to Phoenicia. When they arrived, a Phoenician woman came to Jesus. She had heard about Jesus, and she came to Him for help. “Son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is possessed by a demon. Please help us!” she cried. She believed that Jesus was the only one who could free her daughter from the evil spirit.

Jesus knew all about this woman’s story. In fact, He had come to Phoenicia because He wanted to help her. But He also needed to help His disciples to see that God loved *everyone*, not just Jews.

But Jesus did something quite strange. When the woman asked Him for help, He didn’t answer her. The woman kept begging Him for help, but He didn’t say anything at all. He was waiting for the disciples to say what they were thinking. What would the disciples say? Would they be glad that Jesus was ignoring this non-Jewish woman, or would they feel sad for her? Would they ask Jesus to help her, or would they ask Him to send her away?

“Lord, send her away,” the disciples said. They did not care that she was suffering. Jesus felt wounded, but He said something to her that seemed strange to His disciples. He said, “I was sent to save the lost sheep of Israel.” The disciples knew that Jesus didn’t speak like this; He was always telling them that He had come to save the *world*, not just Israel. Would the disciples ask Him why He was speaking differently now? No, they didn’t. They just accepted what Jesus said, because they agreed with it. They were happy to think that Jesus had only come to help Israelites. They did not see that other people also needed God. This troubled Jesus.

Now that the disciples had shown what was in their hearts, Jesus needed to let the woman show what was in *her* heart. So Jesus again had to do something unusual, something that did not sound like Jesus at all. He said to the woman, “We’re not supposed to take our children’s bread and give it to the dogs.”

The woman looked at Jesus. He looked so kind and compassionate, but His words sounded so mean. It sounded like Jesus was saying that God's blessings are only for God's children, the Jews, and that she was like a dog because she wasn't a Jew. But this was what the Jews believed; it was not what Jesus taught. Now the woman needed to choose. Would she believe that Jesus thought she was like a dog, or would she believe in the kindness of Jesus?

The woman decided to believe in Jesus' kindness. It didn't matter to her if the Jews thought she was as unimportant as a dog; even dogs can be treated kindly, can't they? She said, "You're right. Dogs should not eat the bread that is meant for children. But even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table." She was very sure that, just like Israel was being blessed by Jesus, she could also get at least a small blessing from Him.

Jesus turned to her, and said kindly, "O woman, your faith is great! I will do what you have asked." At that instant, the evil spirit left her little girl. This Phoenician woman went home joyful, knowing that God loved her and cared for her. She was just as much a child of God as any of the Israelites were. Now she knew that God wanted to bless her just as much as He blessed the Israelites. *All* people are precious and loved by God!

The disciples never forgot what Jesus taught them through this Phoenician woman. She believed that God loved her, even though the Jews wanted her to believe that He didn't. God loves all people and His blessings are for all of us, if we will just believe in His love. Do you believe this?

39. Food and Healing for Non-Jews

And in his name shall the Gentiles trust. Matthew 12:21

Matthew 15:29 – 16:12; Mark 7:31- 8:21

DA chapter 44

Jesus and His disciples arrived at Decapolis, the place where Jesus had freed the two demon-possessed men. Do you remember what happened there? The people had sent Him away, because they were upset that they had lost all their pigs. Jesus respected them and went away, but He left them two missionaries: the men He had freed from the demons. These men told the people all about Jesus. Now a few months had passed, and when Jesus returned to this place, the people were eager to see Him. They didn't care about their pigs anymore; they wanted to listen to Him, and they wanted to be healed by Him.

The people of Decapolis began to crowd around Jesus. They brought Him their sick, and He healed them all. One man, who was deaf and unable to speak, came to Jesus for healing. Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd, put His fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue. Then Jesus said, "Be opened," and the man was able to hear and speak. "Don't tell anyone what happened," Jesus said to him kindly. But the man couldn't stay quiet – he was so excited that he told everyone how Jesus had healed him!

For three days, the people came to Jesus. They longed to be with Him so much that they even slept outside under the stars where He was. These people were not Israelites, and they knew very little about God. But as they spent time with Jesus, they began to praise God. They accepted Jesus as the Messiah, even more than the Jews did.

After three days, Jesus said to His disciples, “I feel sorry for the people; they’ve been here for three days and have no more food to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry; they might be too weak to reach their homes.”

This was a chance for the disciples to show their faith in Jesus. They already knew that Jesus could use just a little bit of food to feed thousands of people; He had already done that. But the people here were Gentiles, not Israelites. Would they believe that Jesus would want to feed Gentiles just as much as He had fed the Jews?

Sadly, they did not. The doubting disciples asked Jesus, “Where can someone get food for so many people here?” Jesus asked them gently, “How much food do you have?” “We have seven loaves, and a few small fishes,” they replied.

Jesus asked the people to sit down. Then He took the loaves and fishes, gave thanks to God, broke them and handed the pieces to His disciples. With this food, He fed 4000 men, as well as many more women and children. After everyone had eaten, there were still seven baskets of food left over.

Jesus had already shown the Jews that He and His Father want to bring healing and comfort. Now He had shown it to people who were non-Jews. His disciples needed to decide whether they accepted Jesus as the Messiah for the whole world, or whether they preferred the lies that the Pharisees and Sadducees were teaching. We have this same choice today. Do we believe that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world? Do we believe that He wants to take care of non-Christians too?

40. The Blind Man at Bethsaida

That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:5

Mark 8:22-26

Jesus had come to a town called Bethsaida. He lovingly began to teach the people there and heal their sick. Then someone brought a blind man to Jesus. "Please touch him and heal him," they begged Jesus.

Bethsaida was a city that Jesus had blessed. The people there had heard His teachings and they'd seen His miracles, and even one of His disciples, Philip, came from Bethsaida. But sadly, most of the people in Bethsaida did not believe in Jesus. Jesus wanted to show the people that He could heal not only this man, but everyone in the city, if only they had faith.

First, Jesus silently took the man's hand and led him out of the city. He could have healed the man right there and then, but He chose to take Him out of the town. Why? To show that sometimes, we need to come out of places and beliefs that are stopping us from having faith in Jesus.

Then Jesus did something strange: He spit on the man's eyes and put His hands on him. Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see anything?" The man looked up and said, "I see people, but they look as if they were trees walking." Could the man see clearly yet? No. If people looked like trees, then he could not see them clearly! He needed more of Jesus, and he needed more faith in Jesus before he could be healed.

The man could have gone home now, but he didn't. He chose to stay with Jesus even longer. As long as he stayed with Jesus, Jesus could keep on helping him. Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes one more time. Then He made the man look up again. This time, when the man looked, he could see clearly. People didn't look like trees anymore! He was healed!

Jesus gently told the man, "Now, go back to your home. Don't go back into the town, and don't tell anyone in the town about how you were healed." Jesus said this to avoid problems with the jealous Pharisees.

Sometimes it seems as though we ask Jesus for help with something, but He doesn't answer right away. He does other things first, like He did with this man. But He does this to allow our faith to grow. Sometimes we cannot understand things clearly, just like the man couldn't see clearly. But if we keep spending time with Jesus and looking to Him, He will be able to help us completely, just like He helped this man. Waiting and believing is part of having faith. Do you choose to believe even when it seems that Jesus is not doing what you're asking? Keep on trusting Him; He will always do what is best for you, at the right time.

41. The Glorified Son of God

***This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;
hear ye him. Matthew 17:5***

*Matthew 16:13-28; 17:1-8; Mark 8:27- 9:8; Luke 9:18-36
DA chapters 45 and 46*

Jesus was spending some time alone with His disciples. He asked them, “Who do people say that I am?” They answered Him, “The Israelite people think you are a prophet, but not the Messiah.”

Then Jesus asked, “But who do *you* say that I am?” Peter answered what he and all the disciples thought. He said, “You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God”.

Jesus blessed Peter for this beautiful answer, and He said, “This is something that no person has shown you. Only my Father in Heaven has helped you understand this. And my church will be built on this knowledge that I am the Son of God.” Then Jesus asked His disciples to not tell anyone yet that He was the Messiah, because He knew that the leaders in Israel would cause a lot of trouble if they heard this.

Jesus continued talking to His disciples, “I will have to suffer and die, but I will be raised on the third day.” When Jesus said this, the disciples were unhappy. They believed that Jesus would become a powerful king. They could not understand that He would have to die. Peter held on to Jesus and said, “No, Lord, may this not happen to you!” Jesus looked at Peter. He knew that Satan was using Peter to tempt Him. Satan was trying to get Jesus to say, “No, I refuse to suffer. I won’t allow people to treat me badly.” So even though it sounded very stern, Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan. This is wrong, because the things of men are more important to you than the things of God.”

Then Jesus kindly kept explaining that He would suffer, and that if His disciples followed Him, they would also have to suffer to help others, just like Jesus would. But He comforted His disciples by saying, “Some of you here will not die before you see me coming in my kingdom.” Some of His disciples were going to see Jesus in His glory as the Son of God. Sadly, the disciples thought that He meant

that He would soon become a powerful earthly king. But that's not what Jesus meant.

Six days later, it was time for the words of Jesus to come true. He took Peter, James and John up a lonely mountain. First, Jesus stepped aside from them to pray. He prayed for strength to go through the cross, and He prayed for His disciples. The disciples prayed, too, but soon they grew tired and fell asleep. Jesus kept on praying. He asked for His disciples to see a glimpse of the glory that He had before leaving heaven and coming to earth.

God answered His prayer: suddenly the heavens opened, the gates of the city of God were opened wide, and a bright light came down on the mountain and upon Jesus. Jesus stood up, and He did not look like just a human being; He looked like the Son of God, shiny as the sun, with clothes white as light.

The disciples woke up and watched, amazed. Soon they saw that there were two other beings with Jesus: Moses and Elijah. Moses reminds us of all the people who died believing in Jesus, and who will be raised to life when Jesus comes back. Elijah, who was taken to heaven without dying, reminds us of all the people who will still be alive when Jesus comes back for us, and who will never die.

Moses and Elijah had come to comfort and encourage Jesus because He would soon go to the cross, but the disciples thought that Moses and Elijah had come to help Jesus become a powerful king. They thought Moses and Elijah might stay for a long time. Peter said, "Master, it's good that we're here. Let's make three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." If Peter had really understood what was going on, he would have realized that he was speaking nonsense. But Jesus was lovingly patient with him.

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” When the disciples heard this voice, they fell to the ground, afraid. Jesus came and touched them, and said gently, “Stand up, don’t be afraid.” When the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw that only Jesus was there; Moses and Elijah had left.

Peter, James and John had just seen Jesus in His glory as the Son of God. They had just heard God’s voice telling them that Jesus was His Son, and that they should listen to Him. To be a part of the kingdom of God, it was very important for them to understand who Jesus was, so God made it fully clear to them. We need to understand this, too. Do we believe that Jesus is God’s Son?

42. Help Me to Believe!

Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Mark 9:23

Matthew 17:9-21; Mark 9:9-29; Luke 9:37-45
DA chapter 47

Peter, James and John had just seen Jesus in shining glory. Their faces were glowing after what they had seen. Now they were coming down the mountain with Jesus, and He said to them, “Please don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until after I have risen.” Jesus knew that no one was ready yet to hear this story. His disciples wondered why Jesus was talking about rising from the dead. They still didn’t understand that He would have to die soon, even though Jesus kept telling them about it.

Soon they found the other nine disciples, and a large group of people with them. The nine disciples looked ashamed and discouraged. Jesus knew what was going on. He walked over to some scribes and Pharisees, and asked them, “What are you asking my disciples?”

Before the Pharisees could answer, a man spoke: “My son here is being troubled by a demon. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” The scribes and Pharisees had been making fun of the disciples because they had not been able to cast out the demon. They were making the people think that if the disciples couldn’t cast out a demon, then maybe Jesus wasn’t so powerful after all.

Jesus looked at the people sadly and said, “You have such little faith.” Jesus could only help people if they had faith. Without faith, Jesus was driven away. “Bring your son to me,” commanded Jesus.

As the man brought his son, the evil spirit threw the boy to the ground. The boy lay on the ground, moving and shrieking. Everyone watched silently. Jesus asked, “How long has this been happening?” “Since he was a child,” the father answered. The demon was so mean that it had often thrown his son into the fire or into water, to kill him.

The father wanted Jesus to help, but he didn’t really believe that Jesus was powerful enough to free his son. So he said, “*If* you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us!”

Jesus answered him, “*If* you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” Now the father understood that Jesus knew that he did not believe in Him. He felt terrible as he realized that his son was still demon possessed because he didn’t believe in the power of Jesus. The father cried and said, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”

This was enough. Of course Jesus could help! He turned to the boy and said, “You dumb and deaf spirit, I order you to come out of him, and to not enter him anymore.” The boy cried loudly one more time, and then lay on the ground, without moving. The people around him thought he might be dead, but Jesus took his hand and helped him to stand up. The grateful father received his son, who was now perfectly healthy, strong, and free.

Later that day, the nine disciples asked Jesus, “Why couldn’t we cast out the demon?” Jesus answered, “Because of your unbelief. If your faith is even as small as a mustard seed, you will be able to move mountains, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

The nine disciples had been too busy thinking about Jesus becoming king. They had been jealous of Peter, James and John, who had gone up the mountain with Jesus and they hadn’t. They had been thinking of their own need for greatness, instead of thinking about Jesus and how to be loving and helpful like Him. If they could stop thinking about themselves so much, and truly have faith in Jesus, they would be able to do wonderful things for God’s kingdom.

This faith that Jesus offered His disciples, and all the people who watched the miracle that day, is also offered to us. Let’s ask Jesus to help us to have more faith in Him!

43. The Greatest in God's Kingdom

***Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child,
The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4***

*Matthew 17:22-23; 18:1-20; 20:20-28; Mark 9:30-37; 10:32-45;
Luke 9:46-48; 18:31-34.
DA chapters 48 and 60*

Jesus and His disciples were walking to Capernaum. On the way, the disciples began to argue. "Who will be the most important man in Jesus' kingdom? I think it should be me," said one of the disciples. "No, I am greater," argued another. Jesus was walking ahead of them, so the disciples thought they could argue and He wouldn't know about it. But of course, Jesus knew what they were doing.

After they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus called His disciples together. "What were you arguing about on the way?" He asked. The disciples suddenly felt ashamed. They knew they had been selfish and jealous among themselves, and none of them knew what to say to Jesus.

Finally, one of them asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus answered, "Whoever wants to be first will be last of all, and servant of all." In God's kingdom, greatness comes from loving others and putting them first, not from thinking of ourselves as the greatest. Greatness in God's kingdom comes from knowing that we are full of ugly pride, and that we need God to change us.

Then Jesus called a little child to Him. As He held the child, He said, "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself as this little child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." God's followers need to be

like children? Why? Because God's true followers will believe in Him and trust Him just like a little child trusts and believes in his parents.

Now John admitted to Jesus, "Master, we saw someone casting out evil spirits in your name, and we asked him to stop, because he doesn't follow us." The disciples had felt jealous to see someone else doing things in the name of Jesus. But Jesus wanted them to know that they didn't need to feel jealous. Everyone who believed in Jesus could work for Him. Jesus said, "Don't stop him; if someone is doing miracles in my name, then he can't be speaking against me. If he's not against me, he is on my side."

Even though Jesus kept on telling the disciples that they didn't need to feel jealous of each other, and that no one was greater than anyone else, they still didn't understand. A few months later, James and John, who were brothers, came to Jesus with their mother. Their mother had done many kind things for Jesus before. She said to Jesus, "Please let my two sons sit, one at your right hand and one at your left hand, in your kingdom." She was asking Jesus to make James and John the most important men in His kingdom.

Jesus could see how much they loved Him, but how little they understood about His kingdom. "Will you be able to go through all the troubles that I will go through?" He asked them. "We are able," they answered. "Yes, you *will* go through those troubles," Jesus answered kindly, "But only my Father can decide who will sit at my left side and my right side."

When the other ten disciples heard about what James and John had asked, they were outraged. Jesus called them all together again, and said, "Earthy kings are used to bossing people around. But my followers won't do that."

In the Kingdom of God, the greatest are not those who boss people around, but those who serve and help others. Did Jesus come to earth just so He would make people do whatever He wanted? No, He didn't! He came to save them. This is what He wants His followers to do.

Jesus lived to help others. He longed for His disciples to understand that His followers will do the same, because they will love everyone just like God loves them. Jesus wants to give us His love for others so that we, too, will live to help others, and to forget about our own pride. Are we willing to accept this gift from Jesus?

44. Money in a Fish

And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. John 8:29

Matthew 17:24-27
DA chapter 48

Jesus and His disciples had just reached Capernaum. They came here often, so the people knew them well. Just then, one of the leaders of the temple came to Peter and began to talk to him. "All Jews pay a temple tax. Doesn't your master pay this tax?" he asked Peter.

This question was a test. If Jesus refused to pay the tax, then the leaders would be able to say that Jesus didn't respect the law. If Jesus paid the tax, He would be letting them know that He wasn't really God's Son, because why would God's Son have to pay a tax? Even though most people paid this tax, there was a group of people who didn't have to pay it. They were the Levites, the people who

worked in the temple. If the Levites didn't pay this tax, then of course God's Son should not be asked to pay it, either.

Peter should have said, "Let me talk to Jesus," or he could have said, "Why don't you ask Him yourself?" But instead, Peter promised, "Yes, Jesus will pay it." He didn't want anyone to think that Jesus was disrespectful of the temple.

After this, Peter walked to the house where he would meet with Jesus and the other disciples. Jesus already knew all about what had happened. When Jesus met Peter at the house, He asked him, "What do you think? Do kings take taxes from their own children, or from strangers?" "From strangers," answered Peter. It would be unthinkable for a king to charge his own children. "Then the children are free," said Jesus.

Peter knew now that he had caused a problem. He didn't know how to solve it, but Jesus did. Jesus said to Peter kindly, "We don't want to offend the temple leaders. Go to the sea and cast a hook. Take the first fish that comes up. When you open its mouth, you'll find money inside; take this money to the temple for you and for me."

Peter instantly obeyed Jesus. He took a fishing hook and walked to the sea. He cast the hook, and soon enough, he caught a fish. And just like Jesus had said, when Peter opened the mouth of the fish, there was a coin inside.

Peter took the coin to the temple to pay the temple tax for Jesus and for himself. And as he did so, he told others about the miracle of how he had gotten this money.

Through this miracle, the leaders could see that Jesus did not wish to cause any trouble. It was also clear that God had provided this money for Jesus, because He was His Father and gave Him

everything. Once more, the people were shown that Jesus really was the Son of God.

Jesus, the Son of God, trusted in His Father completely for everything. He wants us to trust Him in the same way, because when we believe in Jesus, we are children of God, too. Do we believe that God loves us and will provide everything for us if we only trust Him?

45. At the Feast of Tabernacles

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 1 John 5:12

John 7:1-36, 37-53

DA chapters 49 and 50

It was time for the Feast of Tabernacles, the last feast of the year. That whole year, Jesus had not been to the feasts in Jerusalem, to avoid trouble with the Jewish leaders. The brothers of Jesus wanted Jesus to attend Tabernacles. "Please go to the feast," they told Him. They wanted Jesus to make friends with the Jewish leaders and to become a powerful king. They were unhappy that Jesus only spoke of a spiritual kingdom and did not seem interested in becoming an earthly king.

Jesus said to His brothers, "Please go ahead to the feast without me. It's not time for me to go yet." Jesus was only going to go when His Father told Him it was the right time.

As people arrived in Jerusalem, they began to look around for Jesus. "Where is He?" they wondered. They wanted to see Him and His

miracles. The priests were also looking for Jesus, hoping that He would do something wrong so that they could punish Him.

Jesus arrived a few days later, all by Himself. He had used a different road to come to Jerusalem, so that fewer people would see Him coming. When He arrived at Jerusalem, He went to the temple, where there were many people. The people all saw Him come in. Suddenly everyone was quiet, and all eyes were on Jesus.

Jesus looked at the large group of people, and began to speak to them and teach them. The priests and leaders wanted to stop Jesus from speaking, but they couldn't. Day after day, until the last day of the feast, Jesus taught the people in the temple. He tried to help them see that the ceremonies during the feast pointed to Him, and that He had come to save them from their sins. He warned them that if they turned away from Him, then God would not be able to protect them any longer, and terrible things would happen.

The people liked listening to Jesus. The priests had never taught them the wonderful truths that Jesus was preaching. But the Jewish leaders were very unhappy that the people liked Jesus so much, so they sent spies to listen to Him, hoping that they could catch Him saying something wrong.

“By what authority are you teaching? Who said you could do this?” the priests asked Jesus.

“I only teach what my Father wants me to teach,” answered Jesus, “And what I teach glorifies God and helps people to understand His character.”

Jesus continued speaking to them. He knew that, although the priests taught that people should keep God's law, they were actually breaking it themselves, because they were planning to kill Jesus. And God's law says not to kill, doesn't it? Jesus asked them,

“Why won’t you keep the law? You are showing that you don’t know God. If you knew God, you would accept His Son.”

The priests knew that Jesus was right, but they refused to repent. During the eight days of the feast, God protected Jesus, and the priests were not able to hurt Him. Throughout the feast, many people were able to listen to Jesus and decide whether they would accept Him as the Messiah or not.

On the last day of the feast, the Pharisees sent some men to arrest Jesus, but these men came back without Jesus. “Why didn’t you bring Him?” the Pharisees asked angrily. The men answered, “We have never heard a man speak like Jesus does.” Even though they had been sent to accuse and arrest Jesus, they listened to His teaching and realized that Jesus really was the Son of God, and they could not arrest Him. “Have you also been led astray?” the Pharisees accused them.

“Let’s just arrest Him now!” the Pharisees angrily decided. But someone stopped them, and said, “Don’t do that! It’s against the law to do that without letting Him first explain Himself!” It was Nicodemus. Nicodemus believed in Jesus, and did everything he could to protect Him from the Pharisees. The Pharisees mocked him in response, saying “Are you also from Galilee, like Jesus?” But what Nicodemus did was enough to stop them. That evening, the frustrated Pharisees went home, and Jesus went up to the Mount of Olives to spend the night.

God protected Jesus so that the Pharisees could not arrest Him yet. God allowed a few more months to pass, to give the leaders and the rest of the people an opportunity to believe in Jesus and follow Him. There are times when many around us will go against the truth, just like the Jewish leaders did when Jesus was teaching so clearly. That was their choice, and we have the chance to make our

own choice, too. Will we choose to believe the truths that God teaches us, even when others don't believe them?

46. A Compassionate God

***And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee:
Go, and sin no more. John 8:11***

John 8

DA chapter 50

The Feast of Tabernacles had ended. In all those days, the priests had hoped to catch Jesus saying something wrong, but they didn't. They had wanted to arrest Him, but they had not been able to. Then the priests had an idea: they would *trick* Jesus into saying something wrong.

The day after Tabernacles, Jesus came back to the temple. Just then, the priests dragged to Him a frightened woman. "We caught her breaking the seventh commandment," they told Jesus, "Moses said that people who do this should be killed with stones. What do you say?"

Jesus knew that this was a trap. If He told them to stone the woman because she had disobeyed the law, they were going to tell the Roman authorities that He was causing trouble. If He told them not to stone her, they were going to tell the people that He didn't respect God's law. What could Jesus say?

Jesus didn't say a word. Instead, He began to write on the ground. The priests moved closer to see what Jesus was writing, and then they felt ashamed. He was writing their own sins on the ground. He

didn't write their names, but they knew that it was their sins. Then Jesus stood up and said, "Whoever is without sin, let him throw the first stone at her." Then He stooped down and continued writing on the ground.

The enemies of Jesus could not accuse Him of anything. Instead, they were faced with their own sins. They felt ashamed, but they were too proud to confess; so one by one, they quietly left. Soon, only Jesus and the woman were left.

"Where are the men who accused you? Has anyone condemned you?" Jesus asked her kindly. "No one," she said. Jesus gently answered, "I don't condemn you, either. Go, and sin no more." "Thank you!" cried the woman. She asked Jesus to forgive her, and from then on, she became one of His most loyal believers.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus had taught people that God is always loving and compassionate. And when the Pharisees brought this sinful woman to Him, how did He treat her? He was never mean or angry; He treated her with kindness and compassion. He helped her. This is how God treats us, too.

Jesus went back to the temple and taught the people some more. "See these tall lampstands from the feast?" said Jesus, "I am the light; with me you will be able to clearly see what needs to change in your life. I am also the truth; I teach you the truth about the Father. See the water fountain from the feast? I am the water, and with me, you will feel like you have all you need." All the things that the people could see in the temple were supposed to show them who Jesus was. Would they accept this?

Now the people could choose. Would they accept Jesus as the Son of a very loving and compassionate God? We have the same choice

today. Do we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that both He and His Father are kind and compassionate?

47. Jesus Heals a Blind Man

I am Jesus...I am sending you to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts 26:15, 18

John 9

DA chapter 51

Several times, Jesus said to the people, "I am the light of the world." The Pharisees did not like to hear this. "Why should we listen to you?" they asked. They felt so angry at Jesus that they picked up stones, hoping to throw them at Him and hurt Him. But God protected Jesus. He was able to hide Himself and escape the Pharisees safely.

Along the way, Jesus and His disciples saw a blind man begging. The disciples asked Jesus, "Why is this man blind? Is it because he sinned, or is it because his parents sinned?"

Jesus answered, "He's not blind for any of these reasons. This is something that God allowed so that the work of God could be seen in this man's life." The Jews believed that if something bad happened to you, it was because you had done something wrong. But Jesus explained that this is not always true.

Jesus, the light of the world, came to the blind man. He was going to bring light to this man. Jesus knelt down next to him, spat on the ground and made some mud. He then covered the man's eyes with this mud. Now Jesus said to him, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam." The man asked no questions; he simply obeyed Jesus and went to the pool to wash his face. After he washed his face, he was able to see.

The people who knew him were amazed. The man looked different now that his eyes could see. "Are you really that blind man who used to beg?" they asked. "Yes, I am he," assured the man. People began to ask him where his healer was, but the man didn't know.

The Pharisees were the only ones who were not happy to see this man healed. "Jesus healed him on the Sabbath," the Pharisees said angrily. They quickly called the healed man and began to ask him many questions to confuse him. Then they began to argue among themselves. "Jesus is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath," some said. But other Pharisees argued, "How can a man do such miracles if he is a sinner?"

After arguing, the Pharisees looked at the healed man and asked him, "What do you think about the man that healed you?" "I think He is a prophet," answered the man.

Now the Pharisees called the man's parents and began to ask them questions, too. They wanted to stop this man and his parents from believing in Jesus. The parents were afraid of the Pharisees. They didn't want to have to answer so many questions, so they said, "Our son was born blind. We don't know how it is that he can see now. Ask him about it, he's grown up and can speak for himself!"

Again, the Pharisees brought the man to them. "It is God who healed you, not Jesus; Jesus is a sinner," they argued with him. They kept on asking him many questions, and tried to confuse him so

that he would stop believing in Jesus. The healed man said, “I don’t know if He is a sinner or not; all I know is that I was blind, but now I see.” After more questions, the man just said, “I have already told you what happened, but you wouldn’t listen. Why are you asking me again? Do you also want to be His disciples?”

The Pharisees got angrier and angrier, and kept trying to cause the healed man to falter in his testimony. But the man gained courage from God, who gave him the right words to say. He said, “Only someone who comes from God could have healed me like this. This has never happened before.” The angry Pharisees knew that he was telling the truth, but they said, “You are not allowed to come into this synagogue anymore.”

The man felt sad about this, and walked away from the synagogue. But on the way, Jesus met him to comfort him. The man was happy to meet Jesus. As they talked together, he learnt who Jesus was. He worshiped Jesus right there. “I believe that you are the Son of God,” he said.

The Pharisees had been watching all of this. Jesus now looked at the Pharisees and said, “I came to this world to bring God’s truth. Some will think they don’t need this truth because they can see, but these people are actually blind. And some will think they are blind, but they will accept this truth and allow me to help them see.” If people accept Jesus, they will notice their sins and go to Jesus for help, but if they refuse Jesus, they will think they are ok when they are actually full of sins.

“Are you saying we’re blind?” asked the Pharisees. Jesus gently answered, “If you think you’re not blind, then you should be able to see your sins. But you’re refusing the light I want to give you, and you don’t want my help. So your sins will still be in your life.”

Jesus gave sight to the blind man, and he was able to see. He also longed to give spiritual sight to the Pharisees, so they could see their sins and their need for God. Jesus wants to help us see our own sins, too, so that He can help us remove them. Will you accept His healing?

48. Loving the Samaritans

***For the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives,
but to save them. Luke 9:56***

Luke 9:51-56; 10:1-24
DA chapter 53

Jesus was traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus hoped to stop at Samaria to spend the night. James and John went ahead to ask the Samaritans to receive Jesus and His disciples that evening. But the Samaritans refused. They liked Jesus, but they didn't like it when they heard that He was on His way to Jerusalem, because they didn't like the people in Jerusalem. "If He's on His way to Jerusalem, then no, He cannot stay here," they replied.

The two disciples returned to Jesus with the bad news. They were furious with the Samaritans for being so rude to Jesus. They asked Jesus, "Would you like us to command that fire fall from heaven and burn them up, like Elijah did?"

Hundreds of years before, the prophet Elijah had asked for fire to fall down and burn up some soldiers that were coming for him. And fire did fall down. Everyone thought that God had sent this fire to help Elijah, but Jesus now explained that this is not what had

happened. The fire had been sent by Satan because the soldiers had rejected God, and had refused His protection.

What the disciples were suggesting to Jesus was not a good thing. Jesus looked at them with pain in His eyes, and responded, “This does not come from God. The Son of Man came to save lives, not to destroy them. We will simply go to another village to spend the night.”

Jesus respected the Samaritans, and He also knew that if He gave them more love, they would accept Him again. A few days later, Jesus gathered seventy of His followers and sent them out to be missionaries for Him. “Go in pairs,” Jesus instructed, “And sleep wherever they receive you, and eat whatever they give you. If they don’t want you there, then leave politely. I would like you to go first to the cities of Samaria.”

This time, the Samaritans received the followers of Jesus, and many believed in Him. They realized that, even though they had been rude to Jesus, He had given them only love and care, and this changed their hearts.

When the seventy missionaries returned to Jesus, they were joyful. “Lord, we were even able to cast out demons in your name,” they told Jesus. They were able to do these things because they had faith in Jesus and His words. With this faith, they were able to bless so many people, including those they formerly thought didn’t like them. Will we accept the call from Jesus to help those who are rude to us also?

49. The Ten Lepers

Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise. Jeremiah 17:14

Luke 17:11-19

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, and He was passing near Samaria and Galilee. Just before He could go into a village, ten men started calling to Him.

The people who were with Jesus were frightened. These ten men were lepers! Leprosy was the scariest disease in Bible times. No one could cure it. Lepers had to live away from other people, because leprosy was easily passed on from one person to another. So these ten men lived together, outside the town. They could only be among other lepers. Some of them were Jewish, and some of them were Samaritans, but they stayed together because they all had leprosy.

These lepers had heard about Jesus, and they knew He was their only hope. They believed that He could heal them. They did not come close to Jesus because they were not allowed to, but they cried out loudly so He could hear. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Jesus saw them, and He called out, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." Why did Jesus send them to the priests? Because the priests were the ones who would look at a person and decide if he had leprosy or not. These men wouldn't be able to go back home to their families unless the priests said that they were healed.

The ten men believed Jesus, and as soon as He told them to go and see the priests, they excitedly went to find the priests. And as they

ran off, they saw that they were healed. And when the priest saw them, he said that, yes, they were healed.

As quickly as he could, one of the men turned back to find Jesus. All the way, He praised God loudly because he was so thankful to be healed. He found Jesus and knelt down in front of Him, and his face touched the ground. He wanted Jesus to know how grateful he was to be healthy again.

Jesus said, “Weren’t there ten men? Where are the other nine? None of them came back to give glory to God, except for this man – and this man isn’t a Jew.”

This grateful man was a Samaritan. The Jews thought that God didn’t love Samaritans as much as He loved Jews, but Jesus had healed him just as well as He had healed the Jewish lepers. And why was the Samaritan the only one who gave thanks to God?

Jesus said to him kindly, “Get up, go your way; your faith has healed you.”

Jesus was willing to heal all ten men, and He did. He did it even though He knew that not all of them would praise God for being healed. He did it even though He knew the nine would be ungrateful. He did it because He knew that there was at least one of them who would bring glory to God and be grateful for his health.

Every day, God gives us blessings. He gives us our home, our food, our clothes, our family, our life and all the things that we enjoy each day. Sometimes we don’t even notice that these things are gifts from God, do we? Let’s not be ungrateful like the nine men. Let’s thank God for all the wonderful gifts He gives us each day!

50. Jesus and the Children

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, For of such is the kingdom of God. Mark 10:14

Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17
DA chapter 56

Jesus loved children, and children loved being with Jesus. He was always kind and gentle, and they enjoyed His stories. Jesus longed for all the grownups around Him to believe in Him and trust Him the way the children did, so easily and fully.

One day, a group of mothers came to where Jesus was. They brought their children with them, hoping that He would bless them. The children were eager to see Jesus, too. "Please, may we bring our children to Jesus?" the mothers asked the disciples, "We would like Jesus to bless our children."

The disciples thought that Jesus was too busy for such a thing. "Don't bother the master," they said, and began to send the women and the children away. Jesus had been listening all this time, and He felt very sad that His disciples had given so little importance to the children. He quickly stopped His disciples and said, "Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of God belongs to people who are like them. In fact, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child does, will not be able to enter it."

Jesus wanted the people to understand that we all need to believe in Him and trust Him as easily as a child believes and trusts in his parents. This is harder for grownups to do, but they can do it if they look to Jesus and ask Him to take away their pride, and to change their hearts and minds. Often, grownups have learnt so many lies

about God, that it takes a lot of effort for them to change their understanding, and to really believe the truth about God. This is easier for little children to do. Children are also less embarrassed than adults to ask for help from God.

The mothers gladly brought their children to Jesus. He took the children in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them. Many of these children, when they grew up, became strong followers of Jesus. They never forgot this special day in which Jesus showed them how loved and precious they were.

Children were important to Jesus when He was here on earth, and they're important to Him now, too. Even little children can be followers and friends of Jesus. He wants to hear your prayers, and He wants to teach you about Himself through what you read and hear about Him. Will you come to Jesus today so He can bless you, just like He blessed those little children? And don't forget to encourage your parents to seek God for blessing and wisdom too!

51. The Rich Young Man

***Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him,
'One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatever thou hast,
and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:
and come, take up the cross, and follow me.'***

Mark 10:21

Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23
DA chapter 57

There was a rich young ruler who had been watching Jesus. He heard what Jesus taught, and he liked it. He watched Jesus blessing

the children one day, and he decided to go and talk with Jesus. *“I like how He blessed the children,”* thought the rich young man, *“I think He can help me, too. I have always followed all the rules, but I feel like something is missing in my life. I’ll go and talk to Jesus about it,”* he decided.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus, knelt before Him, and asked, “Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus looked at him kindly and asked him, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good.” Did this young man believe that Jesus was just a good man, or did he believe that Jesus was the Son of God? Jesus wanted him to think about this. Then Jesus said to him, “To have eternal life, you need to keep God’s commandments.”

“Which ones?” asked the young ruler. Jesus answered him, “You shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

The man responded, “I have kept all of these commandments since I was young. What am I still missing?”

Jesus looked at him kindly and felt such love for him. He could see that this young man really wanted something more in his life. He had riches and honor, but he didn’t have peace and joy, and Jesus wanted to give this to him. This young man didn’t know it yet, but he had never really given his heart to God completely. Jesus longed for this young ruler to realize his need for God, and for him to understand how much his character still needed to change. Jesus wanted to invite this young man to be among His followers and help in doing His work. Would this man accept what Jesus would tell him?

“You’re missing one thing,” Jesus said to him, “To be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come and follow me.” Jesus knew that this man’s riches were more important to him than God. He loved his money more than he loved God, and he was in danger of becoming selfish and forgetting about the needs of others. His riches would also stop him from understanding how much he needed God. Riches are not a bad thing; they can be a huge blessing when used correctly. But when riches become more important than God in someone’s life, then they can be dangerous. In this man’s life, his riches were becoming an idol.

The young man looked at Jesus and felt His love. He longed to follow Him. But he now needed to choose between his riches and Jesus. This made him sad. Why couldn’t he have them both? Jesus had just said to him, “You will have treasure in heaven if you do this.” Would the man believe that, when Jesus was asking him to give up his riches, He was actually offering to give him something better instead?

The young ruler decided that he didn’t want to give up his high position or his riches. He wanted to follow Jesus, but he also wanted to keep the things he already had. He felt gloomy, and walked away from Jesus.

How different this man’s life would have been if he had believed Jesus and followed Him! By choosing his riches, he showed that he, in fact, had never really kept God’s commandments. He loved his riches more than he loved God. Sadly, he rejected the chance to become one of Jesus’ followers and workers, and he missed the riches of heaven.

We get to choose, too. Do we really want to follow Jesus in everything He asks us to, and receive riches from heaven, or do we

prefer the things of this world, which will one day disappear and leave us feeling empty? Jesus is offering us the choice today.

52. At the Feet of Jesus

‘Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’

Luke 10:41-42

Luke 10:38-42

DA chapter 58

Jesus didn't have a home of His own to sleep in every night; He depended on friends in different towns who would offer Him food and room to sleep. Often, He even slept outside. Of course, Jesus needed to rest just like we all do, so He was grateful for the friends who offered Him room in their homes. One of these friends was Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, who lived in Bethany. Whenever Jesus needed a peaceful place to rest, He would visit them there. Lazarus and his sisters really enjoyed having Jesus in their home and listening to His teachings.

One time, Jesus and His disciples went to Bethany to stay with Lazarus for a few days. As usual, Jesus sat down and began to teach the people who were there. One of the people who was listening to Him very carefully was Mary. She had sat down quietly, and didn't want to miss any words from Jesus.

Martha, however, had other things in mind. She loved Jesus and His teachings, but she was more worried about all the things that needed to get done so that He and His disciples could all be

comfortable and well fed. She was so busy cooking, preparing and serving that she did not think about sitting down to listen to Jesus. But as she was doing her work, she looked at the group and saw Mary sitting there. This made her upset. Why didn't her sister get up and help her?

Without really thinking, Martha went over to Jesus and demanded, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus looked at her kindly. Martha didn't seem to realize it, but she had just interrupted Jesus in His teaching. She had also told Jesus that He needed to solve her problem with her sister. She had been so frustrated that she didn't even see that she had been quite rude to Jesus. But Jesus didn't want to distress her. He looked at her and said gently, "Martha, Martha, you are so worried about so many things, but there is one thing that is needed, and Mary has chosen it; it won't be taken away from her."

What did Jesus mean when He said that one thing was needed? He meant that we need to take time to calmly be with God, listen to His Word and receive His Spirit. Receiving this will bring peace and joy, and it will strengthen our faith. There are many things to do every single day, but if we don't take the time to first be with God, then none of those things will matter. All of the tasks that Martha was doing were important, but they were not as important as listening to the teachings of Jesus. If she had first sat and listened, she and Mary would later have found the time and strength to do all the other things. But because Martha was so busy doing things around the house before anything else, she was not going to have time to listen to Jesus, and she was missing out on what was most important.

Jesus was grateful for Martha's care for Him, but what He wanted even more than her cooking and hospitality was for her to listen to

His words and make them a part of her. This is what He was trying to tell her. Like Mary, we need to choose time with Jesus first every day, before we do other things that keep us too busy to be with Him. If we put Jesus first, He will help us to get all the things we need to get done, and His truths will be in our hearts and minds as we do them. Are we giving Jesus some of our time each day?

53. Lazarus

***Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life:
he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.
John 11:25***

John 11:1-44
DA chapter 58

One day, a messenger came to Jesus and told Him, “Your good friend Lazarus is sick.” Mary and Martha, Lazarus’ sisters, wanted Jesus to hurry to Bethany and heal him. But Jesus waited for two more days before He began the long trip to Bethany.

The disciples were confused. Why did Jesus wait so long before going to help His friend? They didn’t know it, but Jesus waited until Lazarus died before He went to Bethany. Then He said to His disciples, “We will go to Bethany now. Lazarus is sleeping.”

“Oh, does this mean that he’s better now?” the disciples asked happily. “No,” answered Jesus, “Lazarus is dead. But what will happen next will make your faith stronger.” Jesus had to stay away from Lazarus’ home, and allow him to die, so that a wonderful miracle could be performed – a miracle that would strengthen all the followers of Jesus. Through this miracle, even the priests and

leaders and those who hated Jesus would have a chance to accept Him again.

When Jesus arrived at the home of Lazarus, it was already full of people for the funeral. He called for the sisters. First Martha came to Jesus. She said to Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died." She couldn't understand why Jesus had let her brother die, but she still believed that Jesus loved them. She said, "I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask of Him."

"Your brother will rise again," Jesus encouraged her.

"Yes," she said, "I know he will rise in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?" Martha answered, "Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was sent to the world." She was sure that one day Lazarus would be raised to life again, but she didn't think that Jesus would raise him now.

Then Mary came to Jesus, knelt at His feet, and also said to Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died." Jesus tenderly asked her, "Where have you put him?" The sisters immediately took Him to the tomb where they'd put Lazarus.

Then Jesus began to cry. The people tried to understand why He was crying. "He really loved His friend," they said to each other, "Why didn't He heal him?" But Jesus wasn't crying just because Lazarus was dead. He was crying because He could feel the pain and sadness of His friends. He also felt the pain that sin had been causing people for thousands of years. And as He looked at the group of people there, He knew that many of them would never accept Him as their Savior, but were planning to kill Him, when all He wanted was to give them life. This is why Jesus cried.

They arrived at the tomb of Lazarus. It was a cave that was covered by a huge and heavy stone. Jesus ordered, "Take away the stone." Would His friends believe Him enough to open the tomb? At first, Martha said, "But, Lord, he's been dead for four days already; he stinks by now." Jesus looked at her gently and said, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" This was enough for Martha to believe. The stone was rolled away, and the people watched. Would Jesus really be able to bring Lazarus back to life?

Jesus, standing next to the tomb, prayed out loud, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me, and I knew that you always hear me, but I'm saying this for the people that are standing here, that they may believe that you have sent me." Jesus was letting the people know that He was the Son of God, and His miracle would prove it.

Then Jesus said loudly and clearly, "Lazarus, come out!" The people watched silently as Lazarus stood up and came out. He was still wrapped in the cloths they'd put on him for the burial. "Loose him, and let him go," Jesus ordered tenderly. His friend would no longer need those tomb cloths – he was back with his family, completely strong and healthy. The Son of God, the giver of life, the Restorer, had given Lazarus back his life. And He wants to give us life, too. Will you accept the life He wants to give you?

54. Zacchaeus

***For the Son of man is come to seek
and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10***

*Luke 19:1-10
DA chapter 61*

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, and as He traveled, He passed through Jericho. There was a man called Zacchaeus who lived in Jericho and needed to meet Jesus, so this is where Jesus went.

Zacchaeus was a Jewish tax collector. He was very rich, and people didn't like him because they knew that he became rich because he charged people too much money for taxes. But Zacchaeus was changing. He had listened to John the Baptist preaching by the Jordan. He had stopped charging people extra money, and he had begun to ask for their forgiveness, but most people didn't believe that he had changed, so they still hated him.

After John the Baptist died, Zacchaeus was filled with sorrow, but he felt hope again when he heard about Jesus. When he heard that Jesus was coming to Jericho, he longed to see Him. If only he could at least get a glimpse of Jesus, he knew he would find the strength to keep on changing.

One day he heard that Jesus had arrived in Jericho. He quickly went to see Jesus, but there were just too many people. Zacchaeus was a very short man, so all the people around him seemed much taller and blocked him from seeing Jesus. But Zacchaeus really wanted to see Jesus! Suddenly he saw a sycamore tree and decided to climb it, just so he could get a better view. He didn't care if people thought it was shameful for a rich and important man to climb a tree – he wanted to see Jesus!

Zacchaeus watched as Jesus and the large group of people came nearer to the tree. He was glad to just have a look at Jesus; he didn't expect Jesus to actually stop under the tree and talk to him – but Jesus did just that!

“Zacchaeus,” said Jesus, looking up at the tax collector, “Hurry, come down, because I need to stay at your house today.”

Jesus wanted to stay at *his* house? This delighted Zacchaeus! He had thought he would just get a glimpse of Jesus, but now Jesus was offering to stay in his home and spend time with him personally! The priests were also amazed. They looked at each other and said, “Why would Jesus want to stay in the home of a sinner?”

Zacchaeus quickly climbed down the tree. He knew what the priests, and the rest of the people, thought of him. He wanted everyone to know that he really did want to change, and that he really had repented. So right there, in front of everybody, Zacchaeus stood and said to Jesus, “Lord, I will give half of my possessions to the poor. And to those I have cheated, I will give back four times as much as I took from them.”

Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house.” Jesus encouraged Zacchaeus, because he knew that for some time now, he had been listening to God's Spirit, repenting and changing. Jesus finished by saying to the people, “For the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost.” He reminded the people that His work was to come and save all those who need saving. And who needs saving? Every single person does! If we were all perfect, Jesus would never have needed to come to earth to save us. What He wants the most is for us to listen to His Spirit and accept Him, so that He can change us and save us. And Zacchaeus had been doing just this for some time now.

How happy Zacchaeus was to have Jesus in His home! How happy Jesus was to spend time with Zacchaeus and help him! Zacchaeus and his family gladly became followers of Jesus from then on.

We can also choose to listen to the Spirit of God, just like Zacchaeus did. Will you ask Jesus to show you, through His Spirit, what you need to change? Will you let Him help you?

55. Bartimaeus

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. Psalm 146:8

Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52

Bartimaeus and his friend were sitting by the road just outside Jericho. Every day they sat there and begged for food or money. They did this because they were both blind.

One day they heard a big crowd of people coming out of Jericho. They wondered what was happening. Then they heard that Jesus of Nazareth had just been in Jericho. There was a big crowd because all of these people were following Him! They heard that He could heal. They also heard that Jesus even forgave sins. In fact, He had just forgiven Zacchaeus the tax collector!

Bartimaeus really wanted to know that God forgave his sins. He had not been a good man. He was a blind beggar now because he had not lived a good life. He was sorry for his sins and wanted to change. He was willing to be blind for the rest of his life, but he wanted to be sure that God forgave him and that he could change.

Bartimaeus and his friend began to cry out loudly, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" The people around them were bothered by their cries, and told them to stop. But Bartimaeus wouldn't stop. He and his friend cried all the louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus heard the cries of these two blind men. He knew their sad stories. He stopped walking, stood still, and called for them to come to Him.

Someone came over to Bartimaeus and his friend, and said, "Good news! Stand up! He's calling for you!" The two men had heard Jesus calling, and they didn't need anyone to come and get them. Even though they were blind, they left their coats on the ground, stood up, and stumbled as best as they could towards the voice of Jesus, and came to Him.

Bartimaeus was very happy. Jesus was merciful! He was willing to help them! When they reached Jesus, He kindly asked them, "What would you like me to do for you?"

What Bartimaeus wanted most of all was to be forgiven of his sins. He wanted his sinful heart to be healed. But now he also believed that Jesus could heal his sight. He said to Jesus, "I would like to receive my sight."

Jesus touched their eyes and said gladly, "Go, your faith has healed you." Immediately, Bartimaeus and his friend received their sight. Now they could see! Their eyes could see, but their hearts could also see the love and goodness of God. These two joyful men began to follow Jesus that day.

Jesus wants to give us our spiritual sight, too. He wants us to be able to see His truths, and His love and goodness. Will you ask Him to give you that sight?

56. Perfume for Jesus

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. Ephesians 5:2

Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-11; Luke 7:36-50; John 11:55- 12:11
DA chapter 62

Jesus was staying in Bethany with His dear friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha. While He was there, a Pharisee called Simon made a big dinner for Him and His friends. Simon was thankful to Jesus because Jesus had healed him from the terrible disease of leprosy. Of course, Lazarus was at the feast, too. Martha served at the table, and Mary had prepared a special gift for Jesus.

Mary was deeply grateful to Jesus. He had freed her seven times from demons. When others thought that she had no hope, Jesus had always been willing to help her, until she was finally free from her sins. She wanted to do something special for Jesus, and had saved money for many months to buy the most expensive spikenard perfume for Him – the kind that was used for kings.

Now, during this special dinner, she decided to give Jesus her gift. She quietly brought the perfume, broke open the alabaster box, and poured it on Jesus, some on His head, and some on His feet. Then she knelt down next to His feet and began to cry, thinking of how loving and merciful Jesus was, and how grateful she felt. As

she cried, her tears fell on Jesus' feet. She quickly tried to wipe them away with her long hair.

She hoped nobody would notice what she was doing, but the lovely smell of perfume filled the room. She heard the disciples whispering to each other. Then Judas said, "What a waste! This perfume could have been sold for 300 silver pieces, and that money could have been used to help the poor." The rest of the disciples agreed with him.

Mary felt embarrassed and confused. She could not explain what she was doing; she had just felt that she needed to show her love and gratefulness to Jesus, and this was how she was doing it. She didn't know that the Spirit of God had given her the idea to do it like this. She just thought, "*Will Lazarus and Martha also feel annoyed by what I'm doing? Is Jesus upset, too?*" She quickly tried to leave, but Jesus began to speak.

He spoke first to the disciples, "Leave her alone. Why are you troubling her? She has done a good thing. You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. She did for me all she could, and just before my burial."

Mary was relieved. Jesus had accepted her gift! She didn't need to explain to anyone why she had done this. Jesus said, "Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world, people will remember what she did here."

The poured perfume had not been a waste; it had been a beautiful lesson of love and gratefulness. Mary had wanted nothing but the very best for Jesus, because He had given her everything. Jesus was filled with joy as He realized that at least one person had understood His love for us. Did you notice that the perfume filled the whole room, and everyone noticed it, even though Mary didn't say anything? In the same way, if we love Jesus and are grateful to

Him for all He does for us, other people will notice, even though we don't say anything. With this love for Jesus, the gospel will be preached to the whole world.

Not everyone liked what Jesus said. Judas was infuriated that Jesus had disagreed with him and defended Mary instead. He didn't really care about helping the poor; he was just uncomfortable with Mary's act of love towards Jesus. He was so angry that he decided to betray Jesus, and that very night he went to the high priest and offered to hand Jesus over to them for thirty pieces of silver.

Simon, who hosted the meal, didn't like it, either. He thought, *"If Jesus was a prophet, He would have known how sinful this woman is."* It's unfair that he thought this, because he had been the one who led Mary into sinning in the first place. Jesus knew this, and He told a parable so that Simon would see the lesson without being embarrassed in front of all the guests.

"Simon," said Jesus, "There were once two men who owed money. One of them owed 50 silver coins, and the other owed 500. Neither of them could pay what they owed, so the creditor forgave them both. Which one do you think will love the creditor more?"

"The one who owed more will love him more," answered Simon. "That's right," said Jesus. "I came into your house, but you didn't give me water for my feet, yet Mary washed my feet, and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but Mary kissed my feet. Do you see her? She has shown much love, because her many sins are forgiven. But those who have only been forgiven a little bit will only love a little."

Jesus then looked at Mary kindly and said to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Simon was forever changed after that. “*Now I understand,*” realized Simon. “*I thought my sins were not that bad, so I didn’t realize how much forgiveness I needed. I have not been grateful to Jesus like I should be.*” Now Simon loved Jesus, and he repented of his sins. He became a strong follower of Jesus after this.

The love that Mary felt for Jesus can be ours. The more we understand how much Jesus has done and is doing for us, the more gratitude and love we will feel. We won’t need to say much; people will notice if we love Jesus just by the way we live our lives. Let’s ask Jesus to show us His love and to help us see what Mary saw. With this love, our lives will preach the gospel to the whole world.

57. The Triumphal Entry

***Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout,
O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he
is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass,
upon a colt the foal of an ass. Zechariah 9:9***

Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19
DA chapters 63 and 64

The day after the feast at Simon’s house, Jesus asked His disciples to go to a nearby village. “You will find a young donkey, a colt, there; untie it and bring it to me. When the owners ask you why you’re untying it, tell them that the Lord needs it.” Jesus was about to fulfil a prophecy in Zechariah, which said that He would come into Jerusalem like a king riding on a donkey.

The disciples were very excited. They brought the colt to Jesus, and as they were doing this, they told everyone what was happening.

“Finally,” they thought, *“Jesus will come into Jerusalem to make Himself king!”* The rest of the people thought the same thing, and soon there were large crowds of people ready to watch Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the donkey.

Even though Jesus knew the people didn’t understand what He was doing, He had to do it anyway. He did it because the prophet Zechariah had written that it would happen, and He also did it because it was very important for all the people to notice Him. They would see Him riding on the donkey like a king. Then they would see Him on the cross. When these people studied the Scriptures, they would understand that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies perfectly, and that He really was the Son of God.

As Jesus rode, more and more people crowded around. They began waving palm branches and singing praises and shouting out loud, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” The ones that Jesus had healed sang the loudest of all. The people happily laid down their coats on the road, and put palm and olive branches on the pathway for the donkey to walk on, just like they would have done for a king.

The priests, however, were not happy at all. They tried to quiet the crowd, but no one paid attention to them. The priests said to Jesus, “Make them stop!” But Jesus politely replied, “If these people become quiet, then the stones will cry out.” This moment had been prophesied, so if people didn’t follow God’s plans, then the stones would.

The priests went to some Roman soldiers and said, “Please do something to stop this man!” But when the soldiers looked at Jesus, they saw that He was gentle and good, and wasn’t doing anything wrong. They liked Jesus so much that, instead of arresting Him, they scolded the priests for causing trouble!

Finally, Jesus came to the edge of a hill, and there He stopped the donkey. Everyone looked out and saw Jerusalem and the beautiful temple. The people were all looking at the beautiful city and enjoying the view. But then they looked at Jesus and they saw that, instead of enjoying Himself, He had started to cry. He was so full of sadness that His whole body shook as He wept. The people watched quietly. They couldn't understand why Jesus was crying. Why wasn't He happy after all the praises they had sung to Him?

Jesus sobbed because He knew that most of the people in Jerusalem would not accept Him as their Savior, even though they were singing praises to Him now. These same people would crucify Him very soon. These people would soon shut God out of their lives, and He would have to leave them and allow Satan to do whatever he wanted with them. He knew they would suffer. Jesus loved them so much that it hurt Him to know He would lose them.

Jesus did not want to give up the people of Jerusalem; they were His people that He had cherished for hundreds of years. They still had time to believe in Him as their Savior. But if they didn't, it would soon be too late – this was to be their final decision, and Jesus would respect their choice.

We, too, have the chance to choose Jesus. He wants to be our Savior, the King of our hearts. He wants to give us a beautiful character like His, full of love and gentleness. He wants to be our Protector. Do we realize what it means if we choose a different king than Him? Do you choose Him today?

58. Jesus' Last Visit to the Temple

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!' Matthew 23:37

Matthew 21:12-17; 23-27; 22:15-46; 23; Mark 11:15-19; 27-33; 12:13-40; Luke 19:45-48; 20:1-8; 20-47.

DA chapters 65 to 67

Jesus stood at the court of the temple. It was full of selfish vendors who were selling animals at expensive prices, taking advantage of visiting believers. There was a lot of noise. It was impossible to worship there, and this made Jesus sad. Three years before, He had cleaned the temple. Now He would have to do it again, because He wanted to spend time teaching the people before His death. He especially wanted to reach the priests.

First, Jesus stood and looked at the people. The people all went quiet and felt afraid, even though Jesus wasn't attacking anyone. He simply said, "It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. Take these things away." Just like the first time, the irreverent vendors and priests were troubled and left the temple as quickly as they could.

Many people left quickly, but others stayed. Jesus gladly taught these people and healed their sick. He blessed the children who were there, and at times a child would climb on His lap and fall asleep. The people were so happy and felt such peace that they began to sing praises to Jesus right there in the temple. Even the children sang.

Just then some of the priests that had run away decided to come back to the temple. When they heard that people were praising

Jesus, they were disturbed. “Make them stop!” they commanded Jesus. But Jesus answered, “The Scriptures say that praise will come from the mouths of little children.” The children were singing the truth about Jesus, so Jesus was not going to stop them.

Now the priests decided to ask Jesus difficult questions, hoping that He would say something wrong so that they could punish Him. Jesus knew they were listening to Him carefully now, so He told them parables to help them see their danger. They had a chance to repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah, but sadly, they were too proud to do it.

“Where do you get authority to do these things?” they asked Jesus. Jesus knew what they were trying to do, so He asked them a question: “When John the Baptist baptized people, was it from God, or from men?” Now the priests were stuck. They knew the people believed that John the Baptist had been from God, but if they said that, then Jesus would be able to ask them, “Then why don’t you believe in me, since John said I am the Lamb of God?” But if they said that John’s baptism was not from God, then the people would get angry at them. Finally, they responded, “We don’t know.” “Then neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things,” answered Jesus.

Then the Pharisees sent a young man to ask Jesus a trick question: “Should we pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” Jesus knew it was a trick question, but He knew how to answer it. “Show me a coin,” He said. When they showed it to Him, He asked, “Whose face is on this coin?” “Caesar’s,” they answered. “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s,” answered Jesus. The Pharisees were amazed at the answer of Jesus. He had clearly taught that we should obey God first, and that we should obey the laws of our country as long as they aren’t against God’s law.

The Pharisees and Sadducees sent more people to ask Jesus difficult questions, but Jesus had good answers for all of them. They could not find anything wrong in what Jesus said. Finally, Jesus asked *them* a difficult question. He asked, “Whose Son is the Messiah?” They answered, “He is the Son of David.” Then Jesus asked, “So if the Messiah is the Son of David, then why does David call Him Lord?” No one calls his son “Lord,” does he? Everyone went quiet. After Jesus asked this, the Pharisees and Sadducees stopped asking Him questions. Jesus was able to keep on teaching the people.

This was the last time that Jesus taught at the temple. After this, He would never return. In fact, God’s presence would leave this temple soon, forever. With tears, Jesus said, “O Jerusalem, you kill the prophets that God sends to you, but I would have liked to gather your children together, like a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you wouldn’t accept it!”

After this, Jesus and His disciples left the temple. He had completed His work there. Now it was up to each person there to decide for himself whether he would accept Jesus as the Messiah or not, but Israel as a nation, through the leaders, had rejected Jesus.

Jesus invites all of us to look to Him and accept Him as our Savior. We can choose to receive His care and protection, or we can be stubborn and proud like the scribes and priests. Which do you choose to be? Will we try to have our relationship with Christ?

59. The Fig Tree

For by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8,9

Matthew 21:17-22; Mark 11:11-14
DA chapter 64

Jesus was spending some days teaching at the temple, but in the evening He would walk to Bethany to spend the night. One morning, as He was returning to the temple, He walked past several fig trees. He was hungry, and saw that one of the trees was full of big, green leaves. Usually, the fig trees that have big leaves also have fruit in them. But when Jesus got closer to the tree, He saw that the tree only had leaves; it had no fruit. Jesus spoke to the tree and said, "Let no fruit grow on you from now on." Then Jesus and His disciples left.

The next morning, when they went past this same tree, they saw that it had dried up. The disciples were amazed. They wondered why Jesus had done this to the tree. Jesus never destroyed; He always restored. Why had He done this? "Master," said Peter, "Look, the fig tree that you cursed has dried up."

Jesus did this as a parable. He needed to show His disciples something really important. The Jewish nation, with its beautiful temple and all its ceremonies, was like that very green and leafy fig tree. The tree looked healthy and strong. The Jewish nation looked like it was busy doing God's work, taking care of the temple and offering all the sacrifices. But when Jesus looked closely, He saw that the fig tree had no fruit. In the same way, the Jews had no spiritual fruit, either. They did not have the fruits of the Spirit, such as kindness, peace and gentleness, in their characters.

The fig tree without fruit was useless. No one wanted a fig tree without fruit! In the same way, people without the fruit of good character cannot enter God's kingdom. Why not? Because to produce this fruit, we need faith. If we don't have faith, we will not even be interested in being a part of God's kingdom. But if we have faith in God and believe His words, His Spirit can change our hearts, and we will have lovely characters fit for heaven, just like a tree that produces lovely fruit.

The Jews, without the fruits of the Spirit, confused other nations and blocked them from getting to know God. Other nations would look at their beautiful temple, their scrolls, and their sacrifices, and they would think it was wonderful. But when they came closer, they would find that the Jewish leaders had no love, no joy, no peace, and no gentleness, and they would turn away.

How can we receive the fruit of the Spirit? By having faith, which allows the Spirit of Jesus in our lives. The fig tree died because it stopped receiving the water that kept it alive; it dried up. In the same way, if Israel kept on rejecting Jesus, they would lose their spiritual water supply. They were going to lose God's protection. Jesus, through His Spirit, is our spiritual water supply, and He is the only one who can give us life.

Jesus explained to His disciples, "If you have faith, you won't only be able to do this to the fig tree; you will be able to tell a mountain to move and go into the sea, and it will happen. Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." There are so many things that God would like to do for us, but we need to have faith in His words for this to happen.

We can choose whether we want to be like the fruitless fig tree, or whether we want to have the faith that produces beautiful fruit in

our character. Let's ask Jesus for this faith. He perfectly trusts and believes in His Father. He will gladly give us His Faith!

60. The Widow's Offering

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee. Deuteronomy 16:17

Mark 12:41-44; Luke 20:45 – 21:4

DA chapter 67

During those last few days in which Jesus spent teaching at the temple, He spoke clearly about the problems of the scribes and Pharisees. These men made long prayers in public, gave lots of offerings, and went to every temple ceremony. But none of this brought them closer to God. Why not? Because during their ceremonies, they were not thinking about what God had done for them, but rather about what other people would think about them. They were very proud of themselves. Their long prayers meant nothing, because they were not changed by God's love. Instead, right after praying, they would still cheat widows and poor people, and they didn't care about those who needed their help. Even though they gave God big offerings, this money was just what was left over of their wealth; they didn't miss any of it, because they still had so much for themselves.

One day Jesus was at the courtyard of the temple. There were large treasure chests in the courtyard for people to leave their offerings. Jesus watched as the people came in to contribute. Rich men came in and dumped their many coins noisily into the chest so that others would hear and see them. They enjoyed knowing that other people admired them for giving such big offerings.

Then a poor widow came to bring her offering. She quickly slipped in two tiny coins, and turned to leave before anyone could see her. Jesus' face brightened when He saw her, and she saw Him looking at her. Then she heard Jesus say to His disciples, "This widow, although poor, has given more than all these other men."

How could her two tiny coins be more than the huge sums of money that the others had brought? Jesus explained, "These men gave from their abundance, but this woman gave all that she had, even what she needed for herself."

The widow left the temple full of joy. Jesus had understood her! This woman loved God and wanted to help the work of God in the temple. She had been willing to give away money that she needed for herself, because she loved God so much. She had felt embarrassed to be giving so little, but it really was all she had. It made her happy that Jesus saw how valuable her gift was.

This woman gave out of love – she was happy to give God everything she had. The rich men gave out of pride - they wanted to look good in front of others. Who do you think knew God better? The more we know God and appreciate how much He has done and is doing for us, the more we will do things out of love. God doesn't want us to do things just because we think we have to do them; He wants us to live and act out of true love and gratefulness to Him for what He is doing for us. If we ask Him, He will give us this love and gratefulness in our hearts.

61. Greeks Come to Jesus

***While ye have light, believe in the light,
that ye may be the children of light. John 12:36***

*John 12:20-50
DA chapter 68*

Jesus had finished His work at the temple. He had just told the Jews, “This temple, which is your house, will be left desolate (empty).” They had rejected Him, and God’s presence would soon be leaving the temple.

Just after Jesus said this, Philip and Andrew came to Jesus. “There are some Greek men here who are asking to see you,” they told Him. Jesus was very happy to meet with these Greek men. The Jews as a nation might have rejected Jesus, but there was still time for other nations to accept Him. These Greek men were among the first non-Jews to believe in Jesus. They loved God and had come to worship during the feast, and they had also hoped to meet Jesus and see for themselves who He was.

As Jesus spoke with these men, other people listened, too. Jesus began to explain that He would soon have to die so that all of us could receive eternal life. He also invited His followers to join Him in helping others to know God. As Jesus spoke, the people saw a cloud surround Him.

Then Jesus prayed out loud. In His prayer, He told His Father that He felt troubled because He would be crucified soon. He wished He didn’t have to go through something so awful. But as He prayed, He felt comforted. He ended His prayer by saying, “This is what I came to the world for. Father, glorify your name – please let people understand your character.”

God gladly answered Jesus' prayer. A light shone from the cloud that was over Jesus, and the voice of the Father was heard by everyone there as He said, "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again." This was the third time in Jesus' life that God spoke out loud to His Son, in front of other people publicly.

Even though everyone heard the voice, some people were still confused. "It thundered!" some said. Others said, "An angel spoke to Him!" But the Greeks saw the cloud, heard the voice, and understood and believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

Jesus said to the people, "This voice was heard out loud not for me, but for you." Then He told them, "The world will judge me very soon - everyone will decide what they think of me. I will be crucified, and I will bring all people close to me." The people were being given the last opportunities to accept Jesus, the light of the world. He said, "The light will be with you for just a little longer. Believe in the light while you have it, so that you can be children of light."

After Jesus said these things, He left, and they couldn't find Him. Did the people need any other sign to prove that Jesus was truly the Son of God? They had just heard God Himself speaking to Jesus! Hadn't they also seen how good and kind Jesus was, and the miracles He had done? What else did people need to see to believe that Jesus was the Messiah? At that moment, many of the Jewish rulers believed, but they were afraid of the other leaders, so they stayed quiet. Sadly, the rest of the Jews decided that not even these signs were enough to believe. But the Greeks did believe. What they saw and heard was more than enough for them to see that Jesus really was the Son of God.

The Greeks chose to believe the light. The Jewish leaders chose to reject the light. We also have the chance to choose. How much

proof do you need to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Is there any fear in your life that is causing you to reject His light?

62. Signs of the End

***I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.
Matthew 28:20***

*Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38
DA chapter 69*

The priests were afraid. They had heard Jesus saying, “This temple, which is your house, will be left empty.” What did Jesus mean by that? He meant that soon God’s presence would leave the temple, because they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Even though the priests were afraid, they pretended not to care about what Jesus had said.

But the disciples did care. What did Jesus mean? Was the temple really in danger? As they were leaving the temple, the disciples pointed to the beautiful, strong walls of the temple. Yes, the temple was beautiful. But Jesus sadly said to His disciples, “One day there won’t be even one stone on top of another; this temple will be completely destroyed.” Many people heard what Jesus said, and His disciples thought about it quietly.

Jesus and His disciples went up the Mount of Olives to rest. Now that they were away from other people, the disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us, when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?”

Jesus gently explained the signs of the end – first of the end of the temple, and then of the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would happen 40 years later, and the second coming would happen hundreds of years later – we are waiting for His second coming right now. Jesus knew that the disciples were not ready to understand the difference between these two events, so He told them the signs for both. He knew that, with time, His followers would read His words in the Bible and eventually understand which event He was talking about.

“There will be men who will come saying that they are the Messiah. Don’t let them confuse you,” warned Jesus. This happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, and it’s still happening now.

“You will be arrested and mistreated. Some of you will be killed, because you believe in me,” Jesus explained, “People will get offended and will hate and betray one another.” This is because, when they reject God, they lose the love of God in their hearts and are unable to love others. This will happen before the second coming, but it also happened just before Jerusalem was destroyed. The Jews hated the followers of Jesus and wanted to hurt them.

Then Jesus warned them, “When you see armies surrounding Jerusalem, run away quickly to the mountains, because the end is near.” Forty years later, when this happened, all the Christians remembered the words of Jesus and fled to the mountains. Of all the people who died in the destruction of Jerusalem, none of them were Christians. The Christians were all safe because they obeyed Jesus’ words.

Jesus also spoke about the signs of the second coming. “There will be wars and rumors of wars,” said Jesus, “and there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes.” These are all signs that human beings have rejected God, and He is withdrawing His protection

from the earth. But we don't need to be afraid, because God is always there with His children, to give them strength and comfort.

Jesus also said, "The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars will fall from heaven." This already happened in 1780 and in 1833. "In the end of time, people will be wicked just like before the flood of Noah," Jesus said. The world will get worse and worse before His coming, "and the gospel of God's kingdom will be preached to the whole earth." In the time of Noah, men had so damaged the earth that the terrible disaster of the flood occurred. So it will be in our time, that as we damage the earth more and more because of sin, there will be more and more calamities. The message of Jesus coming again will become even more urgent. Everyone will have a chance to learn and decide for themselves whether they want to be a part of God's kingdom or not; or whether they will put their faith in this world that is falling apart.

Then Jesus explained what His second coming would be like, "The Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and He will gather His followers from all over the earth." Those who died believing in Jesus will be raised and taken up to heaven. Those living will be saved from all the terrible things happening on the earth.

"But no one knows the day or the hour when this will happen. Only my Father knows this," explained Jesus. And how can we get ready for the coming of Jesus? He tells us how: "Watch and pray always." This means that we just need to spend time with Jesus and get to know Him. If we are sure that Jesus loves us, we will have peace and comfort even when things get difficult. The signs of Jesus' coming might make many people feel worried, but we don't need to feel that way. These signs are telling us that Jesus will soon be here!

Jesus lovingly told His followers all these signs, so that we can be ready. We don't need to be afraid, because God is stronger than anyone or anything, and Jesus has promised to be with us always, even in the end of the world. Let's get to know Him better each day, and learn to rest in the assurance of His comfort, protection and love. Will you?

63. The Greatest Servant

***For I have given you an example,
that ye should do as I have done to you. John 13:15***

Luke 22:7-18; John 13:1-17
DA chapter 71

It would soon be the Passover. Jesus told Peter and John, "Go into the city [Jerusalem], and you will find a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him to his house. Then tell the master of the house, 'Our Master is asking where the guest room is, for Him to eat the Passover with His disciples.' After you ask him this, he will take you to a large upper room. Prepare everything there."

Everything happened exactly as Jesus had said. Soon the disciples had everything ready, and Jesus and the twelve disciples went up to the upper room for their Passover supper.

As they sat down, they realized there was a problem: they did not have a servant to wash their dusty feet. Usually, servants did this unpleasant job. But now, who would do it? They didn't have servants, and none of the disciples wanted to act like a servant and wash anyone's feet. In fact, just before arriving to the room, they'd been arguing among themselves as to who was more important

and who was closer to Jesus. Each disciple wanted to be the greatest disciple – and important people didn't wash anyone's feet, did they?

Jesus felt sorrowful. He knew that in just a few hours, the sins of every single person on earth, including your sins and mine, would do their full work in His life. All of our sins would disconnect Jesus from His Father, and it would become clear what the consequences of sin are. Jesus knew that this separation from His Father would break His heart. He also knew that He would be rejected and treated cruelly by the Jews, and that He would suffer on the cross as well. And as He looked at His disciples, He felt sad because they were so filled with selfishness.

Jesus needed to teach His disciples how to love like God loves. To do this, He picked up a towel and a basin of water, and quietly began to wash each disciple's feet. Suddenly, the disciples felt ashamed of themselves. Why was Jesus washing their feet? *They* should have been washing His feet! They saw their selfishness, and wanted to be loving and humble like Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "No, you will never wash my feet!" He felt bad that Jesus had to do this job of a servant. But Jesus said to Him, "I need to wash you for you to be in my kingdom." Just like Jesus was washing his feet, He wanted to wash his heart from sin as well. "Lord, then wash my hands and head, too!" answered Peter. Jesus answered him, "You've already been washed, only your feet are dirty and need washing." Peter already belonged to Jesus; Jesus just needed to wash his pride and selfishness that night.

Jesus finished washing their feet, and He looked at them and said gently, "Do you see what I've done to you? I am your Master and Lord, yet I've washed your feet. You should also wash each other's feet."

Now the disciples were no longer arguing about who was the greatest. If their own master had washed their feet, then why couldn't they be humble with each other? Now they felt love towards each other and wanted to be like Jesus. They were sorry they had been so proud and selfish. Jesus had shown them, by example, what the greatest in God's kingdom will do. And what will they do? They will serve others. Just like Jesus, they will find ways to help and bless others, even if it means doing things that no one wants to do. This is why we have communion service at church, in which we wash each other's feet. Every time we do this, we remember what Jesus tried to teach His disciples that day, and what He wants us to learn, too.

The greatest in God's kingdom will think of others before themselves. This is what Jesus did for us, and He will gladly help us to do this for others. Will you be willing to serve others like Him?

64. The Last Supper

This do in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11:24

Matthew 26: 20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-23; John 13:18-30
DA chapter 72

Jesus had just washed His disciples' feet. They were sorry they had been so proud and selfish that Jesus had had to do the job of a servant for them. Now they understood their duty to each other and what Jesus wanted them to be like. Their hearts had changed, and they were ready to enjoy a special meal with Jesus.

This was the Passover meal, and the last one that they would have with Jesus. Jesus took the bread, broke it, and said, "Take and eat;

this is my body.” The body of Jesus would be broken, just like the bread was being broken that day. The Bible also says that Jesus is the bread of life; just like we can’t live without food, we also can’t live without Jesus.

Then Jesus took the wine and said, “Drink all of it; this is my blood. Do this in memory of me.” Jesus would be hurt and would bleed for us, and from then on, the disciples of Jesus would always remember the sacrifice of Jesus whenever they drank grape juice.

Jesus asked the disciples to do these things, to remember what He has done for us. So since then, the followers of Jesus have had communion. Even now, whenever we have communion and eat the bread and drink the grape juice, we can think about how Jesus gave everything for us to be saved. It helps us to understand how much He loves us.

The disciples’ hearts were changed by what Jesus was doing that evening – all except for one. Judas was the only disciple who did not like what was happening. He was annoyed that Jesus had done the work of a servant. “*The Messiah would never do that,*” Judas thought. Now he really wanted to betray Jesus. Jesus knew this, and wanted to give Judas a chance to repent. He said, “One of you will betray me tonight.” This worried the disciples, and each of them began to ask, “Lord, is it I?” One by one they asked. John was leaning on Jesus, and asked Him, “Lord, who is it?” Who would do something like that? Jesus softly answered, “It is the same man who is dipping his hand in the dish with me.” Someone in this very room would betray Him! Judas finally asked, “Master, is it I?” Jesus responded very quietly, “You have said it.” Judas suddenly wanted to leave the room. He felt very uncomfortable.

As Judas was leaving, Jesus said to him, “The thing you need to do, do it quickly.” This was the last chance that Judas had to repent. Jesus was actually saying to Judas, “You need to repent. Do it soon,

before it's too late!" But what did Judas understand? Because he refused to repent, he decided that Jesus was saying to him, "You need to betray me, and do it quickly!" But of course, that's not what Jesus meant at all. Jesus had done all He could to touch the heart of Judas. After Judas left the room, Jesus could no longer reach him.

The last lesson that Jesus gave His disciples while living here on earth was a lesson of love and service. He did the job of a servant for His disciples, and He loved them fully. He even loved Judas. And He can help us do the same for others. He gave His disciples, and us, a way to keep remembering His love and sacrifice for us. Every time we participate in a communion service, we can remember the deep, unselfish love of Jesus, and ask Him to give us that same love for others.

Each disciple that day had a choice: they could decide to learn from Jesus so they could be more loving, or they could reject Him. Eleven of the disciples chose the love of Jesus, but Judas chose his own pride. He did not want to be humble, and he did not want to sacrifice himself like Jesus was teaching them to do. We have the same choice today. People naturally don't want to be humble and serve others; this is something that only Jesus can give us. Only He can change our hearts to make us more like Him. Will you let Him?

65. The Last Conversation

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. John 17:23

*John 13:31-38; 14-17
DA chapter 73*

Jesus was alone in the upper room with eleven of the disciples. Judas had already left the room, and was going to meet the priests to betray Jesus.

Jesus began to speak to the disciples. It was the last time He would be able to prepare them for what was going to happen. He said, "I will be with you just a little longer, then I will go where you cannot go."

Jesus would leave? The disciples felt worried as they heard this. But Jesus comforted them, saying, "Don't be troubled. I will go to my Father's house to prepare a place for you, and then I will come again for you."

The disciples were confused. Thomas asked, "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless it's through me. If you know me, then you know the Father, too." Philip still didn't understand. He said, "Lord, show us the Father!" Jesus patiently explained, "I've been with you all this time, and you still don't know me, Philip? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." Jesus and His Father have the same loving character, and the same purpose of saving us. So whatever Jesus did, the Father is like that, too.

Jesus continued, "If you believe in me, you will be able to do the same works that I do. You need to ask the Father for it in my name." Jesus explained to them that even though He would leave, the Father would send His Spirit to comfort and guide them. Right now, Jesus could only be in one place at a time, but after He went to heaven, He would be able to send His Spirit and be with each one of His followers, anywhere in the world.

It was now time to go to the Garden of Gethsemane. Together, Jesus and His disciples sang Psalm 117, which they always sang for Passover, and then they left the upper room. As they walked to Gethsemane, the disciples noticed that Jesus looked sadder and sadder. He told His disciples, "Tonight all of you will be upset and ashamed because of me." Peter burst out, saying, "Even though everyone might be offended, I won't be!" Jesus felt sad because He knew what would happen with Peter. He gently said to him, "Tonight, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." Peter was upset by this, and exclaimed, "No! I would be willing to die with you!"

Jesus looked at His disciples kindly and said, "After I rise again, I will meet you in Galilee." He was letting them know that He would forgive them for leaving Him, and He would be with them again. As they walked, Jesus kept on teaching them. He reminded them that they needed to be connected to Him, just like the branches are connected to the vine. If the branch is connected to the vine, it will produce fruit. If we are connected to Jesus, we will develop the fruit of the Holy Spirit. "I want you to love one another, like I have loved you. People will know you are my followers by the way in which you love one another," said Jesus. Jesus loved even those who hated Him, and He would help His followers to do the same.

Then Jesus made a beautiful prayer. He prayed for His disciples, and He also prayed for all the people who would follow Him afterwards, including you! He prayed that we would all come to know Him and His Father, and reflect their character of love. "I have glorified you on earth, helping people to see what you're really like, and for this, I have finished the work which you gave me to do," prayed Jesus to His Father.

Jesus had given some last words of assurance and encouragement to His disciples. Through His life He had shown the world and the universe how loving and kind God is. Now it was time for Jesus to

allow Satan to show his cruelty and hate. We can thank Jesus for living such a loving, compassionate life, fully representing God His Father. Do we believe God is like His Son Jesus?

66. At Gethsemane

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; John 18:1-12
DA chapter 74

Part 1: In the Garden

Jesus and His disciples walked to the garden of Gethsemane. The closer they got to the garden the quieter Jesus became. He began to feel a deep sadness. He was feeling the whole world's rejection of Him, without the reassurance of His Father that it was ok. It seemed to Him that His Father's presence was fading away from Him, and the vastness of sin was overwhelming Him. Jesus was filled with anguish.

Near the entrance to the garden, the disciples all found spots to rest. But Jesus asked Peter, James and John to come with Him a bit further into the garden. When they reached His favorite spot, Jesus said to the three disciples, "Stay here, and watch with me." Jesus walked just a bit further away, where His friends could still see Him, and He fell to the ground to pray.

Jesus could feel Himself being separated from His Father because of the sins of the world. The more He carried our sins, the more He felt the “wrath of God.” And what is this wrath of God? Is it God being angry? No, it’s not. It means that God doesn’t stop sin from hurting us anymore; He doesn’t get in the way of sin anymore. If a person has rejected God again and again, God finally respects this person’s wishes – He stops protecting this person from this sin, and in the end, sin causes this person to die. This is God’s wrath, and it’s completely different from human wrath, isn’t it? God is grieved whenever this happens, because He loves each of us and wants to give us life. But He can only do that if we allow Him to; He will never force us to accept His help. When God stops getting in the way of sin, then this sin takes over and separates a person from God.

When Jesus carried our sins, God was right there, close to Jesus, but He allowed our sins to do to Jesus what they would do to us if we held on to our sins. As Jesus felt the horrible weight of our sins, He felt separated from God, and completely alone. No man has ever felt what Christ experienced, and no man will experience it until the 2nd death when all the people who have rejected God will face their sins without Jesus bearing any of them. Jesus showed us through His death what the consequence of sin is. He wants us to know this so that we can choose life.

Jesus had spent His whole life being close to God and feeling His presence and comfort, and this separation brought Him much sadness and anguish. He wished someone could take those sins away from Him, but there was no one. He was the only one who could carry these sins for us so we could believe that God forgives us. As He suffered, Satan tempted Him to think that it wasn’t worth it to do this for us. “You might never even see your Father again,” Satan suggested, “And also, think of all the millions of people who will never even be grateful for what you did! Just forget about doing this, and go back to your Father! You don’t have to suffer through this.”

Jesus was suffering and struggling so much that He kept falling down to the ground. He prayed, "Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me. But I want to do your will, not mine." He wished God could take away this terrible suffering from Him, but He was willing to go through it if God said it was best.

Jesus needed comfort. He would have felt strengthened if His three friends had been there to say kind words to Him, and if He had found them praying. But instead, He saw them sleeping. He gently woke them up, and said, "Are you sleeping? Couldn't you watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray, so that you won't be tempted." Then Jesus went back to His prayer spot.

Again, Jesus asked God to let this cup, or this experience, pass from Him, "But only if it's your will." Jesus was suffering so much that He began to sweat blood, and He kept falling to the ground. The disciples heard Jesus praying, and they thought they should go to Jesus, but they quickly fell asleep again. Once more, Jesus gently woke them up. When they saw that He was sweating blood, they felt scared and confused. Their fear, worry and confusion made them want to sleep, not pray. They could not stay awake.

Again Jesus went to pray. He prayed that He wouldn't give in to temptation. "Please take this cup from me, but only if it's your will, and not mine." After this prayer, Jesus made a decision. He thought about all of us, and what would happen if He didn't do this for us. He thought of all the people that would be saved because of Him. He would do it, no matter what. "If this cup won't pass away from me unless I drink it, I will do it; may your will be done," He prayed. After saying this, He collapsed, almost dying from so much suffering.

The friends of Jesus were not staying awake to pray with Him, but all the angels of heaven were watching. How they wished they

could free Jesus from His suffering! Suddenly an angel came down to Jesus – the angel that stands in God’s presence. He came to encourage Jesus. He couldn’t take away the sins that Jesus was carrying, but he tried to comfort Him. He placed Jesus’ head on his chest, and reminded Him, “Your Father loves you. Millions of people will learn about your suffering, and they will finally understand how much God loves them, and you will be able to save them. Don’t give up.” The disciples woke up and saw the angel and heard his voice, but their confusion, fear and worry made them feel drowsy, and they quickly fell asleep again.

Part 2: Judas Betrays Jesus

After the visit of the angel, Jesus was encouraged. He was still suffering tremendously, but He felt strengthened to face what was coming. For the third and last time, Jesus went over to His disciples. And again, they were sleeping. They had not stayed up to pray like He had asked them to. With sadness, Jesus said to them, “Keep on sleeping; it’s time for me to be handed over to sinners.” Jesus knew that it was time for sinners to do whatever they wanted with Him; the whole universe would see very clearly that Lucifer had always wanted to kill Jesus, and that sin causes death.

Just then they heard voices and footsteps coming into the garden. Jesus said to His disciples, “Get up, let’s go; the one who will betray me is here.” The voices and footsteps were from a group of loud, angry men that had arrived. Jesus went to them. “Who are you looking for?” He asked. “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am He,” answered Jesus.

Just then, the angel who had just been with Jesus stood between Him and the mob. The men saw that the face of Jesus shone brightly. The angel did not hurt anyone, but the crowd of men fell to the ground when they saw the bright light. Jesus could have easily gotten away, but He didn’t.

After the angel left, the bright light went away. Now the men got on their feet. They felt ashamed and angry, upset that they had been afraid. They didn't want to accept that God had given them one more chance to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. "Who are you looking for?" Jesus asked again. "Jesus of Nazareth," they responded. "I am He," Jesus said again.

Now someone came to Jesus and kissed Him on the cheek. It was Judas! "Hello, Master," he said, trying to act friendly. He pretended to be worried about what was happening to Jesus, but it was actually he who had led all these people here. He had even promised the priests that he would kiss Jesus on the cheek just so that they could know who Jesus was, and catch Him.

Jesus looked at him sadly, and said, "Judas, where were you? Are you betraying me with a kiss?" Judas could have repented right then. He could see that what he was doing was wrong, but he refused to repent. He just stayed silent.

Suddenly the mob grabbed Jesus and tied Him up. Jesus didn't fight back; He would allow these men to do whatever they wanted with Him. It was time to allow Satan to show the whole universe what he is really like. Whatever these people did to Jesus would be what Satan wished to do to Him.

The disciples were shocked to see Jesus being tied up. Peter couldn't stand it. He had a sword with him. He suddenly grabbed his sword and attacked the mob. In his attack, he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus quickly untied Himself and touched the wounded ear. And instantly, the servant was healed. Then Jesus looked at Peter and commanded, "That's enough. Put your sword away; those who use the sword will die with a sword. Didn't you think that if I ask my Father, He can send thousands of angels to help me? But the scriptures need to be fulfilled. I need to drink the cup that my Father has given me." Killing and attacking is not God's

way of doing things, and Jesus doesn't want His followers to do it, either.

Now Jesus looked at the priests and leaders, who were there among the mob. He said, "You have come to me with swords and sticks, as if I'm a thief. So often I taught at the temple, but you didn't arrest me there. You are doing this at night, in the darkness." The priests were arresting Jesus at a time when most people were asleep, so that no one would defend Jesus. They didn't want anyone to stop them from doing this. What they were doing was not fair. It was not right.

Now Jesus allowed them to tie His hands again. When the disciples saw that Jesus wouldn't free Himself, they felt so afraid that they all ran away and left Him alone. They didn't want to be arrested with Jesus.

Jesus faced tremendous suffering that night. He carried the sins of every single person, and He did it even though it brought Him terrible pain. He loved and forgave His disciples for sleeping when He needed them. He forgave them for running away when He was arrested. He loved Judas and wanted to forgive him, too. He was gentle and loving to the mob who came to arrest Him, and even healed a man's ear. All this shows how loving and forgiving God is. God and His Son truly gave everything so that we could be saved and have eternal life. Let's thank our Father for such an amazing gift!

67. At the Court of the High Priest

[Christ] Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed to him that judgeth righteously. 1 Peter 2:23

Matthew 26:57-27:10; Mark 14:53-72; 15:1; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:13-27

DA chapters 75 and 76

It was night time. The few Jewish leaders who liked Jesus and who defended Him were sleeping. They did not know what was happening; no one had told them. The priests and leaders who hated Jesus wanted to act quickly. They brought Jesus to the home of Annas. The noisy mob followed them. Annas was an older priest who used to be the high priest. He wanted to find something wrong in Jesus, but Jesus had never done anything wrong.

Annas began to ask Jesus questions, hoping that Jesus would say something wrong. But Jesus simply said, "I have never spoken in secrets; people have heard me in the temple and the synagogues. You can ask the people I talked with; they know what I said." Finally, Annas didn't know what else to ask Jesus, and he looked very uncomfortable. One of the servants felt so angry at seeing Annas uncomfortable, that he slapped Jesus on the face. Jesus looked at the servant and gently said, "If I have said anything evil, please tell me. But if I haven't, then why are you hurting me?"

"Take Him to Caiaphas, the high priest," ordered Annas. At the court of the high priest, the group of leaders met to judge Jesus. Caiaphas began to make fun of Jesus, and asked Him to perform a miracle. But Jesus simply stood there quietly and calmly. Even though they were treating Him cruelly, He was the only person at peace in the whole room.

Caiaphas the high priest also tried to find a reason to accuse Jesus, but he could find none. He brought in people to tell stories about Jesus, but all these stories were lies, and what each person told didn't make sense with what the others were saying.

Finally, Caiaphas asked Jesus angrily, "Aren't you going to answer anything to what these people are saying?" Jesus simply remained quiet. Then Caiaphas said to Him, "I ask you, in the name of the living God, to please tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." This was a very important question, asked by one of the most important Jewish leaders. The high priest was asking Jesus if He was the Son of God. Jesus respectfully answered him, "Yes, as you have said it." Would the high priest accept Jesus' answer?

Jesus had just told the High Priest the truth, that He was God's Son, the promised Messiah. This was a chance for Caiaphas to repent and to accept Jesus, but He refused to listen. Instead of receiving Jesus as the Son of God, he decided to condemn Him and send Him to die. Filled with anger, he did something that a priest should *never* do – he ripped his priestly robe to express how infuriated he was. "We don't need to hear anyone else! This man is speaking against God!" he shouted. According to the manmade laws of the priests, a priest could rip his clothes if someone spoke things against God. But according to God's law, a priest was not allowed to rip his clothes. When Caiaphas did this, he broke God's law and stopped having the authority of a high priest in the eyes of God.

It was still night time, and according to Jewish law, no one could be condemned at night. So they had to wait a few hours until daytime. Meanwhile, they allowed the mob to mock Jesus and hurt Him. In all of this, Jesus was always calm and gentle.

Something else happened while Caiaphas was questioning Jesus: the disciples John and Peter came into the room. Even though they

had run away in Gethsemane, they had changed their minds and decided to return and stay close to Jesus. John watched everything silently and didn't mind if people knew who he was, but Peter was anxious and scared and didn't want people to know who he was. He found a warm fire in the room to warm his hands. Suddenly a servant girl looked at him and said, "You're one of them, aren't you?" "No, I don't know Him," Peter lied. Just then the rooster crowed.

Then someone else said to Peter, "You're one of His followers, aren't you?" "No, I don't know Him, I promise you!" Peter lied again. Then another person asked him, "Didn't I see you in the garden with Him? I'm sure you're one of them. The way you speak shows that you're one of them!" The people knew that the disciples of Jesus didn't use bad words. So Peter, to make sure that no one thought he was a disciple of Jesus, began to use bad language, and told the people there that he didn't know Jesus.

Just then, the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered that Jesus had said, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will have denied me three times." Peter looked at Jesus, and Jesus looked at Peter. The face of Jesus was full of care and pity, and Peter felt terrible. He realized he had hurt Jesus, and he ran off, back to the garden of Gethsemane. There he cried for a long time, and wished to die. He begged God to forgive him.

As soon as it was daytime, the Jewish rulers brought Jesus in again to ask Him questions, hoping that He would say something wrong. "Are you the Christ?" they asked. Jesus didn't answer them; He had already answered those questions. After more questions, Jesus responded, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you won't answer me or let me go." They asked Jesus again, "Are you the Son of God?" "You say that I am," answered Jesus. None of this was enough to condemn Jesus, but the leaders decided to take him to the Roman governor. But first, they let Jesus be abused and

mocked even more. The mob was so violent with Jesus that even the Roman soldiers felt angry at the crowd and tried to protect Jesus.

Judas was also watching the trial. Slowly he realized that Jesus was not going to free Himself, and he began to feel terrible. He realized he had betrayed innocent Jesus. He ran to where Caiaphas was, threw the 30 pieces of silver on the floor, and shouted, "He is innocent! Let him go! I have sinned, I have betrayed an innocent man!" But Caiaphas told Judas, "That doesn't matter. It's your problem." Judas then knelt in front of Jesus. "Free yourself!" he begged. Jesus looked at Judas kindly and answered, "I came to the world for this." Now that Judas understood that Jesus was not going to free Himself, he ran out of the room, and sadly, he hung himself and died. Jesus would have forgiven him, but Judas didn't believe that God could forgive him for what he had done.

The Jews, Jesus' own people, accused Jesus of things He never did, and they treated Him like a terrible criminal. Now they would take Him to the Romans to see if He could be killed. Through all this cruelty, Jesus was loving, calm and respectful. He loved the cruel priests, He loved Peter who denied Him, and He loved Judas who betrayed Him. He loved the violent men in the mob who mocked and abused Him. He was willing to forgive them all, but only a few would accept His love and forgiveness. Through these things that happened, the whole universe was able to see the love, gentleness and mercy of God, and the cruel, evil hate of Satan. Let's thank God for all the love He has given us through Jesus!

68. At the Courts of Pilate and Herod

*[Christ] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.
1 Peter 2:22*

*Matthew 27:2, 11-31; Mark 15:1-20; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28 –
19:16
DA chapter 77*

Governor Pilate

It was early morning now. The priests quickly brought Jesus to the Roman governor. The Roman governor was called Pilate. When Pilate looked at the peaceful, gentle face of Jesus, he knew that Jesus was not a criminal.

“What has this man done?” Pilate asked the priests. The priests knew that Jesus hadn’t done anything wrong, so they weren’t sure what to answer Pilate. So they said, “If He hadn’t done anything wrong, then we wouldn’t be bringing Him here to you.” They hoped Pilate would just believe them, and punish Jesus. But Pilate looked at Jesus and decided that Jesus was a good man. Yet he was afraid of the Jewish leaders, so he said, “Take Him, and judge Him according to your law.”

“Our law says that He should die,” they answered, “But we need your permission to kill Him.” Then they brought people who told lies about Jesus. They hoped that Pilate would believe them that Jesus was a threat. But Pilate could see that they were lying.

Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus responded, “You are saying it.” Now the priests began to shout at Jesus. Pilate was surprised that Jesus remained quiet and did not respond to their accusations. He asked Jesus, “Won’t you answer anything? Look at all the things they’re saying against you.” But Jesus still said

nothing; He didn't need to defend Himself. His face, and His life, proved that He was innocent.

Now Pilate took Jesus aside and spoke to Him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked again. Jesus gave him an answer that spoke to his heart. He tried to reach Pilate and convince him of the truth, and said to him, "Are you asking this for yourself, or did others say this?"

Pilate felt in his heart that Jesus was the Son of God, but he felt uncomfortable and decided to ignore what he was feeling. He said to Jesus, "I am not a Jew, but look – the Jewish leaders, your own people, are saying that you are guilty. What have you done?" Jesus kindly answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If I had an earthly kingdom, I would have servants defending me. But my kingdom is not from here."

"So are you a king, then?" asked Pilate. Jesus responded, "You say that I am a king. This is why I came to the world; to show people the truth. Whoever loves the truth will listen to my words."

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" But he didn't wait for Jesus to answer him; he quickly went back to the priests and said, "I don't find anything wrong with Him." The priests complained, angry at what Pilate was saying. Pilate really wanted to free Jesus, but he was afraid that the angry mob would cause big problems. So he said, "Jesus is from Galilee. Take him to king Herod, the ruler of Galilee, so he can judge him. King Herod is visiting here in Jerusalem right now."

King Herod

When King Herod heard that they were bringing Jesus to him, he was glad. *"Maybe if I can help Jesus, I can feel better about what I did to John the Baptist. Also, I really want to see a miracle,"* thought

Herod. He looked at Jesus and knew that Jesus was innocent. He asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus didn't respond; He remained silent. Herod asked Jesus to perform a miracle, but Jesus stayed silent. There was no need for a miracle. Jesus had already done many miracles; the people didn't need to see one more. Everyone already knew who Jesus was, and that He had done nothing wrong. They just needed to decide how they would treat Jesus.

Herod felt angry that Jesus wouldn't speak to him. Finally, he let the crowd do whatever they wanted to Jesus. They mocked Jesus and treated Him roughly. They put a beautiful kingly robe on Jesus, and Herod, the priests, the crowd and the soldiers made fun of Him. Jesus was calm and silent through it all. He never complained and never got angry, even though it hurt Him to be treated that way. But even as they were mocking Jesus, some of the people there, including Herod, were sure that Jesus was the Son of God. Even though Herod could see that Jesus was from God, he refused to free Him. But he also refused to condemn Jesus. Instead, he ordered that Jesus be sent back to Pilate. Herod was too afraid of the Jewish leaders to free Jesus, and at the same time he was too afraid to be responsible for Jesus's death.

Pilate again

Again, the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate. Pilate was not happy about this. "I don't see anything wrong with Him," Pilate said, "So I will let you whip Him, and then I will let Him go." If Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, then why was Pilate letting Him be whipped? Pilate was hoping to make the priests happy by making Jesus suffer, and he hoped that they would think that was enough punishment.

Just then Pilate received a message from his wife. It read, "Please don't do anything to this innocent man. I just had a terrible dream about Him." Pilate wanted to listen to his wife and let Jesus go, but

he was afraid of the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders kept on asking Pilate to put Jesus to death. How could he free Jesus?

Then Pilate had an idea: it was almost the Passover, and every Passover, the Romans would free a Jewish prisoner. Pilate decided to bring in the worst prisoner he had, called Barabbas. "You can choose between Jesus, or Barabbas. Who would you like me to set free?" asked Pilate. He was sure the people would choose Jesus, because Barabbas had done horrible things, and Jesus had always been so good and kind. But Pilate was shocked when the people cried out, "Free Barabbas!"

"What do you want me to do with Jesus?" asked Pilate. The crowd cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate did not want to kill Jesus, and much less crucify Him. "What evil has He done?" asked Pilate. But the people kept on demanding that he crucify Jesus. Then they took Jesus into a large room, they dressed Him in purple clothing like a king, and placed a crown of thorns on His head. Then they mocked Him, and spit on Him, and hit Him with a rod. Jesus was faint with weariness, and covered in blood. In all this, He never complained, and never lost his temper, even though all of this hurt Him immensely.

Pilate, and many of the soldiers, were amazed at how patient and gentle Jesus was. He thought the priests would feel sorry for Jesus and let Him go after all this suffering. But instead, they kept asking to crucify Him. Pilate tried talking to Jesus one last time, but Jesus wouldn't respond. Jesus had already answered all his questions; Pilate already knew what he needed to know. Finally, Pilate said, "You won't speak to me? Don't you know I have the power to have you crucified, or to set you free?" Jesus answered, "The only power you have is what is given to you from heaven. But those who brought me to you are more guilty than you."

Pilate tried one more time to convince the Jews to let Jesus go free, but they wouldn't. "Do you want me to crucify your king?" Pilate asked. The Jews answered, "Our only king is Caesar, the Roman emperor! You are not Caesar's friend if you let Jesus go free!" Now Pilate was really afraid. He wanted to be Caesar's friend, of course, or else he would not be able to be the governor anymore. What would he choose: being a governor, or freeing Jesus? Sadly, he chose to be a governor. He took water and washed his hands, saying, "I am innocent of killing this man!" But was he really innocent? No, because he could have set Jesus free, but he didn't. The Jewish leaders told him, "We and our children will take the blame for killing Him." And Pilate allowed Jesus to be taken, whipped again, and crucified.

During the trial, Jesus showed the character of His Father. Jesus showed that God is patient, kind, gentle, and loving. He didn't try to get back at the people who treated Him so cruelly. He tried to gently reach the hearts of each of the people who were there. This trial also showed the whole universe how Satan is full of cruelty, mockery, hate and evil. As the angels watched, they had no doubt that God is love. As we think about this story, we will also understand the difference between God's gentle, loving character, and Satan's cruelty and evil. Let's thank Jesus for being willing to suffer so that we can see more clearly how beautiful the character of God is.

69. Jesus is Crucified

[Christ] Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

*Matthew 27:31-53; Mark 15:20-47; Luke 23:26-56; John 19:16-42
DA chapters 78 to 80*

Part 1: Going to the Cross

A huge crowd of people gathered to watch as Jesus was taken to be crucified. Jesus was supposed to carry His own cross to the place of crucifixion, but He was too weak. He hadn't slept, He hadn't had anything to eat or drink, and He was bleeding from all the beatings He had received. The cross was just too heavy, and He couldn't carry it even though He tried.

Just then, a man called Simon the Cyrene, who wasn't a Jew, came to watch. A soldier saw Simon and forced him to carry the cross of Jesus. Simon hadn't expected to do that. He didn't even believe in Jesus, even though his sons did. But he was struck by how gentle Jesus was, and felt honored to have helped Jesus by carrying His cross. Simon became a strong follower of Jesus after that day.

Some women were standing nearby, crying. They felt very sad to see Jesus suffering. As He passed by, He stopped to comfort the women. He cared more about their pain than about His own suffering.

Part 2: On the Cross

Finally, Jesus and two other criminals were nailed onto crosses. They put Jesus in the middle, between both criminals. As the soldiers hammered the long nails through His hands, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are

doing.” Jesus loved them even though they were causing Him a lot of pain.

Each cross had a sign. On that sign, people could read what the prisoner had done wrong. Pilate hung a sign on the cross of Jesus, which said, “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” From this sign, it was clear that Jesus had done nothing wrong, and that the Jews had decided to kill their own king. “Oh - no, please don’t put that sign,” the priests begged Pilate, “Please change it to ‘Jesus *said* He is the king of the Jews’.” But Pilate was very upset that he had allowed Jesus to be crucified, and he was angry at the Jewish leaders, so he answered them, “What I have written, I have written.” He was not going to change the sign. There were thousands of people visiting Jerusalem that day because of the Passover, and they would read that sign. It would make many of them study the Scriptures and believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

Once Jesus was placed on the cross, the soldiers divided His clothing among themselves. His tunic was made from one piece of cloth. “Let’s not tear it,” the soldiers said to each other, “Let’s cast lots to see who gets to keep it.” They didn’t know that the Scriptures had said that this would happen.

As Jesus hung on the cross, the Jewish leaders made fun of Him. Jesus suffered as He heard them. These men should have been leading the people to follow Jesus, but instead they had caused people to stay away from Him. The thieves that were crucified with Jesus saw and heard everything that happened to Him. One of them angrily said to Jesus, “If you are the Messiah, save yourself and us!” But the other thief replied, “Don’t you respect God? We deserve what is happening to us, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” This thief was sorry for the crimes he had committed. He wished that he had followed Jesus during his life. Now he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus was more than happy to forgive this thief. He said to the man, “I

assure you today, you will be with me in paradise.” The man now had peace, knowing that God had forgiven him.

John the disciple and Mary the mother of Jesus were standing by the cross, watching with much sadness. Jesus looked down and said to Mary, “Woman, look at your son!” And to John, He said, “Look at your mother!” He wanted to make sure that after He died, Mary would have John to take care of her. John gladly brought her to his home and cared for her the rest of her life, and she was comforted to be able to live with such a close disciple of Jesus.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He was still carrying the sins of every single person on this earth. This sin separated Him from His Father, and this made Him feel sad and without hope. He didn’t know if He would rise again and be with His Father. At midday, it suddenly became pitch-dark. The sun stopped shining, and because it was day, there were no moon or stars shining, either. Nature was suffering along with Jesus, its Creator. In this darkness, the Father came close to the cross. Jesus could not see or feel Him, but the Father was there. This darkness hid the glory of the Father so that sinful human beings would not die from His presence. All of this that happened should have been enough for everyone to believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

The darkness scared the people; many of them went home crying. At 3.00 the sun shone again, but the cross was still covered by a dark cloud. Jesus felt so alone, so far from God because of the sins He was carrying, that He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” His heart was hurting from this separation. But Jesus was also hurting in His body. He said, “I thirst.” One of the Roman soldiers felt sorry for Jesus and filled a sponge with vinegar and offered it to Jesus to drink. The Psalms had said that the Messiah would be given vinegar to drink, and it happened. This kind of drink was meant to cloud His mind so that He would feel less

pain, but Jesus wanted to be able to think clearly, so He refused to drink it.

Part 3: Jesus Dies

Jesus felt abandoned and without hope, but He chose to trust in His Father. Finally, He cried out, “It is finished. Father, into your hands I give my Spirit.” Light flashed on the cross and on the face of Jesus, and Jesus hung His head and died. There was a Roman Centurion standing near the cross when all this happened. He saw everything, and he felt amazed. “Truly this was the Son of God!” he said. He was not afraid to let others know that he now believed in Jesus.

At this same time, the priest was in the temple, ready to kill the lamb for the evening sacrifice. But before he could do it, the earth trembled, and the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was ripped from top to bottom. The ark could be seen by everyone who was in the temple. Now this place was no longer holy. The priest, terrified, dropped the knife, and the lamb ran away. Now that Jesus had died, it was not necessary to sacrifice animals anymore.

The sun was going down, and everyone went home silently. They were about to start the Sabbath, but there was no joy among them. Many of the people who had been mocking Jesus now felt that they had done something terribly wrong.

Meanwhile, the priests wanted the body of Jesus to be taken away and buried before the Sabbath started. Pilate agreed. He asked the soldiers to break the legs of the prisoners on the cross so they would die sooner. But when they saw that Jesus was already dead, they didn’t break any of His bones. Just to prove to the priests that Jesus was dead, a soldier pushed a spear into the side of Jesus, and water and blood flowed from the wound.

The grieving disciples of Jesus wanted to bury Him, but they had no money and no tomb. They were surprised and relieved when two important Jewish leaders came to bury Jesus. These men were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and they loved Jesus. They had not been invited to the trial of Jesus, so they had not been able to protect Him from the other priests. Joseph gave Jesus a tomb, and Nicodemus bought all the expensive spices and cloths for the burial. Then they placed Jesus in the tomb, just in time for the Sabbath hours.

Now the whole universe could clearly see that God is love. God, in His Son, had given *everything* so that human beings could be saved from sin. He even allowed them to do whatever they wished to His Son, just so that they could realize how sinful their hearts were. Satan, on the other hand, had been willing to take and destroy everything that God gave, and his principles only lead to ruin.

The loving, merciful character of God, and the selfish, hateful character of Satan were made fully clear. The angels now had no doubt that everything that God does is good, kind and loving. We don't need to doubt, either. The more we think about how much Jesus gave for us because He loves us, the more we will love Him, and the more we will want to have a beautiful character like His. Do you want it? He's longing to give it to you right now!

70. He is Risen!

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1 Corinthians 15:20

*Matthew 27: 66 - 28:15; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18.
DA chapters 80 to 82*

During the Sabbath hours, Jesus rested in the grave. Meanwhile, the people attended the Passover, but it was not a joyful time. Many sick people had come, hoping to find Jesus for healing, but they were heartbroken to hear that He had been killed. Others began to study the Scriptures and ask questions, but the priests couldn't answer these questions. The people were sad and confused, and the priests were afraid. They asked Pilate to put 100 Roman soldiers around the tomb. They told Pilate, "The disciples might steal the body of Jesus and then they might tell people that He rose from the dead." But in reality, they were afraid that Jesus would actually rise from the dead after three days, because they remembered that He had talked about this.

Early Sunday morning, there was an earthquake. The mightiest angel of God came down to call Jesus from His grave. This angel was full of brightness, and his clothes were a shiny white. The soldiers who were watching the grave were terrified, and they fell to the ground, and could not move. They watched as the angel moved the stone away as easily as if it were a tiny stone. Then the angel called out, "Son of God, come forth! Your Father calls you!" Jesus came out of the grave and said, "I am the resurrection and the life." He came out, shining in glory. And as He came out, a massive group of angels bowed down to Him and sang songs of praise.

When the soldiers couldn't see Jesus or the angels anymore, they stood up, trembling, and went to the city to see Pilate. On the way, they told everyone they met what they had seen and heard. Now many people heard that Jesus had risen. When the priests found out, they quickly asked the soldiers to come to them before they went to Pilate. "Don't tell anyone what you have seen," Caiaphas ordered, "Tell them that you fell asleep and that the disciples stole the body so that it would look as though Jesus is risen."

The soldiers were horrified. “No!” they said, “Pilate will have us killed if he believes we fell asleep. We don’t want to put our lives in danger!” Caiaphas assured them, “Pilate doesn’t want anyone to believe that Jesus is risen, either. I will make sure that he doesn’t punish you, and we will pay you a lot of money if you tell this lie.” Sadly, the soldiers agreed. They took their money, and then they told everyone the lie that the priests had come up with. But even lies couldn’t hide the truth. Pilate and the unrepentant priests were afraid for the rest of their lives.

Even though the soldiers shared the lie of the priests, there were people who had already heard the truth, and these people shared the truth with others. Also, something wonderful had happened that Sunday morning: several people were raised from the dead along with Jesus. Now these people walked along the streets and told everyone that Jesus was risen, and that they had been raised with Him.

The followers of Jesus had not heard anything about Jesus rising from the dead. Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb with spices for the body of Jesus. When she saw that the tomb was open and empty, she ran off to tell the disciples. While Mary was with the disciples, some other women came to the tomb. They saw light in the tomb, but it was empty. Just then they saw a man in shining clothes sitting nearby; it was the same angel that had rolled away the stone. “Don’t be afraid,” he comforted the women, “I know you’re looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, because He is risen. Come and see where He was laid. And go quickly and tell the disciples that He is risen!”

The women looked inside the empty tomb. Then another angel, who appeared as a human, said, “Why are you looking for a living person where the dead are? He is not here; He is risen. Remember that He told you He would be crucified, and would then rise on the

third day?" The women, amazed and full of joy, ran to tell the disciples.

Meanwhile, Mary had told Peter and John about the empty tomb. But she didn't know yet that Jesus had risen. Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it empty, just as Mary had said. Then they noticed something: the graveclothes were neatly folded; Jesus Himself had folded them. When John saw these folded cloths, he remembered that Jesus had told them He would rise, and he believed.

While Peter and John were there, Mary arrived. The two disciples soon left, but Mary stayed. She didn't know yet that Jesus had risen, and she was heartbroken. Then she saw two angels in the tomb. "Why are you crying?" they asked her. "Because they've taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put Him," Mary answered. She didn't know she was talking to angels. She turned away, and someone asked her again, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Mary answered him, "Sir, if you have taken Him, please tell me where He is. I can take Him." She thought she could put Jesus in the empty tomb where her brother Lazarus had been.

Then the stranger said, "Mary!" She knew this voice! This man was not a stranger- it was Jesus! Mary was so happy that she knelt down to worship Jesus. "Wait," said Jesus. He first wanted to hear from His Father whether His sacrifice had been enough to save us. He didn't want to be worshiped until He was sure of that. Instead, He sent Mary to go and tell the disciples that He was risen.

After Mary left, Jesus went up to heaven for a short moment. He heard His own Father tell Him, "You have done more than enough to save human beings!" The angels in heaven were overjoyed to hear this. But the disciples of Jesus were still sad and without hope. They could have been rejoicing like the angels, but instead, they did

not believe Mary when she said, “Jesus has risen, and I saw Him! He said we should meet Him in Galilee!”

Jesus was risen! Jesus had done everything so that we could be saved. This was wonderful news! It was time to be joyful, but the disciples were missing out on this joy because they wouldn’t believe. Jesus has wonderful, joyful news for us. He’s alive, and He wants to give us eternal life. Do we believe what He tells us?

71. On the Way to Emmaus

Then Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. John 20:21

Luke 24:13-48; John 20:19-29
DA chapters 83 and 84

It was late Sunday afternoon, and Cleopas and his friend were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus. These two men were believers in Jesus. As they walked, they talked about all the sad things that had happened that weekend. Jesus had died, and with His death, all their hopes and dreams were ruined. These two men were heartbroken.

On their way they met another man who joined them. This Stranger asked them, “What are you talking about? Why are you sorrowful?” Cleopas answered Him, “Are you just a visitor in Jerusalem, that you don’t know what happened?” Then he told the Stranger all about Jesus and what had happened.

The Stranger said to them tenderly, “Oh, why don’t you believe what the prophets said about the sufferings of the Messiah?”

Carefully, He explained the many passages in Scripture that talked about the Messiah. The more He talked, the more the disciples realized that Jesus had done everything that the Scriptures said the Messiah would do. The two disciples began to feel comforted as they listened. They wanted to spend more time with this Stranger.

By the time they arrived at Emmaus, it was already dark, so they invited the Stranger to stay with them in their home. At first, He refused, saying He would continue His journey. But the men insisted that He stay with them, so He did. Soon supper was ready, and they sat down to eat. Just before eating, the Visitor raised His hands to bless the food – and that is when the men realized that, all this time, they had been visited by Jesus Himself! Jesus always blessed the food that way before eating, and they saw the nail marks on His hands. “It is the Lord Jesus! He has risen from the dead!” they cried out. They knelt by His feet to worship Him. But Jesus disappeared from their sight, so that they might go and tell their friends. They would not have wanted to leave their home if Jesus was there!

Now the men weren’t hungry, tired or sad anymore. They *had* to tell the other disciples! Even though it was dark and they couldn’t see the way, they ran from Emmaus to Jerusalem. As quickly as they could, they went to the upper room where the disciples of Jesus were staying. They knocked on the door, and at first no one opened it. The people inside the room had locked the door and were afraid that someone would come to hurt them. “Open the door, it’s us!” cried Cleopas and his friend. As soon as the disciples let them into the room, they told them the wonderful news of how Jesus had been with them that afternoon. Some of the other disciples also said, “Yes, He is risen, and He also appeared to Simon!”

Then they all noticed that there was Someone else in the room that they hadn’t seen before. They all went quiet. They looked at this Stranger, and He said, in a voice they all knew, “Peace be unto you.”

They all knew it was Jesus, but at first they were afraid. “Don’t be afraid,” Jesus comforted them, “I’m not a ghost; I am real. Look at my hands and feet; you can touch me.” They touched Jesus and saw the nail marks on His hands and feet. Then Jesus asked them for food, and they gave Him some fish and honey to eat. He wanted to show them that He was real, that He really had risen from the dead, and that’s why He could eat and they could touch Him. Now the disciples weren’t afraid anymore; they were full of joy!

Then Jesus explained the Scriptures to them all. He showed them how His life had fulfilled everything that the prophets had written. He began to prepare them to share this wonderful news with the whole world. Then He breathed on them, and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” With His Spirit, they would find the wisdom and power to share the gospel with the whole world.

The day that Jesus met the disciples in the Upper Chamber, Thomas had not been there. For a whole week, his friends told him all about meeting Jesus, but Thomas refused to believe. “I will only believe if I can see and touch the nail marks on His hands and the wound on His side,” Thomas said. He didn’t think it was fair that the others had seen Jesus, but he hadn’t. Each night, the disciples met in that Upper Chamber to stay together, but Thomas refused.

But one week after Jesus had shown Himself to the disciples, Thomas decided to join them. Suddenly Jesus appeared again, even though the door was shut. Again, Jesus said, “Peace be unto you.” Then He turned to Thomas and said, “Come, touch my hands and my side. Don’t be faithless. Come and believe.” Thomas believed instantly; he didn’t even need to touch Jesus to be sure that this was true. He knelt down by the feet of Jesus and said, “My Lord and my God!” But Jesus gently said to Thomas, “You believe because you have seen me; those who believe even though they have not seen are blessed.” Jesus was glad that Thomas believed, but He was sad that Thomas hadn’t believed before. Jesus would have wanted

to meet Thomas sooner, but He had to wait so that Thomas could learn that he needed more faith.

The disciples of Jesus were comforted and in peace after they saw Jesus. They were overjoyed that He had risen, and they began to understand why He had come to earth, and why He had needed to die. They would soon be ready to share this peace, joy and comfort with everyone they met. Jesus wants to give us this peace, joy and comfort, too. All we need to do is believe Him and accept what He is offering to us. Will you?

72. By the Sea with Jesus

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 1 Peter 5:10

John 21:1-22

DA chapter 85

The disciples stayed in Jerusalem for a few more days, until the Passover week was ended. They knew that if they left Jerusalem during the feast, they might have trouble with the Jewish leaders. But as soon as the feast was over, the disciples went to Galilee, because Jesus had promised to meet them there.

Peter, James, John, and four other disciples went to the Sea of Galilee to wait for Jesus. They saw the many places where Jesus had taught and performed miracles. Everything seemed to remind them of Jesus! Then Peter had an idea: "Let's go fishing tonight!" he suggested to his friends. The other disciples agreed. They needed to sell fish so that they could buy food and clothes.

All night they worked hard, but they didn't catch a single fish. They felt very discouraged. When dawn came, they began to row back to the shore with empty nets. On the shore, they saw a Stranger, and the Stranger called out to them, "Children, do you have any food?" "No," they answered. So the Stranger said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." The right side of the ship was closest to the shore. It didn't make sense to fish like this, but they didn't argue with the Stranger; they simply obeyed Him, and soon the net was so full of fish that it was hard to bring it to shore!

John instantly knew who the Stranger was. He said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter was so excited that he jumped into the water and swam to where Jesus was, while the other disciples rowed the boat and dragged the net to the shore. There was Jesus waiting for them. He was preparing fish and bread on a fire of coals.

The disciples looked at Jesus and the food, amazed. "Bring the fish that you've caught," Jesus invited them. Peter helped to bring the fish in, and then they all sat down to eat the meal that Jesus had prepared for them. The last time Jesus had helped them catch such a full net of fish, He had invited the disciples to work for Him as fishers of men. Now He invited them again; He asked them to be ministers for Him.

There was one disciple who felt that he couldn't be a minister for Jesus anymore. His friends also wondered if he was worthy of working for Jesus. This disciple was Peter. He had denied Jesus three times. Could he really be trusted to work for God's kingdom?

Jesus knew what they were all thinking, and He also knew that Peter was truly sorry for what he had done. In front of the disciples, He asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these disciples?" Peter answered quietly, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Then Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

A few moments later, Jesus again asked, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?” Peter responded, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” A third time, Jesus asked, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?” Peter was grieved that Jesus was asking him this again. He thought that Jesus didn’t trust him anymore. Peter quietly answered Jesus, “Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.” Again, Jesus commanded Peter, “Feed my sheep.”

Peter had denied Jesus three times in front of several people. Now, in the presence of the disciples, Peter had said three times that he loved Jesus, and three times Jesus had given him the work of feeding His lambs. Now none of Peter’s friends doubted that he was sorry for what he’d done to Jesus, and all of them knew that Jesus wanted Peter to be one of His ministers. Peter knew that Jesus had fully forgiven him, and he was a new person after this. He became a wonderful minister for God’s kingdom.

Then Jesus took a walk with Peter and spoke to him alone. He told him that he would end up being crucified, too, for working for Jesus. After saying this, Jesus invited Peter, “Follow me.” Would Peter be willing to follow Christ even after knowing this? Yes, Peter was willing. He saw how precious Jesus was to him, and was now truly willing to do anything for Him. But then Peter wondered what would happen to John. “Lord, what about him?” Jesus gently answered Peter, “Even if he stays alive until I come, does that matter? All you need to do is follow me.” Each disciple needed to decide whether he would follow Jesus and trust Him to do what was best for him. The disciples didn’t need to look at what was happening with the other disciples; they needed to look to Jesus and learn from Him.

Peter understood and accepted what Jesus was saying. He decided to follow Jesus no matter what happened to him, because he trusted that Jesus would always do what was best for him. The

other disciples made the same decision. That day by the sea they all became ministers of Jesus once more. They trusted that Jesus would keep on caring for them.

Jesus cares for us, too. Our food and everything we have comes from Him. He is also inviting us to work for Him, to share the gospel with others. Will you accept His invitation?

73. Jesus Returns to Heaven

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:20

Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12

DA chapters 86 and 87

Jesus had told His disciples that He would meet them in Galilee, on a mountain. When the time came to meet, around 500 people were there, waiting to see Jesus. All these people were disciples, followers and believers of Jesus. They gathered in small groups to wait for Him, and excitedly shared everything they knew about the risen Messiah.

Suddenly Jesus appeared to them. He spoke lovingly and explained that He had done everything that was necessary for every person to be saved. He talked about the kingdom of God, and invited His followers to share the good news about the gospel to the whole world. "Begin in Jerusalem," Jesus instructed, "Then go to all the world." He promised that He would be with them, through His Spirit, to help them in this work. He promised that He would give them power to teach about God's kingdom and to heal the sick, just

like He had done. “I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world,” Jesus promised them.

After this, Jesus and His eleven disciples walked to the Mount of Olives. They passed through the gate of Jerusalem, and many people saw them. Jesus and the disciples talked as they made their way to the mountain.

When they arrived at the mountain, Jesus looked at them lovingly. Beams of light shone from His face, and He encouraged them. He told them how much He loved them, and that He would care for them. He stretched out His arms to bless them, and began to slowly go up to heaven. The disciples looked at Him for as long as they could, and they watched as He was covered by a bright cloud. They saw a shining group of angels receive Jesus, and they heard the angels singing beautiful music.

The disciples were still looking up to heaven when two angels came to them. They lovingly comforted the disciples and said to them, “Why are you looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, that you saw go up to heaven, will come again in the same way that He went up to heaven.” The disciples were comforted. They would miss having Jesus with them, but they were joyful knowing that His Spirit would be with them. They were excited to tell everyone what they had seen and heard. The disciples went back to Jerusalem and began to share that Jesus had risen from the dead and had now gone back to heaven, and that He was preparing a place for them and would come back to take them to heaven. It was the best news they had ever heard! Many people were excited to hear what the disciples had to share.

Meanwhile, Jesus arrived at the gates of heaven. The angels that brought Jesus to heaven stood by the gate and sang joyfully:

Lift up your heads, O you gates,

And be lifted up, you everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

The angels on the other side of the gate were full of joy as they sang,

Who is the King of glory?

The angels knew, of course, who the King of glory was. But they wanted to sing it! Outside the heavenly gates, the angels that came with Jesus sang,

The Lord strong and mighty
The Lord mighty in battle!
Lift up your heads, O you gates,
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors,
And the king of glory shall come in!

The angels inside sang again,

Who is the King of glory?

And the angels outside the gate sang what everyone wanted to hear:

The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory!

Now the gates of heaven were opened wide, and the angels sang the most beautiful music as Jesus came in. Jesus did not come in alone; there were angels with Him, and He had also brought the people that had been raised from the dead on the same day that He had been raised.

There was a considerably large group waiting for Jesus: all the angels of heaven were there, as well as leaders from other worlds in which no one had sinned. All of them wanted to worship and praise Jesus, but Jesus asked them to wait. He first needed to see His Father. The Son went to the Father and showed Him His hands and feet. He also showed Him the people that had been raised from the dead. Did the Father accept what Jesus had done? Would Jesus and all of these risen people be able to live in heaven forever?

Yes, of course they could! The Father assured Jesus that He had done more than enough to save us. The Father and the Son hugged each other tight, and the angels worshiped them joyfully. Jesus had done it! Jesus had been able to live a life on earth without sinning, and now He would prepare a beautiful home for every single person that wants to be in heaven with Him.

What wonderful news! Jesus is in heaven, preparing a home for you and me. And every day, He offers us His Spirit so that we can learn to be kind and loving like Him, and be ready to live in such a wonderful place. Let's thank Him for being so loving to us, and let's share this wonderful news with others!

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Children are one of the most precious gifts God has entrusted to us. It is our responsibility to tell them of Jesus, that they might accurately understand how much their heavenly Father loves them. The truths that we understand to be key to the experience of God's people in these last days must be explained clearly and tenderly.

This book aims to present the life of Jesus in the light of these truths: the new covenant, the character of God, and the science of salvation. We pray that it would help our kids have a relationship with God based on knowing Him through His Son Jesus Christ.