



# 100 BIBLE

## SUMMARIES



### DAVID KILLS THE GIANT GOLIATH

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." 1 Samuel 17:32



**WRITTEN BY:**  
Samuel, or scribes Nathan or Gad



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**  
1024 BC



**LOCATION:**  
Valley of Elah, near Gath on the coast (now part of the Gaza strip) and south of Jerusalem



#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Under Saul, Israel still faced trouble from other nations and went to war against the Philistines, who were over six cubits in height with heavy armor. The Philistines had chosen champions to fight Israel. David was chosen to face Goliath, a giant who was mentioned earlier in the Bible (1 Samuel 17:32). Goliath was over nine feet tall, which is daunting even by today's standards.



#### SUMMARY:

- The Philistines and the Israelites were assembled to battle. Goliath was a champion who was over six cubits in height with heavy armor.
- Goliath taunted the army of Israel to send a champion to fight him for the Israelites were afraid.
- David brought food to his brothers in the military camp and saw Goliath taunting the army of Israel.
- David faced Goliath with just a sling and stones, striking Goliath in the forehead and killing him with his sword.
- The Philistines were afraid and ran away, and Saul took note of David.



### THE CREATION STORY

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1

GEN 1-2



**WRITTEN BY:**  
Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**  
Unknown, but possibly as late as 4000 BC



**LOCATION:**  
Garden of Eden, located between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, in modern-day Iraq



**CHARACTERS:**  
God, Adam, Eve



#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Creation story in the Bible emphasizes the fact that God is our Creator and He cares for His people. If we understand the Creation in this context (while acknowledging our limited understanding of God's perfect nature), we can see the Creation as a faith-promoting story that fosters our devotion to Him.



#### SUMMARY:

- Day 1:** God separated the light from darkness, calling the light day and the darkness night.
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- Day 5:** God created living creatures, birds and sea creatures, and commanded them to reproduce and multiply to fill the earth.
- Day 6:** God created creatures to fill the land and commanded them to reproduce and fill the earth. He created man and woman in His own image and also blessed them to reproduce. He gave them dominion over the earth and other creatures.
- Day 7:** God finished His work and rested. He blessed the day and made it holy.



#### THEMES:

How do we celebrate the Sabbath today?

### JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns." Matthew 14:13



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**  
25 AD



**LOCATION:**  
Bethsaida, a town northwest of the Sea of Galilee



**CHARACTERS:**  
Jesus, a large crowd, the disciples

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Only miracles to be included in each of the four Gospels. Although this account is often much greater since it included women and children. In Mark's account (Mark 6:37), the disciples claimed they would have had to spend two hundred denarii to feed a crowd that size, which is about three months' wages for a common worker—a vast amount of money!

#### SUMMARY:

Jesus went to a boat, but the crowds followed Him on foot and met Him by the shore. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. The disciples told Jesus to send the people away so they could get food. Jesus only had five loaves of bread and two fishes. The disciples brought the food to Him. Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves and fishes, then gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. The disciples gathered twelve baskets that were left over.

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# CONTENTS

1. The Creation Story	4	52. Ezekiel Sees the Wheel	55
2. Fall of Man	5	53. Ezekiel's Famous Vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones	56
3. Cain, Abel, and Seth	6	54. Nehemiah Gets Leaders to Stop Charging the Returnees Tax	57
4. Noah and the Ark	7	55. How Daniel Came to Be in Babylon & the King's Court	58
5. Tower of Babel	8	56. Daniel Interprets a Dream	59
6. Isaac Is Born to Abraham & Sarah	9	57. Daniel's Three Friends in the Fiery Furnace	60
7. Jacob & Esau	10	58. Daniel Interprets a Dream	61
8. Jacob's Ladder	11	59. Handwriting on the Wall	62
9. Joseph Is Kidnapped	12	60. Daniel in the Lions' Den	63
10. The 12 Tribes Come to Egypt	13	61. Esther Saves the Jewish People	64
11. Moses as a Baby	14	62. Daniel on the End of Days	65
12. The Burning Bush	15	63. Jonah Resists God	66
13. Passover (The Final Plague)	16	64. Jonah Delivers the News	67
14. Parting of the Red Sea	17	65. The Birth of Jesus from Luke/ The Nativity	68
15. The Ten Commandments	18	66. The Birth of Jesus from Matthew / The Magi	69
16. The Spies Are Afraid	19	67. Escape to Egypt (& the Sad Part of the Birth of Jesus)	70
17. Death of Moses	20	68. The Beatitudes	71
18. Joshua & Rahab	21	69. Speck and the Plank/Ask, Seek, Knock	72
19. The Walls of Jericho Tumble Down	22	70. Golden Rule & the House on the Rock and the Sand	73
20. The Sun Stands Still in the Sky	23	71. Parable of the Sower	74
21. Leviticus	24	72. Parable of Weeds among the Wheat	75
22. Prophetess Deborah & Jael Save the Day	25	73. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant	76
23. Hannah Gives Her Son to God	26	74. If You Did It for the Least of These	77
24. Child Samuel Hears God's Voice	27	75. Jesus Casts the Demons into the Herd	78
25. Israel Demands a King	28	76. Jesus Turns Water to Wine	79
26. Samuel Anoints David as Israel's 2nd King	29	77. Jesus Walks on Water	80
27. David Kills the Giant Goliath	30	78. Jesus Raises a Widow's Son	81
28. David Refuses to Kill King Saul	31	79. Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind	82
29. David Weds Abigail	32	80. The Good Samaritan	83
30. David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem	33	81. Rich Fool /Do Not Worry	84
31. David's Son Tries to Steal the Throne	34	82. Lazarus and the Rich Man	85
32. Solomon Prays for Wisdom	35	83. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector/ Little Children Come to Jesus	86
33. Solomon Dedicates God's Temple	36	84. Jesus Heals Paralytic Man	87
34. Rehoboam Splits the Kingdom	37	85. Jesus Feeds Five Thousand	88
35. Elijah Calls Down a Drought	38	86. Jesus' Resurrection	89
36. Elijah Defeats the Prophets of Baal	39	87. The Last Supper	90
37. Elijah Runs and Hides	40	88. Washing the Disciples' Feet	91
38. Elijah Is Taken up to Heaven	41	89. The Arrest of Jesus	92
39. Elisha Raises a Young Man from the Dead	42	90. Jesus' Trial, Peter's Denials	93
40. Naaman Is Cured of Leprosy	43	91. The Crucifixion	94
41. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, Destroyed	44	92. Mary Magdalene Sees Jesus First	95
42. Southern Kingdom of Judah Destroyed	45	93. Jesus' Appearance on the Road to Emmaus	96
43. King Cyrus Funds the Rebuilding of the Temple	46	94. Jesus Visits His Disciples on the Beach	97
44. Israel Divorces its Foreign Wives	47	95. Jesus Appears to Doubting Thomas	98
45. Job Loses Everything	48	96. The Ascension	99
46. Job Responds to His Wife's Harassment	49	97. Day of Pentecost	100
47. Restoration of Job's Blessings	50	98. Ananias & Sapphira	101
48. God Tells David Not to Build the Temple	51	99. Stephen: Christianity's First Martyr	102
49. Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon	52	100. Conversion of Apostle Paul	103
50. The First Prophecy of Isaiah	53		
51. A Great Prophecy about Jesus	54		

# THE CREATION STORY

**GEN**  
**1-2**

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

Unknown,  
but possibly as late  
as 4000 BC



**LOCATION:**

Garden of Eden,  
located between the  
Euphrates and Tigris Rivers,  
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**CHARACTERS:**

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The Creation story in the Bible emphasizes the fact that God is our Creator and He cares for His people. If we understand the Creation in this context (while acknowledging our limited understanding of God's perfect nature), we can see the Creation as a faith-promoting story that fosters our devotion to Him.



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**THEMES:**

**How do we celebrate the Sabbath today?**

God rested from all His work on the last day of the creation. While God may have not needed the rest, He illustrates the importance of the concept of rest for us. The Jews designated the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, a day of rest. The idea of rest can be uncomfortable in our society today, where we may feel guilty about taking time for ourselves amid the busyness in the world. However, taking time to rest can help us refresh spiritually, and it gives God a chance to speak with us personally, when we are finally relaxed enough to hear Him.

# FALL OF MAN

GEN  
3

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

4000 BC



## LOCATION:

Garden of Eden,  
located between the  
Euphrates and Tigris Rivers,  
in modern-day Iraq



## CHARACTERS:

Adam, Eve, God,  
the serpent



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Fall of Man is important because it was the beginning of mankind’s sinful nature. This was problematic because it would separate man from God with permanency. However, God also provided a redemption for man. Speaking to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, God said: “He will crush your head and you will strike at his heel.” This is a reference to Jesus and His suffering and death, but also the triumphal Resurrection. Through Jesus, God offers salvation as a free gift to all mankind and as the way to change our sinful nature and return to Him.



## SUMMARY:

- God created Adam and Eve and placed them into the Garden of Eden.
- God placed an important tree in the Garden, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
- God told Adam and Eve not to partake of the fruit of that tree
- Satan deceived Eve and she partook of the fruit.
- Adams and Eve recognized that they were naked and hid themselves.
- God cursed Adam and Eve, provided them with clothes, and made them leave the Garden.



## THEMES:

**God created mankind with the freedom to choose.**

God did not force or compel Adam and Eve to obey but allowed them to decide for themselves. He also allowed them to experience the consequences of those actions, but not without providing a way for redemption through Jesus. Like Adam and Eve, we are able to make our own choices. We also experience the consequences of those choices. God does not compel us either but allows us to use our free will to follow Him and accept the salvation He provides.



# CAIN, ABEL, AND SETH

**GEN**  
**4**

"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Genesis 4:7



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

Before 3000 BC



## LOCATION:

The story starts in Eden, west of the Garden. After his brother's murder, Cain leaves the family and settles in Nod, east of Eden.



## CHARACTERS:

Cain, Abel, Seth



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After the Fall of Man, the descendants of Adam and Eve were able to make their own choices and could sin. The story of Cain and Abel takes sin to the extreme, with the first murder recorded in the Bible.

Although not expressly stated, the offerings God required were blood offerings made as an expression of faith. These offerings were a symbol of Jesus being offered as a sacrifice for our sins. From Hebrews 11:4, we learn that Abel's offering was accepted because it was made in faith, meaning he understood and exercised his faith in the great redemption God offered. Cain's offering was not accepted because it was not offered in faith.



## SUMMARY:

- Abel was a shepherd and kept flocks. Cain was a farmer and raised crops.
- The Lord required an offering so Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. Cain brought fruit and Abel brought the first-born of his flock.
- God accepted Abel's sacrifice but warned Cain that his was not acceptable.
- Cain killed Abel.
- God cursed and marked Cain.



## THEMES:

**Humility will help keep us from Cain-like situations.**

When Cain gave an offering not acceptable to God, he was warned and given the opportunity to correct his offering and his heart. We also need various corrections. How we choose to respond to correction can determine our subsequent actions. When we respond with humility, we remain teachable.

# NOAH AND THE ARK

**GEN  
6-9**

“This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.” Genesis 6:9



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

Before 2500 BC



**LOCATION:**

Near to the original Garden of Eden on the east side of the Euphrates River, but landing site was Mt. Ararat



**CHARACTERS:**

Noah, Ham, Shem, Japheth



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Within just 10 generations from Adam, mankind had become so wicked that God decided to destroy them. Essentially, God gave a fresh start to mankind by resetting the world to the time of Creation. God’s purpose was not to destroy the people, but to destroy their wickedness and sin.

Noah was righteous and followed by God in faith. He and his family built the ark over a period of about 100 years. During that time, Noah preached repentance to the people. God was merciful and provided a way and time for people to repent. However, they chose not to listen to Noah and ignored all warnings they were given.



**SUMMARY:**

- God saw that the people of the earth had become very wicked so He decided to destroy them.
- Noah was righteous and God decided to save him and his family.
- God commanded Noah to build an ark with specific instructions.
- Noah brought into the ark a pair of all living creatures, and seven pairs of clean animals.
- Noah and his family entered the ark and the rain began. Rain fell for a period of 40 days, and the earth was flooded for 150 days.
- The waters eventually dried up, but Noah and his family waited until God called them out of the ark, nearly a year after the rain began.
- Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to the Lord.
- God was pleased and gave the rainbow as a sign of His promise to never flood the earth again.



**THEMES:**

**God’s wisdom may not be obvious.**

Noah was a righteous man who was called to do a specific task. Although the people of his day may have mocked his efforts at building the ark, Noah and his family were saved when the flood came. Sometimes the wisdom of the Lord isn’t obvious to those around us, and it is only through hindsight we can see God’s hand in our lives. We can learn from and follow Noah’s example of faith by being on the Lord’s side, despite the opposition around us.



# TOWER OF BABEL

**GEN**  
11:1-26

“That is why it was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.” Genesis 11:9



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

Before 2100 BC



**LOCATION:**

The land of Shinar, an area inside of Babylon, near to the original Garden of Eden on the east side of the Euphrates River



**CHARACTERS:**

God, various descendants of Noah



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The descendants of Noah had followed God’s commandment to Noah after the flood and had begun multiplying and having children, but they had not followed God’s commandment to fill the earth (Genesis 9:1). They did not want to spread out.

In building a tower, the people chose to remain together and use manmade materials, relying on their own skill and handiwork. The tower itself was a symbol of their pride and arrogance. The people were trying to reach heaven on their own terms instead of relying on God.



**SUMMARY:**

- The people of the earth spoke one language and decided to build a city with a tower to reach the heavens.
- God came to the city and tower, but He was unhappy with the people’s efforts.
- God confused their languages, causing the people to not understand each other.
- The people stopped building the tower and were forced to scatter over the earth.



**THEMES:**

**Include God’s direction in all important assignments.**

The best way to understand this mysterious story is by understanding our modern story of the Titanic. It was a pride of man that showed man’s acumen in engineering, design, and teamwork. But it’s unlikely anyone asked God to be involved... except, in an occasional morning prayer, someone asking God to bless THEIR work. Instead of asking God to bless OUR work, we should ask to be part of HIS work and understand the difference.





# ISAAC IS BORN TO ABRAHAM & SARAH

**GEN**  
21:1-  
22:19

“Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.’” Genesis 22:2



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

2066 BC



## CHARACTERS:

Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac



## LOCATION:

**Abraham and his family traveled extensively through the years.**

Abraham first lived in Ur, had traveled to Canaan and to Egypt, and then returned again to Canaan, the Promised Land. It was in Canaan, at Mamre, a grove of trees, where Abraham received the three visitors who promised Sarah would become pregnant.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Abraham had been promised great posterity by the Lord, one as numerous as the stars in the sky. Although Abraham and his wife Sarah had been unable to have children, Abraham had fathered Ishmael through Hagar, Sarah’s maid. Abraham had first believed that God’s promise of posterity might be fulfilled through Ishmael, but God specifically promised that Sarah would give birth to a son and be the mother of generations and future kings.



## SUMMARY:

- God had promised Abraham that he would father nations with Sarah.
- Abraham and Sarah were old and past childbearing years. Sarah was 90.
- Three visitors came to visit.
- Abraham and Sarah offered them food and hospitality.
- One of the men promised that Sarah would have a son within a year.
- Sarah laughed when she heard the news.
- Sarah conceived and gave birth to Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old.



## THEMES:

**Many of God’s blessings require patience.**

God promises great things to those who choose to follow Him. God had promised great blessings to Abraham and to Sarah, but those promises were not immediately fulfilled. As time passed and Abraham and Sarah grew old, it may have seemed like those promises were out of reach. However, from this story, we learn that God chooses to fulfill His promises in His own time and His own way. When we become impatient to see blessings in our own lives, we can learn from Abraham and Sarah and pray for patience while we wait.

# JACOB & ESAU

“May God give you of heaven’s dew and of earth’s richness – an abundance of grain and new wine.” Genesis 27:28



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

2005 BC



**CHARACTERS:**

Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Esau



**LOCATION:**

**The land of Canaan, in Beersheba.**  
Like Abraham, Isaac and his family had traveled to Egypt to escape famine and settled several times, digging wells for water. When disputes arose among others, Isaac and his family relocated each time, until they settled in Beersheba.



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

While Rebekah was pregnant with Esau and Jacob, she received a revelation from the Lord that she would give birth to twins, that two nations would come from her two sons, and the older would serve the younger. Esau was older and favored by his father Isaac, while Jacob was younger and favored by his mother Rebekah

Jacob had already gained Esau’s birthright by selling a bowl of stew. From this it becomes clear that Esau simply didn’t have the vision or the enthusiasm for working closely with God. Jacob was the chosen heir. Jacob, the young twin, had been promised this through Rebekah’s revelation.



**SUMMARY:**

- Isaac was old and wanted to give his blessing to his eldest son Esau.
- Esau left to hunt and make food his father liked in preparation for receiving the blessing.
- Rebekah convinced Jacob to put on a disguise to make himself appear as Esau.
- Isaac was confused, but blessed Jacob with the covenant of Abraham.
- Esau came after shortly and was angry to find that Jacob had already received his blessing.
- Isaac did not rebuke his former blessings to Jacob, but confirmed it and offered a smaller, lesser blessing to Esau.
- Esau plotted to kill Jacob for his deceit.
- Rebekah intervened and sent Jacob away to live with her family for a time.



**THEMES:**

**They were flawed; we are flawed.**

Isaac and Rebekah’s involvement in this deception shows that they were not perfect people. Rebekah may have lacked faith to let the God fulfill His promise in His own time, and Isaac may have not been able to see God’s chosen heir. Despite their weaknesses, they were righteous and able to accomplish God’s will in their lives. Like Isaac and Rebekah, we are flawed and we may find ourselves shortsighted. However, despite our imperfections, we can remain close to the Lord and accomplish His purposes.

# JACOB'S LADDER

**GEN**  
28:10-17

"He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." Genesis 28:12



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1928 BC



**LOCATION:**

Bethel in Northern Israel



**CHARACTERS:**

Jacob, God, Angels



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Jacob was on his way to visit his mother's family in Haran, as he had been sent away from Esau, who had been planning to commit murder.

Through deception, Jacob had previously gained Isaac's blessing to the covenant of Abraham by deceit. It is likely that, due to the circumstances, Jacob wondered at the validity of receiving that blessing. Through a dream, Jacob gained the confirmation for himself that he was the chosen heir and had rightfully inherited the blessing he had received.

In this dream, God renews the same covenant made with Abraham and Isaac, but this time with Jacob himself. As Jacob wakes up and anoints the site with oil, he accepts the covenant and promises himself to God.



**SUMMARY:**

- As Jacob was dreaming, he had a vision of a ladder or stairway going from earth to heaven.
- Angels of God were ascending and descending the ladder.
- God appeared above the ladder and extended the same promise to Jacob that He had made to Abraham and Isaac.
- Jacob woke up and believed the place was sacred.
- He consecrated the stone he had laid on with oil and set it up as a pillar.
- He renamed the place Bethel.



**THEMES:**

**God speaks to His children; we need only listen.**

God communicated with His chosen people in many ways, including dreams and visions. God still communicates with us today, even though this is not a time of great miracles occurring regularly. We can speak to God at any time, and we can hear His voice in many ways, including reading His word—the Bible. Furthermore, God has promised us His Holy Spirit, and through the Holy Spirit we can feel and understand God's will for us.



# JOSEPH IS KIDNAPPED

**GEN  
37**

“So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.” Genesis 37:28



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1898 BC



**LOCATION:**

Canaan, fields near Shechem, Dothan



**CHARACTERS:**

Israel, Joseph, Reuben, Judah



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Joseph was the youngest of his brothers, about 17 when he was sold into slavery.

Even as a child, Joseph was close to the God, and had dreams with significance. He had dreamed that his brothers’ sheaves of grain bowed down to him, and later, that the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing to him. His brothers interpreted this dream to mean that Joseph sought to rule over them. Coupled with the jealousy of Joseph’s favored status and his coat of many colors that was a gift from their father, the tensions among Joseph’s brothers were high and set the tone for the drastic measures they took to get rid of him.



**SUMMARY:**

- Joseph made his brothers jealous because he was favored by their father.
- Joseph was sent to report to his brothers, and when they saw him coming, the brothers planned to kill Joseph.
- Reuben intervened and the brothers decided to not to kill Joseph.
- Joseph was stripped of his coat and put into the pit or cistern.
- Judah proposed that they sell Joseph into slavery.
- Joseph was sold to the Midianites for twenty shekels of silver, and then taken to Egypt.
- Joseph’s brothers put goat’s blood on Joseph’s coat, then gave it to their father.
- Israel mourned Joseph’s death.



**THEMES:**

**Bad things happen to good people.**

With Joseph’s story, we learn that bad things still happen to good and righteous people. In Joseph’s case, it may have seemed that the more good he did, the harder things got. But adversity was not a sign of God’s disapproval or a sign that Joseph had done wrong. Instead, God remained with Joseph through his hardships. Likewise, God may not remove the trials we face in life but sustain us through them.

# THE 12 TRIBES COME TO EGYPT

EXO  
1

"Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, 'Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?'" Exodus 1:18



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1875 BC



## LOCATION:

Egypt



## CHARACTERS:

Jacob and his children, a new king (unnamed), slave master, midwives for the Hebrews (Shiphrah and Puah), God



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After the famine, the 12 tribes of Israel stayed in Egypt and continued to prosper. Although the family only began with 70 people, God's promise that they would grow and multiply was fulfilled, and Egypt provided a peaceful place for them to do so.

Although the Israelites became slaves and were hated by the Egyptians, this also served a purpose. The animosity between the Egyptians and Hebrews prevented intermarriage, which allowed the Israelites to remain a separate people and receive the blessings of the covenant promised to Abraham years before. It is likely that God waited for the time to be right for His people to inherit the land promised to them.



## SUMMARY:

- The 12 tribes of Israel multiplied in Egypt and became very numerous.
- A new king came to power and enslaved the Hebrews.
- The Israelites still multiplied in number and worried the king.
- Pharaoh told the Hebrew midwives to kill all the boy babies born to the Israelites.
- The midwives did not comply.
- Pharaoh sent for the midwives again and questioned them, but they responded that the Israelites were giving birth before they arrived.
- The midwives were blessed with their own families.
- Pharaoh gave the order to all the people, not just the midwives, to kill the Israelite baby boys.



## THEMES:

### Fear God, not man.

The midwives in this story feared God more than they feared Pharaoh, despite the fact that their lives and livelihood were at stake in disobeying. Because they listened to God, they received many blessings, which included families of their own. We may face similar circumstances and a similar choice in our lives, where we must choose God and put Him first in our lives. Like the midwives, God promised blessings to His followers, despite the risk of condemnation from others.

# MOSES AS A BABY

**EXO**  
**2**

"But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile." Exodus 2:3



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1525 BC



## LOCATION:

Egypt along the Nile



## CHARACTERS:

Moses, Jochebed,  
Miriam, Pharaoh's  
daughter



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Because of the edict of Pharaoh, the birth of baby boys was expressly forbidden. When Jochebed, Moses' mother, gave birth to a baby boy, she refused to listen to Pharaoh and she kept her baby. Like the midwives, she exercised her faith in the Lord and kept the baby secret, a difficult task by any means. However, it is likely that Pharaoh's order was later rescinded, as Moses had a younger brother Aaron, who likewise was not killed, and the Passover plague specifically protected the firstborn sons of the Israelites.



## SUMMARY:

- Moses was born a male child to a Hebrew slave.
- His mother Jochebed kept him hidden for three months but could no longer take care of him.
- Moses was placed in a basket on the Nile, and his sister Miriam was placed to watch.
- Pharaoh's daughter found the basket and recognized the baby as a Hebrew slave. She took pity on the baby, planning to save him and adopt him.
- Miriam offered to find a wet nurse and brought her mother Jochebed to Pharaoh's daughter.
- Jochebed fed and raised Moses until he became older, then took him to Pharaoh's daughter.
- Pharaoh's daughter officially adopted Moses and he became a prince of Egypt.



## THEMES:

### Moses pointed to Christ.

Many similarities can be found between Moses and our Savior Jesus Christ. Moses' birth and preservation are akin to Joseph and Mary escaping to Egypt to avoid Herod's order to kill Jewish babies. Moses also became a savior to the Israelites, rescuing them from bondage and providing the way for them to escape from Egypt. Jesus Christ is our Savior, rescuing us from sin and its destructive bondage, providing the way for us to return to God. Although we are far removed from the ancient Hebrew culture, we can find similarities as we can remember our dependence on Jesus Christ as our Savior.

# THE BURNING BUSH

**EXO**  
**3**

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Exodus 3



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Moses**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**1446 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Wilderness near Midian**  
in eastern Egyptian  
wilderness



**CHARACTERS:**

**God, Moses, Jethro**  
(Moses’ father-in-law,  
a priest from Midian)



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Moses had fled Egypt after he had killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew slave. Pharaoh had heard of Moses’ actions and wanted to kill Moses. However, to avoid this, Moses traveled to the land of Midian. There he met Jethro, a Midian priest, and married Jethro’s daughter Zipporah. Moses was around 80 years old before he was called at the burning bush.



**SUMMARY:**

- Moses was tending sheep when he went to Mount Horeb and found a bush burning but not consumed.
- Moses then heard the Lord’s voice and was told to remove his sandals as the place was holy.
- God spoke to Moses and declared that He had seen the misery of His people in Egypt and was going to rescue them. He would send Moses to lead them.
- Moses asked God who he should say sent him to Pharaoh. God replied “I AM WHO I AM.” God then told Moses that He would perform wonders and miracles to rescue the Israelites.
- As a sign of God’s power and Moses’ authority, God turned Moses’ staff into a serpent, then made Moses’ hand leprous and healed it again.
- Still afraid, Moses did not feel up to the task and complained that he was slow of speech. God allowed Moses to call Aaron as his spokesman.



**THEMES:**

**Follow Moses in your actions.**

Moses had some difficulty in accepting God’s assignment. Moses asked questions and had reservations about being up to the task. However, God did not allow Moses to shun the responsibility He had called him to. Instead, God used the opportunity to teach Moses, and he became a great leader. We sometimes, like Moses, may feel that our responsibilities are too great for us. With the Lord’s instruction and experience, however, God helps prepare us for the tasks He call us to do.

# PASSOVER (THE FINAL PLAGUE)

**EXO**  
**12**

“For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel.” Exodus 12:19



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1446 BC



**LOCATION:**

Egypt



**CHARACTERS:**

Pharaoh, Moses,  
Aaron



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Many might wonder why Pharaoh would change his mind so many times. The Hebrew slaves were quite numerous and a large part of the Egyptian work force. It is likely that Pharaoh was swayed by the miracles that affected lives in so many ways, but changed his mind when he realized the impact that losing the slaves would create.



**SUMMARY:**

- Moses told Pharaoh that he would send one more plague, a plague that would kill the firstborn son of all the people, including the cattle.
- To protect the Israelites from the plague, they were commanded to sacrifice a lamb and paint the blood on the door frames of their house.
- They were also commanded to eat a special meal of roasted meat, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. This meal was named the Passover.
- Like all the Egyptians, Pharaoh’s firstborn son died and all the people mourned.
- Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and finally agreed to let the Israelites leave.



**THEMES:**

**God’s presence doesn’t make all things easy.**

God performed many great miracles in rescuing the people from Egypt, but He did not insulate the Israelites from hardship. When afflicted with the plagues, Pharaoh was still allowed to choose and was not forced to free the slaves. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, and eventually agreed to let the Israelites leave of his own volition. The Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, meaning He did not intervene with Pharaoh’s decision each time he refused to free the Hebrew slaves.



# PARTING OF THE RED SEA

**EXO**  
13:17-22,  
14

“Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.” Exodus 14:16



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1446 BC



**LOCATION:**

**Pi-HaHiroth in Egypt,** just west of the Red Sea and where the people crossed over



**CHARACTERS:**

Moses, Pharaoh, God



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

If Pharaoh had the faith, he could have let the people go with ease, which is probably what he would have liked to do after the God of Israel revealed His wrath with 10 horrible plagues. The problem was that the Hebrew slaves provided more income, services, and other wealth to such a great extent that it couldn't be counted. He would lose face with his own people, as the loss of income and resources hit them in one place after the next.



**SUMMARY:**

- God told Moses to commemorate the day and instructed how to make sacrifices.
- Moses took the bones of Joseph along on the Exodus.
- The Lord told the people to encamp near Pi-HaHiroth.
- Pharaoh took 600 chariots and bore down on the Israelites.
- A pillar of cloud stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians.
- Moses stretched out his hand over the sea all night as the Lord drove it back with a strong east wind.
- The Egyptians confessed that the Lord was fighting for Israel and they should retreat.
- After Israel crossed over, the Lord told Moses to stretch his hands over the water again.
- The water closed, killing the Egyptian army.



**THEMES:**

**God works miracles for His people.**

The whole story of the Exodus was filled with drama, a story that would be told over and over for millennia. God intentionally made it that way so that His people know and tell of Him, His devotion, His loyalty, His strength and power. Today we know that nothing is impossible with God, largely due to this miracle and many others in which God shows Himself. Even though a story may be very old, its age doesn't make it any less true. God still shows Himself with miracles today, and we can look closely for them, especially when we are in need of deliverance.

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine...” Exodus 19:5



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1446 BC



**LOCATION:**

Base of Mount Sinai



**CHARACTERS:**

The Hebrew people, Moses, God, elders



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Shortly after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they traveled to Mount Sinai (also known as Horeb). God called Moses to the top of the mountain, where he stayed for 40 days and 40 nights. Then God gave him the first part of new laws, the Ten Commandments, among many others. These were special as they had been written by God Himself. During the time Moses was on the mountain, the people had become impatient and built a golden calf to worship. When Moses came down the mountain, he was furious at the people for their idolatry. He proceeded to smash the two tablets, then destroy the gold calf and discipline the people. Afterwards, Moses returned to Sinai and wrote the commandments himself on two tablets of stone. These commandments were incredibly important, as they set apart the Hebrews as God’s people and provided a code of conduct for their behavior.



**SUMMARY:**

- You shall have no other gods before me
- You shall not make any graven image (idols)
- You shall not misuse or take the name of the Lord God in vain
- Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
- Honor your mother and father
- You shall not murder or kill
- You shall not commit adultery
- You shall not steal
- You shall not give false testimony or witness against your neighbor
- You shall not covet



**THEMES:**

**God gives us commandments because He loves us.**

The Ten Commandments may just sound like a group of rules, restrictive in nature. But these commandments are essentially a summary of many other laws given in the Old Testament. They were given out of love, as a way to protect from the consequence of sin. By keeping the commandments, we can experience the protection the Lord provides, as well as happiness that comes from following the Lord.

# THE SPIES ARE AFRAID

**NUM  
13-14**

“What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwallled or fortified?” Numbers 13:19



**WRITTEN BY:**

Moses



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1445 BC



**CHARACTERS:**

Moses, the 12 spies,  
Aaron, Caleb, the  
assembly



**LOCATION:**

Starting at the Desert of Paran, east of the Jordan River, the spies went into Canaan, the future Promised Land, to note things such as what the land is like and the size of the people.



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The land of Canaan was the Promised Land of the Lord’s people, a land that was abandoned when Jacob and his family traveled to Egypt. However, the abandonment was only temporary, as the Lord was leading the Israelites back to inherit Canaan. It was clear that God was on their side as He had performed many miracles for these people. He had provided for and protected them, saving them from the plagues of Egypt and providing a miraculous escape from Egypt. Despite experiencing a first-hand account of these miracles, the Israelites lacked the faith necessary to move forward with God’s plan, leading to some drastic consequences.



**SUMMARY:**

- Moses sent the 12 spies to explore Canaan, who brought back a single cluster of grapes that was carried on a pole between two men.
- Ten spies returned and gave a bad report, telling Moses the people were powerful and cities fortified, and that giants lived there.
- Only Joshua and Caleb gave favorable reports of the land.
- The Israelites listened to the bad report and rebelled against God.
- The Lord was angry and cursed the Israelites so that no one over the age of 20 would enter the promised land, save Joshua and Caleb.
- The Israelites repented and wanted to go to war, but Moses told them it was too late and they would not succeed because God was not on their side anymore.
- The Israelites were attacked by the Amalekites and retreated into the wilderness where they wandered for 40 years.



**THEMES:**

**There are consequences to rebellion.**

The Israelites feared others more than God, and as a result they rebelled against Him. It was not done out of ignorance or weakness, as they had seen God’s power and might. Instead, it was a simple refusal to follow His commands. And as a result, they had to face severe consequences. Likewise, there are also lasting consequences when we refuse to follow God. To avoid these consequences, we can pray for faith and to accept God’s vision and will for us, no matter how hard it may seem.

# DEATH OF MOSES

“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.” Deuteronomy 34:10



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses wrote most of Deuteronomy, and his death was written by scribes



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1406 BC



## LOCATION:

Base of Mount Nebo, east of Canaan/soon to be Israel



## CHARACTERS:

Moses, Joshua, the Israelites



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Moses was the only leader the people had had since leaving Egypt. He had interceded many times for the Israelites over the years and been instrumental in performing God’s miracles. However, Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the Promise Land due to an incident when they had provided water for the Israelites and failed to honor the Lord. Now Moses’ time with the Israelites was coming to an end as they were preparing to finally enter the land of Canaan.



## SUMMARY:

- Moses ascended Mount Nebo and saw the Promised Land.
- Moses died and the Lord buried him in Moab.
- Moses was 120 years old when he died.
- Joshua, Son of Nun, was put in command.
- It was noted that no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, or had done awesome deeds.



## THEMES:

**God acted in the best interest of His people.**

Although Moses was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan, the Lord had prepared the Israelites with a new leader for that task. The Lord selected Joshua, who would act as a warrior and lead the Israelites to victory in battle in the coming years. Today, we, like the Israelites, may see leadership changes in our churches. Although experiencing that change can be difficult, we can learn from the Israelites and trust that those leaders have been chosen to accomplish a specific task for God.

# JOSHUA & RAHAB

**JOSH  
2 &  
6:17-25**

“But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, ‘Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from.’” Joshua 2:4



**WRITTEN BY:**

Joshua and one of his scribes



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

1406 BC



**LOCATION:**

**Jericho,**  
near the Jordan River just slightly north of the Dead Sea



**CHARACTERS:**

**2 spies, Rahab the prostitute, her family, the military**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

When God commanded the Israelites to move into Canaan, that land was already inhabited and had been for centuries. The Israelites had to physically conquer the people who already lived there and who had been described by the spies 40 year earlier as strong and large, not to mention living in well-fortified cities. However, with the strength of God, Joshua and the Israelites became fearless and proceeded as God intended. It is evident in Rahab’s plea to the spies in this story that reports of God’s power and alliance with Israel had gotten around, and the Canaanites had grown fearful of them.



**SUMMARY:**

- Joshua sent the spies into Jericho who stayed at the house of Rahab, the prostitute.
- The king of Jericho heard of this and told Rahab to bring them out.
- Rahab hid the men and told the king’s men that the spies had already left.
- Rahab acknowledged that the spies and the Israelites had been led by the Lord, and requested that the Israelites spare her and her family when they came into the city.
- The spies agreed and were let down by a red cord from her window, and that same cord would be a sign of protection.
- The spies returned to the camp and Joshua and his troops took the city.
- Rahab and her family were all spared, and they joined the Israelites.



**THEMES:**

**God is impartial to all.**

Rahab was a prostitute, but God welcomed her and her family into his fold regardless of her past. Rahab went on to marry one of Joshua’s commanders named Salmon, according to the Matthew 1 genealogy of Christ. Likewise, our past sins don’t matter when we truly turn our lives over to Him. God’s love and His grace are available to everyone, and He is waiting to welcome every one of us.



# THE WALLS OF JERICO TUMBLE DOWN

**JOSH**  
**6**

“And he ordered the army, ‘Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD.’” Joshua 6:7



## WRITTEN BY:

**Joshua**  
and/or one of  
his scribes



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**1406 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Jericho**



## CHARACTERS:

**The Lord, Joshua, the  
priests, the military, the  
family of Rahab the Harlot**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In preparation for battle, the Lord had provided a miraculous way for the Israelites to cross the river Jordan, proving His might and power again. He also commanded the Israelites to be circumcised again, an important sign of their covenant with Him. They had failed to keep up the practice over their 40 years in the wilderness, so the new generation had not been circumcised. Before the Israelites entered Jericho, the Lord also stopped sending manna (bread from heaven). The Israelites’ physical sustenance was no longer dependent on the Lord, as they were preparing to enter lands flowing with milk and honey. However, the Israelites’ success in battle would be dependent on their relationship with God. As long as the Israelites kept their covenant, God had promised His aid.



## SUMMARY:

- The Lord told Joshua and his army to march around the city of Jericho once each day for six days with seven priests trumpeting in front of the Ark of the Covenant.
- They fulfilled God’s order, and on the 7th day, they marched around the city seven times.
- Joshua commanded the army to shout a victory cry.
- The walls of Jericho collapsed and the army took the city.
- The army protected Rahab and her family.
- Joshua declared that the city would never be rebuilt.



## THEMES:

**God requires obedience, even when we don’t understand why.**

Joshua and the army were given specific instructions so that they could conquer Jericho. Although the Israelites may have looked foolish marching around the city of Jericho, it was part of God’s plan. Today, we may not understand how exactly the walls of Jericho fell, but we can remember the importance of obedience. God’s ways are not always our ways, but obedience to Him always brings blessings. We should consider how much God deserves our trust, so that we can act on faith, even at the risk of looking foolish to others.

# THE SUN STANDS STILL IN THE SKY

**JOSH**  
10:1-27

“On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.’” Joshua 10:12



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Joshua**  
and/or a scribe



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**1405 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Gilgal,**  
the camp where Joshua had the army; Gibeon, a kingdom northwest of Jerusalem



**CHARACTERS:**

**King of Jerusalem (Adoni-Zedek), Joshua, the kings of the five kingdoms that collectively attacked Gibeon**  
(see the list below)



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The kingdoms in Canaan and surrounding areas had seen Israelites conquer the city of Jericho and Ai. Moses had previously warned the people of Israel not to make any promises or covenants with the Canaanites. The Gibeonites, however, formed a covenant through deception as they pretended to be people from a distant land. Although Joshua was angry, he decided to honor the oath and placed the people of Gibeon in service instead of killing them. The other kings of the surrounding lands scrambled to form an alliance, but were too afraid to attack the Israelites directly.



**SUMMARY:**

- The King of Jerusalem appealed to Hoham (king of Hebron), Piram (king of Jarmuth), Japhia (king of Lachish) and Debir (king of Eglon) to attack the Gibeonites because they had formed a peace treaty with Joshua.
- Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal that they were surrounded.
- Joshua created a surprise attack with his best fighting men.
- The Lord hurled large hailstones at the armies as they ran.
- Joshua asked the sun to stand still in the sky until the nation avenged itself on its enemies.
- Joshua found the five kings hiding in a cave, killed them and displayed the bodies.



**THEMES:**

**God has power over nature and the elements.**

The Bible is full of miracles, a compilation of deeds God did to show mankind His loyalty, power, and provision. In this particular miracle, it is clear that God has power over nature. As the Creator of the earth, He has power over the elements and can create a devastating hailstorm and make the sun and moon to appear to stand still, all without any logical explanation. As we look to the incredible power in nature, it can serve as reminder that God is the power behind these forces, and He can direct them for our good.

# LEVITICUS

**LEV**  
19 & 20

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” Leviticus 19:18



## WRITTEN BY:

Moses



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1411-1406 BC



## LOCATION:

Kadesh-Burnea



## CHARACTERS:

God, Moses



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The biblical world at the time Moses wrote Leviticus contained many differed religions, some which even required human sacrifice. These other religions taught that their gods would not be happy unless human blood was spilled—for crops, for prosperity, for posterity. When Moses revealed these laws, he was revealing the rules for how God wanted His people to live healthy and peaceably. These rules may sound stringent by today’s standards, but to other nations that were killing adults as well as babies for sacrifices, this was extremely tame.



## CONTENT:

### Chapter 19

- A call to holiness
- Law to respect parents
- Law against idolatry
- Laws about offerings
- Providing for the poor by leaving fields incompletely harvested
- Honesty
- Compassion for the infirm
- Laws regarding justice and truthfulness
- Love your neighbor
- Laws of purity
- Fruit in Canaan

- Laws against pagan practices
- Laws of kindness and justice

### Chapter 20

- Penalty for sins of idolatry
- Penalty for involvement with the occult
- Penalty for sins of immorality and sexual sins
- Why God calls Israel to holiness
- Penalty for being a medium or practicing with the occult



## THEMES:

### Laws to make God’s people holy

The laws revealed through Moses may seem harsh, with punishments like death and stoning. However, through these laws God was setting Israel apart from all other nations with the intent to make them holy. Even though today those same laws don’t carry severe punishments like in Moses’ time, God’s laws and commandments are still important for us to follow. Like the Israelites, our obedience to those laws can set us apart as God’s people and bring us blessings.





# PROPHETESS DEBORAH & Jael Save the Day

**JUDG**  
**4**

“Certainly I will go with you,” said Deborah. ‘But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.’ So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.” Judges 4:9



### WRITTEN BY:

**Prophet Samuel**  
(most likely)



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**1235 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Hill country of Ephraim**  
between Bethel and Ramah, Mount Tabor, Harosheth Haggoyim



### CHARACTERS:

**Deborah, Barak, Sisera, and Jael**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Although Joshua and the Israelites entered the land of Canaan and began conquering, they did not conquer all of the land. This created a problem cycle that would repeatedly plague Israel for years to come. As soon as the previous generation would pass away, Israel would begin to absorb pagan worship of gods like Baal and immoral practices of other nations. The Israelites would then fall into the hands of their enemies until people began to repent and ask God to rescue them. Finally, God would call a judge that would deliver them and Israelites would return to the covenant living.



## SUMMARY:

- King Jabin of Canaan had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years.
- Judge Deborah led Israel and prophesied to Barak to attack the enemy.
- Barak said he would not go unless Deborah went also.
- She agreed but prophesied that Sisera, the Canaanite commander, would not die by Barak’s hand, but a woman’s.
- The Israelites went to battle and won, but Sisera fled.
- Jael lured Sisera into her tent.
- When he fell asleep, Jael nailed his head to the floor and led Barak to find him.



## THEMES:

### There are Deborahs in churches today.

When Barak refused to go to battle unless Deborah went with him, he showed that he lacked faith in Deborah as a prophet. He failed to recognize that God’s messages are always important, no matter how that message is delivered. Sadly today, some misogynistic attitudes can be found in Christians despite the fact that the Bible is filled with incredible examples of strong, faithful women like Deborah. We should look for these women and pay attention to their words, as they likely have much to share in terms of wisdom and experience that can bless us all.



# HANNAH GIVES HER SON TO GOD

1 SA  
1

“And she made a vow, saying, ‘LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.’” 1 Samuel 1:11



## WRITTEN BY:

Samuel, Nathan, Gad, and an unknown scribe who served as compiler



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1100 BC



## LOCATION:

Shiloh, situated north of Bethel and south of Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim



## CHARACTERS:

Elkana, Hannah, Peninnah, Eli the priest, Samuel



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Jews had been out of the Exodus and living under the Judges for around 250 years. During this time, it was very acceptable in their society for men to have multiple wives, but this often caused painful jealousies among the women. For a wife not to be able to bear children was a great source of shame, especially when other wives were able to. Other great women in the Bible like Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel had also experienced barrenness and each of these women experienced a miraculous birth, which traditionally was seen as an indication of a divinely chosen leader.



## SUMMARY:

- Hannah was one of the wives of Elkanah, and loved by him.
- She was upset because she did not have any children, but Elkanah’s other wife Penninah had both sons and daughters.
- She cried in great anguish over her barrenness, and she prayed to God, offering to dedicate a son to the Lord if she would be blessed with one.
- Eli the Priest joined her while she was praying and after speaking to her, he prayed for Hannah as well.
- Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son named Samuel.
- After Samuel was weaned, Hannah returned to Eli and offered up Samuel to be raised by the priests.



## THEMES:

**God was in Hannah’s life the whole time.**

Although Hannah was barren and was not able to have a child for some time, she did not blame God for this difficult situation. Instead, she drew closer to God through her hardship. We will also experience trials in our lives. These trials can serve as opportunities to turn to the Lord and have our faith strengthened by Him. By turning to the Lord, we can come to know Him and receive the blessings He has in store for us.

# CHILD SAMUEL HEARS GOD'S VOICE

**1 SA  
3**

"Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, 'Here I am.'" 1 Samuel 3:4



## WRITTEN BY:

Samuel, Nathan or Gad, and an unknown scribe who served as compiler



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1088 BC



## CHARACTERS:

Samuel, Eli the Priest, God



## LOCATION:

**Shiloh**, situated north of Bethel and south of Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim. During the period of judges, it was a major religious center and the permanent site of the sacred Tabernacle, which the Israelites had carried through the wilderness.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The boy Samuel had been left by Hannah to be raised by the priests at the Tabernacle. Eli and his sons were priests in the Tabernacle, but Eli's sons did not follow the ways of the Lord. Although they were entitled to a portion of certain sacrifices, they had been taking it before the sacrificial offering had been made (something akin to robbery), and had also taken parts that they were not entitled to. Eli's sons also had committed adulterous acts at the door of the Tabernacle. Although Eli had rebuked his sons, their behavior was not corrected. This led to an unnamed prophet coming to Eli and pronouncing a curse on Eli's house, that his descendants would die young.



## SUMMARY:

- Samuel's bed was near to the Ark, and when he was going to sleep, God called to him.
- Samuel thought Eli was calling to him and went to his bedside.
- Eli told Samuel that he had not called him.
- This happened two more times before Eli became aware that it was the Lord calling, so he told Samuel how to answer.
- Samuel listened to the Lord, who told him that Eli's house had sinned.
- Eli asked Samuel what the Lord had told him, threatening punishment if he hid anything or held it back. So Samuel told Eli what the Lord had said and Eli accepted the Lord's will for him and his family.
- The Lord stayed with Samuel as he grew up.



## THEMES:

### God speaks to children.

Samuel was only a boy when God spoke to him, but he was prepared and worthy to receive God's message. Due to Eli's sons' behavior and Eli's failure to correct them, it was apparent that these men had failed the Lord. God chose to use someone who followed Him, even though it was only a child. This can serve as a reminder to remain close to the Lord so that we can hear God's voice. And even though we may feel small or inadequate, He will use those who are close to Him to do His work.

# ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

**1 SA  
8**

“Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.” 1 Samuel 8:9



## WRITTEN BY:

Samuel, or scribes Nathan or Gad



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1051 BC



## LOCATION:

Ramah, a town to the north of Jerusalem



## CHARACTERS:

Samuel, the people, the Lord



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Israel had been ruled by judges for many years, and under poor judges, the people became weak and sinful. Samuel's sons had done a poor job of setting a good example of righteous living, and the Israelites became envious of the surrounding kingdoms. Although this desire for a king was not new, their motive this time was different. The Israelites failed to recognize that God would deliver them when they repented and changed their hearts. By failing to repent and return to God and looking for deliverance elsewhere, the Israelites had rejected God as their king.



## SUMMARY:

- Samuel's sons had been appointed leaders, but they were dishonest and accepted bribes which prevented justice.
- The people came to Samuel and explained how Samuel's sons were misbehaving, then asked Samuel to give them a king.
- Samuel prayed and the Lord told him that the people were rejecting Him. The Lord asked Samuel to warn the people about the rights a king would claim.
- Samuel warned the people, but they did not care and said they wanted a king so they would be like all the other nations.
- Samuel prayed again to the Lord and the Lord told him to give them a king. Then Samuel sent the people home.



## THEMES:

### Peer Pressure

The Israelites wanted to be like the other nations when they desired a king to rule over them. However, the Israelites did not see how those other nations were oppressed by their kings. They also failed to see how their refusal to repent had contributed to their problems. At times, we may also find ourselves envious of others and want to be like them. However, at those times we should look inward and consider where we stand with the Lord. When we choose God, we are always blessed, even though it may not be popular.



# SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID AS ISRAEL'S 2ND KING

**1 SA**  
**16**

"But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'" 1 Samuel 16:7



### WRITTEN BY:

**Samuel,  
Nathan, or Gad**



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**1024 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Bethlehem,**  
birthplace of King David,  
just south of Jerusalem



### CHARACTERS:

**The Lord, Samuel,  
Jesse, David's father,  
David's seven older  
brothers, David**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Saul had been chosen as the previous king, but he had not followed the Lord's ways. Saul had consulted a medium and disobeyed God when he refused to destroy all of the Amalekites and kept their property. In response to these actions, Samuel reminded Saul that his obedience was more important than repentance or sacrifices. As a result of Saul's actions, he was rejected by God as king. The Lord then commanded Samuel to anoint a new king. Anointing, however, did not make someone king. It was a blessing that meant that person had God's blessing and favor and someday, that person would be the next king.



## SUMMARY:

- Samuel mourned Saul, but the Lord told Samuel He had chosen a king from among Jesse's children and to go anoint him.
- Samuel brought a sacrifice to Bethlehem and invited Jesse and his sons.
- Samuel was told to look carefully at the sons, and not pay attention to their appearance because the Lord looks at the heart.
- Samuel was systematically shown Jesse's sons, but did not see God's chosen among them. When Samuel inquired if there were any more sons, the youngest, David, was brought before him.
- The Lord confirmed David was the one He had chosen and Samuel anointed him.



## THEMES:

### God does not judge by appearances

When presented with Jesse's sons, Samuel was given the key to judging: don't look at the outward appearance, but look at the heart. Generally, we can only see what's on the surface, but God who knows everything, can see what's in the heart. This makes God uniquely equipped to judge us because He knows our potential, our desires, our faith, and our motivation. We should refrain from judging those around us based on what we can see, and seek after God's wisdom and judgment.



# DAVID KILLS THE GIANT GOLIATH

**1 SA**  
**17**

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." 1 Samuel 17:32



## WRITTEN BY:

Samuel, or scribes Nathan or Gad



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1024 BC



## LOCATION:

Valley of Elah, near Gath on the coast (now part of the Gaza strip) and south of Jerusalem



## CHARACTERS:

King Saul, David, Goliath, David's oldest brother Eliab, Army commander Abner



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Under Saul, Israel still faced trouble from other nations and went to war against them. It was not unusual for armies to resolve battles by choosing champions. The Philistines had chosen Goliath, and it is generally believed that he was descended from giants who are mentioned earlier in the scripture (Genesis 6:4, Number 13:3, Deuteronomy 2:10-11) and hailed from the region where they settled. At 18 inches a cubit, Goliath was over nine feet tall, which is daunting even by today's standards.



## SUMMARY:

- The Philistines and the Israelites were assembled to battle. Goliath was a champion from the Philistine camp, who was over six cubits in height with heavy armor.
- Goliath taunted the army of Israel to send a champion to fight him for over 40 days, but Saul and the Israelites were afraid.
- David brought food to his brothers in the military camp and saw Goliath taunting the army. David offered to face him, saying he had killed a lion and bear while tending sheep and the Lord had protected him.
- David faced Goliath with just a sling and stones, striking Goliath in the middle of the forehead. He then beheaded Goliath with his sword.
- The Philistines were afraid and ran away, and Saul took note of David.



## THEMES:

### Courage comes from God

When Saul asked who David was, he was really asking where David's courage had come from. David had gained confidence in his own sling-throwing skills, but his courage to face Goliath had truly come from God. He knew that the Lord was on his side and he would be triumphant. We may also face our own Goliath-like challenges, and like David, we can turn to the Lord and face our problems with courage and faith.



# DAVID REFUSES TO KILL KING SAUL

1 SA  
24

You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. 1 Samuel 24:18



### WRITTEN BY:

1 Samuel or scribes Nathan or Gad



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

1011 BC



### LOCATION:

Desert of En Gedi, near the Craggs of the Wild Goats



### CHARACTERS:

King Saul, David



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

David remained close to the Lord and was successful in battle as he fought for Israel. He eventually became the son-in-law to Saul, after defeating more Philistines, but Saul grew jealous of David's success and popularity. Eventually Saul decided to kill David, but David was able to evade capture. Although David was forced to send his parents to live with the Moabites for protection, David gained loyal followers as they recognized that he was chosen by the Lord and was protected by Him.



### SUMMARY:

- Saul was returning from battle with the Philistines when he was told David was in the desert of En Gedi. Saul took 3,000 of his men and began to search for David.
- Saul went into a cave alone, but did not see David and his men at the back of the cave.
- David's men told him to kill Saul, but David only crept close and cut a piece of Saul's robe.
- Saul then left the cave unharmed and David followed him outside.
- David called out to Saul and bowed down. He stated that he did not seek to harm Saul, and showed him proof with the piece of robe, even though Saul had been seeking to kill David.
- Saul wept and acknowledged that he had been wrong and that David would one day be king of Israel and made David promise to not kill Saul's descendants.
- Saul went home and David went back to his men.



### THEMES:

#### Meaning of Mercy

Even though David had been anointed by Samuel as the king of Israel, David refused to harm King Saul. Instead, David showed mercy, a godly characteristic that illustrated how close David was to the Lord. Like David, when we stay close to the Lord, mercy and forgiveness are gifts that are accessible to us, even when we've been wronged. We can work to love others so that we can also receive God's promised mercy and forgiveness.



# DAVID WEDS ABIGAIL

1 SA  
25

“And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal.” 1 Samuel 25:26



## WRITTEN BY:

Samuel or scribes Nathan or Gad



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1011 BC



## LOCATION:

Ramah,  
near Jerusalem and where Samuel the Prophet was buried;  
Carmel,  
near the Desert of Paran, where David was occupying the wilderness with his troops



## CHARACTERS:

David, Nabal, Abigail



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

David was still on the run from King Saul, who now knew that David was a true threat to his throne. David was essentially an outlaw, who was camping in the wilderness. David had previously protected Nabal's flocks and servants, and was likely seeking food as a repayment for that service. As a wealthy woman, Nabal's wife Abigail held a preeminent place in her household. Although she lived in a patriarchal society, she was obviously respected as a leader when the servants reported to her and helped her defy Nabal's orders.



## SUMMARY:

- Samuel died and Israel mourned his passing.
- A wealthy man, Nabal, who was married to Abigail, was shearing his sheep in Camal.
- David sent men to Nabal to ask for food, and stated that his men were good men who had not harmed his sheep or servants.
- Nabal refused the men food, and David and his men were very angry and prepared to take provisions by force.
- A servant told Abigail what happened and so she gathered food and took it to David. She apologized for Nabal's behavior, and expressed faith that David would be protected.
- Abigail returned home, where Nabal was drunk. When he was sober the next day, Abigail told him about what she had done. Nabal became unwell and died ten days later.
- David asked Abigail to marry him and she agreed to become his wife.



## THEMES:

### God seems to work slowly, then BAM!

Abigail was a righteous woman who recognized that David had God's favor. Although she did not know the outcome of her decision to provide food, she expressed her faith and acted with diplomacy, which ultimately prevented a tragedy. Like Abigail, we can seek peace by influencing those around us to do good and make wise choices.



# DAVID BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM

2 SA  
6

"The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God." 2 Samuel 6:7



## WRITTEN BY:

Probably scribes Nathan or Gad



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

1003 BC



## LOCATION:

**Baalah**  
(where the Ark of the Covenant was being kept),  
**Nakon** (a temporary stop for the Ark on its way to Jerusalem), the home of Obed-Edom the Gittite, **the City of David** (Jerusalem)



## CHARACTERS:

**David, his troops, Uzza and Ahio** (sons of Abinadab), **Michal** (daughter of Saul and David's first wife)



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After Saul's death, the tribes of Israel did not immediately support David or accept him as king. For seven years, the tribes were divided, as Judah supported David, but others supported an opposing king, Saul's son Ishbosheth. Eventually, a rift developed in Ishbosheth's camp and more tribes supported David. It was only after David executed the two men who killed Ishbosheth that David was able to unify the tribes entirely. David chose Jerusalem as his capital, and settled there, which was a wise choice because it was neutral ground. It was located between the northern and southern tribes, but had not belonged to either of them before it was conquered.



## SUMMARY:

- David went with 30,000 men to Baalah to bring the Ark up to the Jerusalem.
- They set it on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab. As they reached the threshing floor of Nakon, the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark. God got angry at Uzzah and immediately killed him.
- David was frightened by God's anger so he sent the Ark to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, who became extremely blessed.
- David then decided to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. As the Ark entered the city, David danced before the Lord, and offered sacrifices after it reached the tent David had provided for it.
- David's wife Michal despised him for dancing, but her opinion did not matter to him, only the Lord's. Michal never had children.



## THEMES:

### Humility and Pride

Michal despised the fact that David was dancing with the Ark, because she felt it was beneath his station as king. She was proud, like her father, and failed to see how David's humility had endeared himself both to the people and the Lord. David's humility and willingness to abase himself before the Lord and the people give us insight into the character of God's chosen leader. From David's example, we learn that humility before the Lord is important regardless what others may think of us.



# DAVID'S SON TRIES TO STEAL THE THRONE

**2 SA**  
17:24-18:33

“You are not the one to take the news today,” Joab told him. “You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king’s son is dead.”  
2 Samuel 18:20



## WRITTEN BY:

**Prophets Nathan and Gad were main contributors.** Samuel also is thought to have contributed records and such, though he died during the reign of King Saul.



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**972 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Land of Gilead, forest of Ephraim**



## CHARACTERS:

**Ahithophel, Absalom** (David’s oldest living son)  
**Hushai the Arkite, Joab** (a commander of David’s)



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

David’s kingdom was in turmoil once again. David’s son Absalom killed his half-brother Amnon, who had violated his sister Tamar. Afterward, Absalom remained away from court for three years and David mourned him. Eventually, he gained his former position and returned to court as heir-apparent. Absalom ingratiated himself with the people and gained their support by listening to their complaints, then telling them they were justified and that no one from the king’s court would hear them. When David heard that Absalom had gained the support of the people, David fled the city with his household and some men.



## SUMMARY:

- David and his troops had crossed the river Jordan to Manhanaim, and Absalom and his troops followed.
- David gathered his troops and sent them to battle, but stayed to support them from the city.
- David told all the commanders to be gentle with Absalom for his sake.
- David’s army marched to fight Israel and they battled in the forest of Ephraim and Absalom’s men fled.
- Absalom was riding a mule when his hair got stuck in a high tree branch, and the mule rode on, leaving him hanging in the air.
- David’s men spotted Absalom and Joab killed Absalom.
- David mourned his son, wishing he had died instead.



## THEMES:

### Humility in every situation

When Absalom gained the support of the people, David chose to flee rather than stay in the city, the seat of his power. With this decision, David accepted his change of situation as a punishment from the Lord and humbly accepted whatever would be inflicted upon him, even the loss of his throne. Although David was able to gain his throne back, we gain favor with God when we humble ourselves before Him, even when things may look their worst. God is still guiding us and waiting to bless us.

# SOLOMON PRAYS FOR WISDOM

**1 KI  
3**

“The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.” 1 Kings 3:4



## WRITTEN BY:

### Unknown;

however, the stories of 1 Kings were written or compiled in Babylon, during the Great Exile



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**975 BC**



## LOCATION:

### Gibeon,

just northeast of Jerusalem. Gibeon was once a kingdom that united with Israel when Joshua took Jericho. It has history in the Bible dating back to Genesis.



## CHARACTERS:

**Solomon, God**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

As King David became old and feeble, there was one final attempt at usurping his throne. David’s son Adonijah had set himself up as king and tried to consolidate his power by gaining support from key leaders. The prophet Nathan and Bathsheba learned what was happening and went to David because they feared for Solomon’s life. David then appointed Solomon as co-regent, and they ruled together until David died. Before his death, David instructed Solomon to keep the commandments and follow God. Solomon’s reign was established after dealing with some discord and disloyalty from Adonijah, Abiathar, and Joab (who had conspired to put Adonijah on the throne).



## SUMMARY:

- Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and then returned to Jerusalem.
- Solomon went to Gibeon to make sacrifices. In a dream God came to Solomon and said, “Ask whatever you want me to give you.”
- Instead of asking for power or long life for himself, Solomon asked for an understanding heart.
- God said He would give Solomon both wealth and honor as well as wisdom if he would walk as his father David had.
- Solomon’s wisdom was evident when two women came to him, both claiming to be the mother of a baby. When Solomon threatened to cut the baby in half, the real mother offered to let the other woman keep it as long as it was not killed.
- Solomon’s wisdom was acknowledged by all of Israel.



## THEMES:

### Wealth and Wisdom

When presented with the option to have a request granted by the Lord, Solomon humbly asked for wisdom. He shunned the material things in life, and as a result was blessed beyond measure. We can also learn from Solomon’s example that things like wealth and honor should not be our sole aim. Instead, we should focus on building up the God’s kingdom, and the heavenly treasures that He has promised us will be given to us.



# SOLOMON DEDICATES GOD'S TEMPLE

**2 CHR**  
**7**

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14



### WRITTEN BY:

**Unknown,**  
though the scribe Ezra has been cited as a possible candidate



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**959 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Jerusalem**



### CHARACTERS:

**King Solomon, the Israelites, God**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

From the time of the Exodus when Moses had been given instructions on building the Tabernacle, God had been worshipped in a moveable structure that could be transported. However, as Israel established itself as a physical kingdom, they sought to build permanent physical structure instead. King David had known the importance of building the Temple, but then had been denied building the Temple by the Lord due to bloodshed, Solomon was given the task. Due to the wealth that Solomon had inherited, along with the support and labor of the people, the Temple that was built was beautiful and precious.



### SUMMARY:

- After Solomon prayed, fire came down from heaven and consumed the huge burnt offering and many sacrifices. Glory so filled the new Temple that the priests could not enter.
- Solomon and the people made many more sacrifices.
- Solomon consecrated the middle part of the courtyard.
- The people and Solomon celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days.
- The Lord appeared to Solomon and promised that if he would follow David's example and keep the commandments, that Solomon's throne would be established by God.



### THEMES:

#### God's Timing

The Tabernacle was created in the first year of the Exodus, which was around 450 years before the Temple was completed in Jerusalem. However, the years in between were essential to preparing a kingdom and place for the Temple to be built. In our own lives, God's plans may take longer to complete than we expect, as they happen on His timetable. As we wait for God's timing, we can pray for patience and preparation for as we wait for God's will to be fulfilled.

# REHOBOAM SPLITS THE KINGDOM

**1 KI  
12**

“He followed the advice of the young men and said, ‘My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’” 1 Kings 12:14



## WRITTEN BY:

**Unknown;**  
however, the stories of 1 Kings were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**931 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem, then Samaria-**  
Samaria was the “Jerusalem” of Israel after the split between the tribes



## CHARACTERS:

**King Solomon’s son Rehoboam, Jeroboam, the Jewish assembly, the elders, the young men**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Solomon had conducted many expensive building projects. However, he had taxed the people heavily to fund these projects and they became resentful and bitter, especially the tribes in the north. Jeroboam was a man that had worked for Solomon and was rewarded with an administrative position. He then gained the respect of many of the tribes, but was approached by the prophet Ahijah who prophesied that Jeroboam eventually would rule over ten of the tribes of Israel. Solomon became afraid of Jeroboam and tried to kill him. However, Jeroboam fled to Egypt and only returned to Israel after Solomon’s death.



## SUMMARY:

- Rehoboam went to Shechem and was crowned King of Israel.
- He was approached by the Jeroboam and the assembly of Israel and asked to lower the taxes that Solomon had demanded. Rehoboam said he would give an answer in three days.
- Rehoboam consulted with the elders and asked their advice. The elders told Rehoboam to lower the taxes to gain loyalty. Rehoboam then consulted instead with his young friends, who encouraged him to raise taxes as a sign of power.
- After three days, Rehoboam announced he would not lower the taxes, but would make them heavier. He sent out Adoniram to collect taxes, and Israel responded by stoning him to death.
- 10 tribes broke with Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king.
- Rehoboam was left with the Tribe of Benjamin the Tribe of Judah, but retained Jerusalem and the Temple.
- To avoid people returning to Jerusalem and giving their allegiance to Rehoboam, Jeroboam made two golden calf idols and set up one in Bethel and one in Dan for people to worship.



## THEMES:

### Leaders are made to serve

When Rehoboam denied lowering taxes for the people, he failed to see the long-term effects of his actions. He got caught up in making himself appear powerful and wealthy, and did not practice humility, which led to his downfall. We can also learn from Rehoboam’s example and approach all situations with humility. Although leadership positions may make us feel important, those positions should not be abused and we should seek to serve those we lead.

# ELIJAH CALLS DOWN A DROUGHT

**1 KI  
17**

“After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ‘Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.’” 1 Kings 18:1



## WRITTEN BY:

### Unknown;

however, the stories in 1 Kings were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**863 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Samaria**, which Northern Israel named their capital (their Jerusalem) after the Kingdom split



## CHARACTERS:

**Elijah the Prophet, King Ahab, Obadiah the palace administrator**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

King Ahab had become the king of Israel, the seventh king after the tribes split. Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidonians who brought idol worship again to Israel. Ahab and Jezebel worshiped Baal, and set up temples and altars for others to worship Baal as well. This angered the Lord, who sent Elijah a prophet to pronounce severe consequences over the land.



## SUMMARY:

- Elijah the Tishbite went to Ahab and pronounced a drought on the land, and that it would not rain for the next few years except by his word.
- Elijah went to Kerith Ravine, where he was fed by ravens and drank from the brook.
- The brook dried up so Elijah went to Zarephath. There he asked a woman to feed him with her last bit of flour and oil, the last meal she was planning to eat before dying of hunger.
- The woman obeyed Elijah and fed him. She was blessed so that her jars of flour and oil did not run out during the drought.
- Sometime later, the woman’s son became ill and died, but Elijah brought him back to life, and the woman recognized Elijah as a prophet of God.



## THEMES:

### Faith Can Persist Amid Wickedness

It is clear from Elijah’s ministry that faith can persist and even prosper amid difficult and wicked environments. During those times, the Lord still responded to the faith of those who followed Him. Through Elijah, personal miracles were performed by those exercised their faith, like the widow at Zarephath. Even during the difficult and trying environments we may encounter, it’s important that we not lose sight of our faith. God will likewise respond to our faith and provide for us.



# ELIJAH DEFEATS THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

1 KI  
18

“Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.” 1 Kings 18:19



## WRITTEN BY:

### Unknown;

however, the stories were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

863 BC



## LOCATION:

Mount Carmel



## CHARACTERS:

Elijah, King Ahab, Obadiah, prophets of Baal



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The drought that Elijah had pronounced on the land had been in effect for three years. The drought had caused a famine so severe that both King Ahab and his servant Obadiah were outside the palace looking for food. Ahab knew that Elijah was the one who had caused the drought, so he had been looking for him. Elijah was occasionally spotted, but would disappear before Ahab arrived. Ahab then killed the person who said that they had seen Elijah, so when Obadiah met Elijah, he rightly feared for his life.



## SUMMARY:

- The Lord told Elijah to present himself to Ahab. Elijah met Obadiah, in the fields, who then brought Ahab to meet Elijah.
- Elijah requested to meet 450 of Baal’s prophets on Mount Carmel along with 400 prophets of Asherah.
- Elijah proposed a challenge; he and the priests of Baal would prepare an altar and sacrifice, but not light it. After calling upon their own respective gods to light the altar, whichever one answered by lighting the sacrifice would then be acknowledged as God.
- The priests of Baal prayed from morning until noon, with no answer. Elijah began to taunt them so they prayed harder and became frantic, but their altar remained unlit.
- After dousing the altar three times with water, which filled the trench, Elijah prayed to God.
- The fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.
- Elijah seized all the priests of Baal and slaughtered them in the Kishon Valley.
- Elijah sent Ahab back and then opened the skies for the first time in three years.



## THEMES:

### Social trends may violate God’s commandments

Under Ahab and Jezebel, Baal worship was common and publicly endorsed. However socially acceptable or compelling this may have been, this was a direct violation of God’s commandments. Today we may be faced with similar dilemmas as we find that what is socially acceptable is in opposition to Christian living. At these times, we can remember Elijah and be reminded of God’s power and ability to perform miracles for those that choose to follow Him.



# ELIJAH RUNS AND HIDES

**1 KI  
19**

“The LORD said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.” 1 Kings 19:11



### WRITTEN BY:

#### Unknown;

however, the stories in 1 Kings were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**858 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Beersheba in Judah, then the surrounding wilderness**



### CHARACTERS:

**Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, an angel (unnamed), the Lord, Elisha**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Elijah had battled and won against the priests of Baal and Asherah. Elijah’s victory, however, did not endear him to King Ahab or Queen Jezebel, even after Elijah had lifted the drought and caused it to rain. Their hearts remained hardened and they were angry and embarrassed at the failure of their god. Elisha, who was appointed to be Elijah’s successor, was a wealthy man, which was evident by the number of oxen and servants he owned. However, Elisha rejected his worldly wealth and was prepared to follow the Lord, even at great personal sacrifice.



### SUMMARY:

- Elijah was afraid for his life because Queen Jezebel had sworn to kill him. He fled to Beersheba in Judah and then into the wilderness there.
- Elijah was preparing to die, but an angel appeared and told him to go Mount Horeb.
- At the mountain, Elijah experienced a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire. But word of the Lord was not in any of these and finally came as a small, still voice, and was not part of the destruction.
- Elijah told the Lord that he was the only prophet left, and the people were trying to kill him.
- The Lord then gave Elijah instructions to anoint others: Hazael King of Aram, Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha to succeed him as prophet. The Lord then announced that there were still 7,000 loyal followers to Him that would not worship Baal.
- Elijah left the mountain and met Elisha in a field where he was plowing with twelve oxen. After Elisha bid farewell to his family and his land, he followed Elijah.



### THEMES:

#### The Still, Small Voice

Although Elijah experienced the power and might of God when he stood amid a great wind, earthquake, and fire, the word of God was only heard through a still, small voice. Like Elijah, the Holy Spirit speaks to us today in that same voice. However, we may have to put aside the distractions and competing influences so that we can hear it and respond to what God would have us do.





# ELIJAH IS TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

**2 KI**  
**2**

“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” 2 Kings 2:11



### WRITTEN BY:

#### Unknown:

however, the stories were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile.



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

851 BC



### LOCATION:

**Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho,** then an unnamed place on the west of the Jordan River



### CHARACTERS:

**Prophet Elijah, Prophet Elisha, prophets, group of boys**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Elijah’s long battles with King Ahab had finally come to a close. King Ahab had refused to kill Ben Hadad after he had been defeated, even though his death had been demanded by the Lord. A prophet appeared to Ahab and in this encounter, Ahab pronounced his own death sentence. Ahab died in the next battle and his son Ahaziah reigned in his place. However, Ahaziah’s reign was short-lived and he was succeeded by his brother Joram.



### SUMMARY:

- Elijah and Elisha were on their way to Gilgal when Elijah said the Lord had sent him to Bethel. He then asked Elisha to stay behind, but Elisha would not leave him.
- Elijah said that the Lord had sent him to Jericho, but Elisha would not stay behind. Elijah then traveled to Jordan, but again Elisha would not stay behind. At each place, prophets told Elisha that Elijah was going to be taken to heaven.
- Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan River and Elijah asked what he could do for Elisha before he left. Elisha requested to have a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. Elijah said that if Elisha saw him taken up to heaven his request would be granted.
- A chariot of fire appeared and Elisha saw Elijah taken up to heaven. Elisha then picked up Elijah’s cloak and crossed back over the river.
- The prophets who had been watching from afar insisted on looking for Elijah. They sent 50 men and looked for Elijah, but he was not found.
- Elisha cured the water of a town, then cursed boys that were jeering him so that they were attacked and killed by two bears.



### THEMES:

#### Spiritual Gifts

Elisha was loyal to both the Lord and Elijah. He wanted to spend the last moments he could with his dear friend. When Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him, Elisha requested a double portion of spirit, a gift he could only use to bless others. We should remember Elisha when we petition the Lord for the things that we want. How we plan to use those gifts to bless others is important to the Lord when He grants them to us.

# ELISHA RAISES A YOUNG MAN FROM THE DEAD

2 KI  
4

“When all the jars were full, she said to her son, ‘Bring me another one.’ But he replied, ‘There is not a jar left.’ Then the oil stopped flowing.” 2 Kings 4:6



## WRITTEN BY:

### Unknown;

however, the stories were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile.



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

849 BC



## LOCATION:

**Shunem,**  
a city west of the Jordan River and slightly below the Sea of Galilee



## CHARACTERS:

**Widow, Elisha, widow's son, Gehazi** (Elisha's servant), **the barren woman, her husband, their eventual child**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The two kingdoms of Israel, although divided, had allied together in a war against Moab. The Moabites had paid tribute to Israel from the time of David, but after Ahab's death, the Moabite king refused to pay tribute. Jehoram sought an ally with Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. Jehoshaphat agreed as he had been friendly with Ahab and wanted to keep a good relationship with his successor. Together with Edom, they marched against Moab. However, as they marched, they sought a prophet so that the Lord would bless them. Elisha



## SUMMARY:

- A widow who had served Elisha revealed that her husband had died and their two sons were being sold into slavery by debtors.
- Elisha helped her by miraculously multiplying her oil, which she then sold to pay her debts.
- A Shunammite woman recognized Elisha as a holy man and made a place for him to stay. Elisha was grateful and wanted to bless her. She was barren so Elisha told her she would conceive and have a child.
- She bore a son, who then died mysteriously as a young child.
- The Shunammite woman went to Elisha and told him what had happened.
- Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to help, but he was not able to raise the boy.
- Elisha then came to the Shunammite woman's house, where the boy was lying dead. He lay on top of the boy, who came back to life.
- Elisha then healed poisoned food and multiplied food to feed the people.



## THEMES:

**Do unto others, and it comes back to you.**

The widow of Shunem recognized Elisha as a servant of God and looked for ways to help him. The room she built for Elisha was deeply appreciated by him, and when it came her turn to be in need, the prophet was there to deliver life in the face of death. Although the world teaches us to be selfish and care only for ourselves, we should follow the example of the widow and look for ways to help those around us. God's work begins as we care for others.

# NAAMAN IS CURED OF LEPROSY

**2 KI  
2**

“Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.” 2 Kings 5:1



## WRITTEN BY:

### Unknown:

however, the stories were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**849 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Samaria,**  
at the home of Elisha the Prophet



## CHARACTERS:

**Naaman**  
(commander of the army of Aram),  
**Naaman's wife, Naaman's wife's maid, Elisha the prophet**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Naaman was an important man and a great warrior, captain of the entire army of Syrians. However, he was diseased with leprosy. Leprosy was a skin condition that caused the flesh to turn white. In its most severe form, it would cause the flesh to fall from the bone and those who were afflicted with it were required by the law of Moses to live separately from society. There was no known cause of leprosy, so there was no known cure.



## SUMMARY:

- Naaman was a commander of the army of king of Aram, but he was afflicted with leprosy.
- The maid of Naaman's wife was from Israel and told her that a prophet could cure Naaman.
- Naaman went to the King, and he agreed to send a letter to the king of Israel to request Naaman's healing.
- The king of Israel was distraught by the letter, but Elisha said he would heal Naaman.
- Elisha sent Naaman a message to wash seven times in the Jordan River.
- Naaman was angry because there were other better rivers he could have washed in, so he left in a rage.
- But Naaman's servants convinced him to listen to Elisha. So Naaman washed himself seven times in the Jordan and was healed.
- Naaman tried to reward Elisha for his healing, but Elisha refused. Elisha's servant Gehazi secretly requested a reward from Naaman, and was cursed with leprosy instead.



## THEMES:

### The Lord works sometimes in simple ways

Naaman was an important man and was insulted when the prophet wouldn't speak to him personally and told him to wash in a dirty river. However, Naaman swallowed his anger and pride, and followed Elisha's instructions and received healing. Like Naaman, we may want the Lord to deliver us in a grand way, but we must remember that the small and simple counsel given to us is important and just as powerful.



# THE NORTHERN KINGDOM, ISRAEL, DESTROYED

**2 KI**  
**17**

“So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left.” 2 Kings 17:18



### WRITTEN BY:

#### Unknown:

however, the stories were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**722 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Samaria; deportations sent the Israelites to Halah in Gozen, part of Assyria on the Habor River, and unnamed towns of the Medes**



### CHARACTERS:

**Hoshea, new King of Israel, Shalmaneser, King of Assyria**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The northern kingdom of Israel had a series of kings who were wicked and worshipped other gods. Despite warnings to repent, the Israelites continued sinning and were eventually captured by the Assyrians and taken away to their lands. After this story takes place (see below), the Assyrians were defeated by King Hezekiah of Judah, a righteous king, who pleaded with God for deliverance. A mysterious plague hit the Assyrian camp and many died, which led to their retreat.

Samaria was land that the northern tribes had left behind, and the Assyrians gave that land to other nations. These people eventually intermarried with the Israelites and became known as the Samaritans. The Jewish people despised the Samaritans who tried to lay claim to Jewish heritage and blessings. The Jews refused this claim due to mixed blood and a history of pagan worship, and the hostility between these people worsened.



## SUMMARY:

- Hoshea was king of Israel for nine years. Shalmaneser, king of the Assyrians, attacked Hoshea because he had stopped paying tribute to Assyria and was paying tribute to Egypt.
- Shalmaneser invaded the land, imprisoned Hoshea, and lay siege to Samaria. After three years of siege, the city fell and the Assyrians took the Israelites as captives back to Assyria.
- The Israelites were captured because they practiced idolatry and had stopped keeping the commandments of God. Only the tribe of Judah was left, who also practiced idolatry.
- The king of Assyria resettled Samaria with people in Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim. They didn't worship the Lord, so God sent lions that killed some people.
- When the king of Assyria found out about lions, he sent a priest from the Israelites to go back to Samaria and teach the people how to worship their God Jehovah. Even though they were told not to worship other gods, they worshipped the Lord with their own respective gods.



## THEMES:

### Lost Tribes

The ten tribes of Israel eventually became known as the “lost” tribes. However, the term only means that they had lost their identify as God’s people and became completely immersed in other cultures. We should consider the importance of our own identity as God’s children and Christians. We should think about how we can make this identity a priority so that we don’t get “lost” in the ways of the world.



# SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH DESTROYED

**2 KI**  
**24-25**

“The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.”  
2 Kings 24:7



## WRITTEN BY:

### Unknown:

however, the stories were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**586 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem, Babylon, Egypt**



## CHARACTERS:

**King Nebuchadnezzar, King Jehoiakim, King Jehoiachin, King Zedekiah, Gedaliah, Ishmael**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

A short time after the Northern tribes had been taken captive, the Assyrian empire became to weaken. The Chaldeans and Babylonians united, and King Nabopolassar of Babylon conquered Assyria in 609 BC. After his death, Nebuchadnezzar had inherited the kingdom and began building and beautifying his empire. The tribe of Judah has seen the destructive consequences of wickedness when the Israelites were taken captive, and had escaped the same fate by God’s hand. However, they did not change their ways and turned back to idolatry, essentially losing the promise of the Lord’s protection.



## SUMMARY:

- King Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land and King Jehoiakim became his vassal. He paid tribute for three years, but then unsuccessfully tried to free his people and was killed.
- Jehoiachin became king. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, Jehoiachin and his family surrendered. They were taken captive, along with treasure from the Temple.
- Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah as king of Judah, and he reigned for eleven years. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar again besieged the city. Jerusalem was captured and Zedekiah and his sons were taken to Babylon and killed.
- The Babylonians entered the city and burned the temple, killed the priests, and broke the walls of the city. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah to oversee the people left in Jerusalem. Gedaliah was assassinated by Ishmael, who claim royal blood, and the remaining Judeans fled to Egypt.
- King Jehoiachin, who had been taken captive, was released from prison, given an allowance, and lived among the Babylonians.



## THEMES:

### God gives warnings

It took hundreds of years for the people to become wicked enough that they had rejected the Lord. He had warned them multiple times of the consequences of their behavior, but they refused to listen and change their ways. As a result, the kingdom of Judah and Israel had finally fallen. God likewise warns us about the consequences when we choose to disobey His commandments. However, when we follow His commandments, He blesses us with protection and peace.



# KING CYRUS FUNDS THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

**EZRA**  
**1**

“Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites – everyone whose heart God had moved – prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.” Ezra 1:5



### WRITTEN BY:

The scribe and scholar Ezra



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

537 BC



### LOCATION:

Babylon, Jerusalem



### CHARACTERS:

Cyrus (King of Persia)



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After Nebuchadnezzar’s rule, the Babylonian empire began to decline and the Persians came to power. Cyrus had united the Medes and the Persians and began an era of expansion, conquering Mesopotamia, Syria, and Judea before he took Babylon in 539 BC. Cyrus’ reign was different than the former empires, who had terrorized the people it had conquered. Cyrus instead treated the people with consideration and was respectful of their religions. Cyrus eventually allowed the Israelites to return to their homeland, which was prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28, 45) and that return took place 70 years after the Babylonian Exile as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11-12).



### SUMMARY:

- King Cyrus of Persia announced that God had given him all the kingdoms and that he would fund rebuilding a temple for Him in Jerusalem and that all of the former Israelites could return to Jerusalem.
- Israelites were given by their neighbors gold and silver, goods and livestock, and other valuable gifts as offerings for the Temple.
- Cyrus made an inventory of the items Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Exile, which were returned to Jerusalem.



### THEMES:

#### God inspires people to fulfill His will

King Cyrus was inspired by the Lord to send the Jews back to Jerusalem and support the rebuilding of the Temple, fulfilling prophecy that was given many years before. God has inspired people throughout history to do His work and fulfill His purposes, even those who may not have considered themselves believers. Even today, people who are not religious may find themselves inspired by God to do things that are part of God’s plan. We can look at these situations with an understanding that God can inspire all people. We can trust God, who has all power and whose purposes will be fulfilled in His own time and His own way.



# ISRAEL DIVORCES ITS FOREIGN WIVES

**EZRA**  
**9-10**

“You gave through your servants the prophets when you said: ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other.’” Ezra 9:11



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Ezra the Scribe**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**457 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Jerusalem**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Ezra, leaders, crowd, leading priests and Levites, all the men of Judah and Benjamin, foreign women**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

About 60 years after Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, King Artaxerxes of Persia had lent support by sending more supplies. He sent Ezra to Jerusalem with more men and money so that the Temple could be decorated. Ezra had prayed for safe passage from the Lord, which was granted. However, when Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he was stricken to learn that the Jews who had arrived earlier were not living the Commandments. The priests were not conducting the Temple service correctly and some had taken wives from pagan nations. This was expressly forbidden by the Lord and was problematic because intermarriage led to idolatry and had been the cause of Israel’s downfall and exile.



## SUMMARY:

- The leaders told Ezra that the people of Israel had not kept themselves separate from the surrounding, detestable idolators and had intermarried with them.
- Ezra prayed and offered a great repentance to the Lord.
- The Israelites gathered together and wept. They offered to make a covenant with God and send away all the foreign women and their children.
- Ezra put the leading priests and all Israel under the oath and sent a proclamation to gather all the exiles at Jerusalem.
- Once gathered, Ezra explained the sin of intermarriage and the people agreed to separate themselves. They made a list of all the men who had married foreign women.



## THEMES:

### **A Review of Divorce**

Ezra was able to successfully call the priests and the people to repentance, even though what God required from them may have been difficult. They not only confessed their wrongdoing, but were willing to change their behavior. When we are called to repent, we can learn from the example of the exiled Jews, by confessing and correcting our mistakes with a willing heart.

# JOB LOSES EVERYTHING

“One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.” Job 1:6



**WRITTEN BY:**

Unknown



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

Unknown, but thought to be around the time of Abraham, 1900 BC



**LOCATION:**

Uz is sometimes identified with the kingdom of Edom, roughly in the area of modern-day southwestern Jordan and southern Israel.



**CHARACTERS:**

God, Satan, angels, Job, Job’s sons and daughters, messengers



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The exact dates of the Book of Job are uncertain, but there are clues that indicate Job lived after the flood but prior to Moses. Job’s wealth was determined by his flocks rather than money, he officiated in sacrifices for his family, he lived long enough to sire two families of children that each grew to adulthood, and then he lived to 140 years. All of these facts are consistent with the time of the Patriarchs.



**SUMMARY:**

- Job was a righteous and rich man who lived in Uz.
- Satan appeared before the Lord and the Lord asked him if he had seen Job.
- Satan replied that Job was righteous because God has blessed him. He said that if God took his protective hand off of Job, Job would curse Him.
- The Lord said that Satan could smite Job, so long as he didn’t touch Job personally.
- Job received messengers who reported that his animals had been taken or killed and that his children had died.
- Job mourned his losses but did not blame the Lord for them.



**THEMES:**

**God tests our faith**

The story of Job has a profound influence on believers, especially as to how we are tested. God allowed Satan to tempt Job because it fit within His purposes to test him. We also will experience periods when we are tested by the Lord. These experiences however, can become opportunities to walk by faith and show our dedication to the Lord. And like Job, when we see our trials through to the end, God can bless us often beyond what we could imagine.



# JOB RESPONDS TO HIS WIFE'S HARASSMENT

**JOB**  
**2**

“‘Skin for skin!’ Satan replied. ‘A man will give all he has for his own life.’” Job 2:4



## WRITTEN BY:

Unknown



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

Most likely around  
1900 BC



## LOCATION:

**Uz**,  
located near Edom in  
modern-day southwestern  
Jordan and southern Israel



## CHARACTERS:

**God, Satan, angels, Job, Job's wife, Job's three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar)**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The book of Job is organized in three parts: the prologue (Chapters 1-2), the poem (Chapters 3-42:6) and the epilogue (42:7-16). The poem portion was written in a Hebrew poetic form, but much of the style, language and poem quality has not been kept through subsequent translations. Some Bible scholars view the Book of Job as literary work or a story rather than the account of real person. However, Bible prophets like Ezekiel and James cited Job's example of faith, which indicate that they viewed Job as a real historical figure.



## SUMMARY:

- Satan returned to heaven with the angels.
- God asked Satan about Job, pointing out that even though Job had lost much he had not cursed God.
- Satan said that Job had not been afflicted physically and that a man would do anything for his own life.
- God gave Satan permission to strike Job's flesh but to spare his life.
- Job became ill, with painful sores on his body.
- Job's wife challenged him, saying to curse God and die. But Job replied that he would accept both the good and trouble from God.
- Job's three friends came to visit him and sat on the ground with him for a week.



## THEMES:

### We All Experience Heartache

Job's righteousness did not protect him from the heartaches he endured. His heartaches were not consequences of wrong-doing or sin, which help us understand that the idea of only wicked people suffering is a false one. Our righteous deeds and desires to follow God are not always a protection from the hardships and trials we will face. However, they can give us perspective and help us understand our Savior better. We also will be prepared to reach out to others with empathy who are also suffering heartache.



# RESTORATION OF JOB'S BLESSINGS

**JOB**  
42:7-17

"After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before." Job 42:10



## WRITTEN BY:

Unknown



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

Most likely around  
1900 BC



## LOCATION:

**Uz,**  
located near Edom in  
modern-day southwestern  
Jordan and southern Israel



## CHARACTERS:

**The Lord, Job, Eliphaz,  
Job's new family**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

When noting how Job's blessings had doubled from before his misfortune, some Christians key in on the fact that God did not give Job double the number of children. He had seven sons and three daughters before they were killed and afterward was blessed with the same number of sons and daughter as before. However, Job's first family of children were not lost forever. They were still his children and promised blessings in heaven, so combined with the new children he was blessed with, his children were doubled and he will be with them again in the Kingdom of Heaven.



## SUMMARY:

- The Lord declared His anger toward Eliphaz and his two friends because they had not spoken truth about the Lord.
- The Lord commanded Eliphaz to make a sacrifice and have Job pray for him.
- The Lord accepted Job's prayer and the sacrifice.
- God restored Job's fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. His family came bearing gifts of silver and gold.
- Job was more blessed than the former part of his life, and bore seven more sons and three more daughters.
- Job lived to be 140 years old and he saw his grandchildren to the fourth generation.



## THEMES:

### We Must Trust God

After suffering so much, Job asked God to provide reasons He allowed him to suffer, but God didn't provide a direct answer. Instead, with a list of rhetorical questions, God reminded Job that He is in control and has all power and knowledge. It was a call for Job to put his trust in the Lord instead of his own understanding. Likewise, we may wonder why bad things happen to us or others around the world. Through Job's experience, we learn although we may not understand everything, we must trust God and His purposes.

# GOD TELLS DAVID NOT TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

1 CHR  
22

"Then David said, 'The house of the LORD God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel.'" 1 Chronicles 22:1



## WRITTEN BY:

**Unknown,**  
though it may have  
been Ezra, a scribe  
and scholar



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**979 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem**



## CHARACTERS:

**King David, Solomon,  
God**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Throughout the history of Israel as a kingdom, God had been worshipped in the Tabernacle, a movable tent that had accompanied the Israelites since the Exodus. However, when David became king, he noticed the disparity between where he lived and where the Ark of God resided. David wanted to build a permanent and beautiful place for the Ark, representative of God's splendor. While David's desire to build the Temple was a righteous one, the prophet Nathan told David that the Temple would instead be built by his posterity.



## SUMMARY:

- David assembled foreigners with building skills and appointed them to prepare materials for building the Temple.
- David made extensive preparations for the Temple because he wanted the Temple that would be built to be famous and magnificent.
- David called for Solomon and gave him charge to build the Temple. David said that he had been told by the Lord that he had shed too much blood to build His house. The Lord told him that his son Solomon would build the temple instead.
- David charged Solomon to keep the law of the Lord and be courageous.
- David ordered all the leaders of Israel to be supportive of Solomon in building the Temple.



## THEMES:

### **We can assist in God's work in many ways**

Although David had a great desire to build a Temple, he was not assigned that task and it was to be given to another. Sometimes we may find ourselves like David, wanting to accomplish great things for the Lord but often finding ourselves on the sidelines instead. Rather than bemoaning the fact that we're not given a big assignment, we can be at peace knowing that we can still assist in the work, even in small ways. We can be like David, preparing for the Temple rather than building it ourselves. God sees all our efforts and blesses us.



# QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON

**1 KI**  
**10:1-13**

“The king used the almuqwood to make supports for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. So much almuqwood has never been imported or seen since that day.” 1 Kings 10:12



### WRITTEN BY:

**Unknown;**

however, the stories of 1 Kings were written or put together in Babylon, during the Great Exile



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**946 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Jerusalem**



### CHARACTERS:

**Queen of Sheba,  
Solomon**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The word about Solomon being wise and wealthy had circulated the known world. The Queen of Sheba was likely from Saba (spelled “Sheba” in Hebrew), a country from Arabia near the southern end of the Red Sea, where modern Yemen is located. The Sabeans were primarily traders, specializing in spices, ivory, and gold, and transported these goods through camel caravans. The Sabeans also typically had women rather than men as rulers, which supports the fact that a queen was their ruler.



### SUMMARY:

- The Queen of Sheba heard about the wisdom of King Solomon so arrived for a visit to test him with hard questions.
- Solomon answered all the questions she asked and talked with her about what was on her mind.
- The Queen determined that Solomon’s mind and his resources were even better than she had heard, and declared that his people must be very happy.
- She gave him many gifts including gold, spices and precious stones.
- Solomon used some of the gifts to complete the Temple and aid musicians.
- The Queen of Sheba returned to her own country.



### THEMES:

#### **Why God doesn’t bless many the way He blessed Solomon**

Wealth, handled properly, is a tool that can be used for the Lord’s purposes, but it can also bring temptations. Solomon initially used the wealth he had inherited to build the Temple, but then decided to build other buildings and ended up taxing his people heavily. Wealth and money can help accomplish great things, but it does not save us or provide us with redemption. When we focus too much on wealth without using it for the Lord’s purposes, we may find that it distances our hearts from God.



# THE FIRST PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

**ISA**  
**1**

“‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’”  
Isaiah 1:18



## WRITTEN BY:

Isaiah the Prophet



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

739 BC



## LOCATION:

Jerusalem



## CHARACTERS:

God, Isaiah, the people of Judah



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Isaiah is the first of the major prophets of the Bible, the word major denoting the quantity (not quality) of his writings. He was called as a prophet to the kingdom of Judah and prophesied during the reign of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah was highly educated and used a writing style of symbolism and imagery that was well understood by the Israelites or those familiar with the Law of Moses. Although his prophecies may be difficult to understand because of their literary nature, the importance of his words is evident in the fact that Isaiah was often quoted by later prophets.



## SUMMARY:

- Isaiah calls Judah a rebellious nation.
- Isaiah claims their sins include ingratitude, obnoxiousness, corruption and degeneracy, perversion of justice.
- God is displeased with their false sacrifices and assemblies.
- Isaiah calls the people to repent, with a promise of the Lord’s forgiveness.
- Isaiah promises a happy reformation with a return to purity and prosperity.



## THEMES:

### Hearts not Habits

Isaiah called the people to repent and pointed out particularly how their worship of the Lord was hypocritical; the ordinances of the law were fulfilled, but the hearts of the people were not in their worship. As believers, we may ourselves also be worshipping out of habit, without our hearts in our actions. We can, however, use Isaiah’s words as a reminder to recommit our hearts to God, so that our worship is faith-filled instead of just empty actions.



# A GREAT PROPHECY ABOUT JESUS

**ISA  
53**

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”  
Isaiah 53:5



## WRITTEN BY:

Isaiah the Prophet



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

711 BC



## LOCATION:

Jerusalem



## CHARACTERS:

God and Isaiah



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Isaiah was a prophet who was also given visions and knowledge of the coming Messiah, who was prophesied to redeem the people of Israel. Isaiah had also prophesied of the Messiah’s birth (Isaiah 7) and expounded his prophecy of the coming Messiah with further descriptions, particularly in this famous Messianic chapter. Although many of the Israelites in the coming years would long for a political Messiah who would save people from captivity and oppression from other nations, it is clear in these verses that the Messiah would provide a spiritual deliverance for mankind.



## SUMMARY:

- The Lord will grow up tenderly, and His appearance will not distinguish Him from other men.
- His reception among people will be negative, He will be despised and rejected.
- He will suffer for man’s transgressions and sins, and through Him mankind will be healed and saved.
- He will be silent and led like a lamb to the slaughter.
- He will be killed and make His grave with the wicked and rich.
- The Lord will be an offering for sin, and by Him will man be justified.
- He will make intercession for the transgressors.



## THEMES:

### The Savior’s Suffering

Few verses in the Bible give us insight into the physical suffering of the Savior like Isaiah’s description. Jesus was crucified, a tortuous death, and experienced agony by taking on the sins of the world. This was essential for the salvation of all mankind, but we cannot begin to comprehend what Jesus endured for us. However, we can gain appreciation and express gratitude for our Savior by understanding that He suffered with us in mind.

# EZEKIEL SEES THE WHEEL

**EZE**  
**1**

“And in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human.” Ezekiel 1:5



**WRITTEN BY:**

**The Prophet Ezekiel**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**593 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**The River Chebar**  
called Tel abib, south of  
Babylon



**CHARACTERS:**

**Ezekiel, God, the four living creatures, the Spirit**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Ezekiel was carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar with about 10,000 Jews, which included the last king of Judah, King Jehoiachin. He served as a prophet among the exiles in Babylonia during the time of both Jeremiah and Daniel. Ezekiel’s vision was a wonderful experience, but he would have had difficulty describing such a majestic experience to others. In conveying the picture of his vision, Ezekiel relied on figurative language such as symbolism, metaphors, similes, and comparison. Due to this and the cultural differences between modern day and ancient Israel, Ezekiel’s words need not be interpreted literally.



**SUMMARY:**

- Ezekiel was among the captives along the River Chebar when he received this vision.
- Ezekiel saw a whirlwind out of the north and four living creatures.
- Ezekiel described the appearance and movement of the living creatures.
- Ezekiel saw wheels associated with the creatures and described their movement.
- Ezekiel described the sky above the creatures and their wings.
- Ezekiel saw in the sky, above the creatures, the Lord sitting upon His throne.



**THEMES:**

**No Perfect Understanding**

Although many people and Bible commentaries have sought to describe Ezekiel’s vision, it becomes clear that we do not have a clear understanding of this vision. However, having a perfect knowledge of this particular vision and its meaning may not be necessary for us, and even the Apostle Paul described the complexities of not understanding something entirely (1 Cor. 13:11). We can, however, choose to walk by faith, and wait for the time when the meaning and interpretation of Ezekiel’s vision is known to us.



# EZEKIEL'S FAMOUS VISION OF THE VALLEY OF THE DRY BONES

**EZE  
37**

“The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.” Ezekiel 37:1



### WRITTEN BY:

**Ezekiel the Prophet**



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**585 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Settlement along the River Chebar, around 100 miles south of Babylon**



### CHARACTERS:

**Ezekiel, the Sovereign Lord, pile of dry bones that form skeletons and come to life representing the people of Israel**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Ezekiel received this vision while the Jews were in exile and had lost their homes and land. This vision served as hope that the Lord had not forgotten them and would someday restore them to what they had lost. This prophecy was fulfilled when the exiles were allowed to return to their lands and rebuild the Temple in 516 BC. However, often prophets’ words will have dual meanings, and there may be more than one truth to a particular prophecy. Another truth of Ezekiel’s vision was revealed with the restoration of the nation of Israel in 1948, and many modern scholars believe it speaks of our current era.



### SUMMARY:

- Ezekiel was taken by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley which was full of bones.
- The Lord asks Ezekiel if the bones can live, and Ezekiel says only He can know.
- The Lord tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones that the Lord will make them alive again.
- Ezekiel prophesies and the bones are restored with tendons and flesh and become alive. The Lord says He will restore the people back to their land in Israel.
- The Lord describes a stick of Judah and a stick Judah that will become one, and that the divided nation will become one kingdom.
- The Lord assures His covenant and protection with His people.



### THEMES:

#### Repentance and Restoration

Ezekiel’s prophecy of a restoration and resurrection provided the exiles with hope for the future. Despite their captivity, God had a plan for a way back. Although most of us won’t experience captivity, we may experience hopelessness when we stray from God’s paths. However, He also provided us a way to restore us through our Savior Jesus Christ. With Jesus, we can repent and recover the hope that has been lost to us through our transgressions.





# NEHEMIAH GETS LEADERS TO STOP CHARGING THE RETURNEES TAX

**NEH**  
**5**

"I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, 'You are charging your own people interest!' So I called together a large meeting to deal with them..." Nehemiah 5:7



## WRITTEN BY:

**Nehemiah**



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**444 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem,**  
approximately 75 years  
after the end of the Great  
Exile to Babylon



## CHARACTERS:

**Nehemiah, God, the  
remnant of Judah  
that returned from  
the exile and their  
leadership**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Nehemiah was a Jew born during the exile, likely after Cyrus of Persia had conquered Babylon. Although some Jews had returned to Jerusalem with Ezra, many remained in Babylon. Nehemiah and his family were among those that stayed and he rose to a high position as cup bearer to Artaxerxes. This would have been a station of trust as Nehemiah ensured that the king's food and drink was kept free of poison. When Nehemiah learned of the condition of the Jews in Jerusalem along with the broken walls, he prayed and fasted, then requested permission from the king to go to Jerusalem to aid his people. King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah his request, so Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, only to find the Jews in an appalling condition.



## SUMMARY:

- The people cry about the poverty. They had mortgaged their land, borrowed money, and sold their children to pay taxes they owed.
- Nehemiah becomes angry and charges the nobles and officials with selling their own people into bondage, after they had just escaped bondage from the Gentiles.
- Nehemiah tells the nobles, officials, and priests to stop charging interest and give the land back. The leaders take an oath to do this.
- Nehemiah is appointed governor, but does not demand food or taxes from the governor's allotment because the burden was heavy for the people.



## THEMES:

### Service Opportunities

Nehemiah was very mindful of the circumstances of the Jews. He saw their poverty, debt, and despair then influenced others to stop the oppressive taxes. And when Nehemiah served as governor, he also chose not to assert his position over the Jews. Rather, he denied himself the governor's allotment and served the people. We can be like Nehemiah and look to the needs of others. When we see these needs, we can look for ways to aid and serve without recognition or reward.



# HOW DANIEL CAME TO BE IN BABYLON & THE KING'S COURT

**DAN**  
**1**

"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink." Daniel 1:12



**WRITTEN BY:**

The Prophet Daniel



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

605 BC



**LOCATION:**

City of Babylon



**CHARACTERS:**

King Nebuchadnezzar, Ashpenaz, young men to be in the king's court, God, Daniel, Hananiah, Michael and Azariah



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The first deportation to Babylon for the Great Exile occurred in 605 BC (the other two took place in 597 and 586 BC), during which Nebuchadnezzar decided he would take most of the nobility and upper class back to Babylon. These noble Israelites were then selected by the king to serve in his court, and included Daniel and his friends. When Daniel refused the meat of the king, it's likely not because he was a vegetarian, but because the meat that Babylonians served included items that were forbidden in the Mosaic law or had been part of heathen sacrifices. Eating this food would have been akin to participating in worship of false gods and a violation of God's commandments.



**SUMMARY:**

- King Nebuchadnezzar brought the Jews captive to Babylon, along with temple treasures.
- The King ordered Ashpenaz to bring Israelites from royal and noble family into the king's service, who would be taught the language and literature of Babylon.
- Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah were chosen for the king's service and their names were changed to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- Daniel resolved not to eat the royal food and wine, but asked the chief official for permission to eat different food.
- The official was afraid that Daniel and his friends would appear weak and he would be punished as a result. Daniel asked the official to test him by letting him and his friends eat different food for 10 days, then compare them to the others at the end of that time.
- Daniel and his friends looked healthier so they were allowed to continue their diet.
- God blessed Daniel and his friends with knowledge and understanding. Daniel was blessed with visions and interpreting dreams.



**THEMES:**

**We Must Speak Up**

Daniel's obedience to the Mosaic law and food restrictions showed his unwavering loyalty to the Lord. Even though Daniel's request to eat differently may have been daunting, Daniel had complete faith that the Lord would bless his obedience. Sometimes we may find ourselves in situations where we need to speak out and express our beliefs, even though they may be unpopular. During these times, we can take courage from Daniel and have faith that the Lord will bless us.

# DANIEL INTERPRETS A DREAM

**DAN  
2**

“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.” Daniel 2:44



**WRITTEN BY:**

**The Prophet Daniel**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**604 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's palace**



**CHARACTERS:**

**King Nebuchadnezzar; his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers; Daniel; Arioch (the commander of the king's guard); God; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

King Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, who had conquered the Israelites and brought them back to his country. In Babylonia, dreams were considered important and often viewed as visions of the future. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar's dream that troubled him was not an insignificant event. In Babylon, astrologers, magicians, and enchanters were a part of the royal court, who used different methods of divining or predicting the future. When Nebuchadnezzar asked these men to tell him what he dreamed, he was likely testing their abilities, as he had previously found them inferior to Daniel and his friends. Daniel gained his knowledge and truth from God, so that his wisdom and understanding were greater than the other wise men of the court.



**SUMMARY:**

- Nebuchadnezzar was troubled because of a dream so he could not sleep. He summoned various wise men to tell him what he had dreamed and what it meant.
- These men could not tell Nebuchadnezzar what he dreamed, even when threatened with death. The king then ordered all wise men to be executed, including Daniel and his friends.
- Daniel went to the king and asked for time so he could interpret the dream. Daniel returned to his home and prayed with his friends, and that night the dream was revealed to him.
- Daniel went to the king and explained the dream. The king had seen a large statue with a head made of gold, arms and chest made of silver, belly and thighs made of bronze, legs made of iron, and feet made from a mixture of iron and clay. A rock was cut out of the mountain without hands that hit and broke the statue, then grew and filled the earth.
- Daniel revealed that the statue represented subsequent kingdoms that would rise after Babylon, inferior in quality. The rock that was cut out from the mountain would be God's kingdom on earth, which would destroy all other kingdoms but itself never be destroyed.
- Nebuchadnezzar rewarded Daniel with a high position and gifts for revealing the dream.



**THEMES:**

**God's Kingdom**

Daniel's vision revealed the place of the kingdoms of the world in relation to the Kingdom of God. Like Nebuchadnezzar found the wise men of his court inferior to Daniel, much like the kingdoms of the world are inferior to God's kingdom. Just as the stone rolled to fill the whole earth representing God's kingdom, we can consider how God's desires will be accomplished, despite any obstacles. We can ponder on how we can contribute to establish God's kingdom on earth.



# DANIEL'S THREE FRIENDS IN THE FIERY FURNACE

**DAN**  
**3**

“As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.” Daniel 3:5



### WRITTEN BY:

The Prophet Daniel



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

585 BC



### LOCATION:

Plain of Dura in Babylonian outskirts, the kings' palace in Babylon proper



### CHARACTERS:

King Nebuchadnezzar; provincial officials; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; and an unnamed angel of the Lord



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel requested that the king make his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administrators over Babylon and they were placed in position of leadership. In this story, Nebuchadnezzar built a large image for the people to worship, which was 90 feet high and 9 feet broad. The term image in the text is very general, so it may have been a human form, much like the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's earlier dream, although the dimensions are rather narrow. When Nebuchadnezzar demanded worship of this image, it was intended as an expression of political solidarity and loyalty, not necessarily religious in nature. However, as Babylon was known for idolatry, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego found themselves unable to perform the act, as idolatry was forbidden by the Lord.



### SUMMARY:

- Nebuchadnezzar made a large golden image then summoned all the officials of the kingdom to see it. He commanded them to worship the image with a decree that any who refused would be put to death.
- The astrologers came to Nebuchadnezzar and reminded him of his decree, then told him about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who refused to worship the image.
- The king summoned the men, who declared they would not worship the image but would serve God, who had the power to deliver them.
- Nebuchadnezzar was angry and commanded the furnace be heated seven times hotter than normal. It was so hot that the soldiers who put the three men into the fire were killed.
- Nebuchadnezzar saw four men in the furnace, determining that one must be an angel of the Lord. He commanded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out of the furnace and they did so, revealing that the fire did not harm them.
- The king praised Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for their faith and declared that any who spoke ill of their God would be punished.



### THEMES:

#### Faith is not dependent on outcomes

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had incredible faith in the Lord. They knew that God had the power to save them, but were willing to die for their faith even if He didn't. We may face a similar trial of faith, when our faith may not lead us to the miracles we seek. However, we can find inspiration to stand firm in our faith, even when deliverance does not come. We must trust God that all will work for our own good.

# DANIEL INTERPRETS A DREAM

**DAN**  
**4**

"I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me." Daniel 4:5



## WRITTEN BY:

**The Prophet  
Daniel**



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**582 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Babylon,  
King Nebuchadnezzar's  
palace**



## CHARACTERS:

**King Nebuchadnezzar,  
his court, Daniel**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Although Nebuchadnezzar had seen God's hand in the preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and also recognized that Daniel had been given power to interpret dreams, these events had not been sufficient enough to convert Nebuchadnezzar from worshipping Babylon's gods. However, after Nebuchadnezzar's descent into madness and subsequent restoration, he acknowledged God as supreme and praised him. Although some Bible scholars debate on whether Nebuchadnezzar converted from polytheism to worshipping God, it is clear that Nebuchadnezzar recognized his punishment had come from God and was just because of his pride.



## SUMMARY:

- King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that made him afraid, so he brought all the wise men of Babylon to interpret it, but none of them could.
- Daniel appeared and interpreted the dream. Nebuchadnezzar had seen a large tree, with leaves and fruit, which animals used for shelter. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar, whose kingdom had grown great.
- In the dream, an angel appeared and called for the tree to be cut down and its branches scattered so that only the stump and its roots remained. These would be bound in iron, then drenched in dew and given the heart and mind of an animal for seven years.
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he would become insane and live as an animal in the field until he understood that only God gives men power to rule. However, Nebuchadnezzar would come to his senses after seven years and the kingdom would be restored to him.
- Daniel encouraged the king to renounce his crimes and be kind to the oppressed.
- Twelve months later, the king heard a voice from heaven declaring that the kingdom had departed from him. Nebuchadnezzar then fell into mental illness for seven years.
- Nebuchadnezzar's sanity was restored at the end of that time period, and the king praised God.



## THEMES:

### **Humility Is Important to God**

Nebuchadnezzar's madness illustrates well the power of God. King Nebuchadnezzar had been proud of his kingdom and accomplishments, yet in a moment God humbled him in a way that no one else could. We learn from Nebuchadnezzar's story that God has the power to humble the prideful, but also the power of restoration. God wants us to be humble, and when we are humble, He can bless us.

# HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

**DAN**  
**5**

“He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.” Daniel 5:12



**WRITTEN BY:**

**The Prophet Daniel**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**539 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Babylon, King Belshazzar’s palace**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Belshazzar, the queen, the wise men of Babylon, Daniel**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who had previously ruled over Babylon and had brought the Israelite captives and the Temple artifacts from Jerusalem. When Belshazzar gave this great feast and called for the Temple artifacts to be brought and used, this was an act of mockery as they celebrated their god’s victory over the God of Israel.

When interpreting the writing on the wall, Daniel did not give a favorable report to the king, but was rewarded anyway with a position of power. Some believe this was because Belshazzar was either still impressed with Daniel’s abilities or hoped to appease the wrath of God and prevent the destruction of Babylon. Although Babylon was a great city, it was taken in one night as described. The Persians diverted water from the canal outside the city and marched under the walls of the city, conquering the city.



**SUMMARY:**

- King Belshazzar gave a feast for leaders in the kingdom, and called for the holy artifacts from the Temple to be brought so that the nobles can drink from them.
- Suddenly a hand appeared, and wrote on the wall, something that could not be understood.
- Belshazzar called for the wise men and offered a great reward for anyone who could read the writing and tell him what it meant. None could, and the king became afraid.
- Daniel was brought before the king and was offered the same reward. Daniel refused the gifts but agreed to read and interpret the writing.
- Daniel reminded Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled by God.
- He then read and interpreted the writing: MENE–the days of Belshazzar were numbered, TEKEL–he was weighed and found wanting, PERES–the kingdom would be divided and given to Medes and Persia.
- Belshazzar rewarded Daniel, but was slain that night when Darius of Medes invaded the city.



**THEMES:**

**We can learn from others**

Daniel specifically warned Belshazzar of pride, giving him the example of his father Nebuchadnezzar who had been humbled in a very visible way. However, Belshazzar refused to learn from his father, and continued with his pride. We have the opportunity to learn from others so that we don’t make their same mistakes. However, if we do not learn from others, we may find ourselves in the same regrettable situations.



# DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

**DAN**  
**6**

"The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den." Daniel 6:7



**WRITTEN BY:**

**The Prophet Daniel**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**539 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Babylon**



**CHARACTERS:**

**King Darius, satraps, administrators, and Daniel**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Daniel continued serving the kingdom after the death of Belshazzar, under the reign of Medes and Persia. It's likely that Daniel's previous appointment by Belshazzar was recognized under the new government, as he was given a position of authority. This may have been because Daniel had prophesied that Belshazzar's death and kingdom would be given to the conquerors, but it is also likely that the king recognized Daniel's qualities as just and righteous man, and considered him trustworthy to lead the people. However, it was these same qualities that caused the envy of others who considered Daniel their rival.



**SUMMARY:**

- Daniel was one of three men over the kingdom of Babylon. Daniel was preferred over the others, so they became jealous and tried to find reasons to remove him from his position.
- These men went to King Darius and convinced him to make a decree that no one could pray to anyone except the king for the next 30 days. Anyone who refused to do so would be thrown into the lion's den.
- The men caught Daniel praying, then took him to King Darius. They reminded the king of the decree and the punishment Daniel would face. The king was distressed and tried to help Daniel, but the decree could not be changed so Daniel was thrown into the den.
- The king spent the night without eating and could not sleep. He went to the lion's den in the morning and called out for Daniel, asking if God has saved him. Daniel answered that God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. Daniel was then removed from the den.
- Darius brought Daniel's accusers together and threw them into the lion's den with their families. Darius praised God and decreed that reverence should be given to the Lord.



**THEMES:**

**Prayer as a first resort**

Despite the fact that Daniel knew about Darius' decree, he refused to stop praying to the Lord and continued worshipping Him. Like Daniel, when we are troubled or facing difficulty, we should turn first to the Lord. Our prayers can help strengthen us so that we remain close to the Lord and refuse to let anything separate us from Him.

# ESTHER SAVES THE JEWISH PEOPLE

**EST  
3-5**

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14



**WRITTEN BY:**

**The Prophet Daniel**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**482-478 B.C.**



**LOCATION:**

**Persia**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Queen Esther** a beautiful Jewish woman,  
**King Xerxes** the king of Persia, **Mordecai** who was Esther’s cousin, **Haman**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

King Xerxes was the king of Persia, also known as Emperor Ahasuerus (his Hebrew name). Xerxes had married Queen Vashti, but divorced her when she refused to obey a summons to appear. The men feared Vashti’s insolence would inspire similar rebellion in their wives, so they asked Xerxes to send an unalterable royal decree making wives respect their husbands. Xerxes then sought a new queen and the most beautiful women in the kingdom were gathered for him to choose from. Esther was one of these women. However, she was a Jew, and was counseled to keep her background a secret. Despite this, Esther found favor with the king and was chosen as his new bride.



**SUMMARY:**

- Haman had been elevated by the King Xerxes to a position of power, but was angry when Mordecai, a Jew, did not kneel down to him. Haman looked for a way to destroy the Jews.
- Haman convinced Xerxes to send an edict declaring the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai heard the edict, then asked Queen Esther for help. Although she feared for her life, she decided to help and requested that the Jewish people fast for her for three days.
- Esther then appeared before Xerxes, who granted Esther a request. She invited both Xerxes and Haman to a banquet. At the banquet, Xerxes asked what Esther would request from him, and she invited them both to another banquet the next day.
- That night, the king read about the events of his reign. He learned how Mordecai exposed an assassination plot and wanted to reward him. Xerxes asked Haman for advice on how a man should be honored. Haman thought the honors were for him, so he suggested great rewards. Hamann was angry when the honors were not for him, but for Mordecai.
- At the banquet the next day, Esther revealed her heritage and requested that the Jews be spared. Xerxes was angry when he learned that Haman had plotted to kill the Jews. Haman was killed in the same way he had planned to kill Mordecai.



**THEMES:**

**Foreordination**

When Mordecai visited Esther to convince her to intercede for the Jews, he stated that Esther may have come into her position “for such a time as this.” He suggested that perhaps Esther was prepared and foreordained to save her people. We should also consider how God has designed the time in which we are living. We likely have a role to play in contributing to God’s kingdom here on earth. We can look for the ways that we can serve Him, with the gifts He has given us.



# DANIEL ON THE END OF DAYS

**DAN**  
10 & 12

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered.” Daniel 12:1



## WRITTEN BY:

The Prophet  
Daniel



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

539 BC



## LOCATION:

An unnamed river,  
though it is likely the  
Euphrates



## CHARACTERS:

God, Daniel, bones  
that become the  
people of Israel



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Daniel arrived in Babylon as a captive Israelite, but eventually rose to power, serving and prophesying under five kings. During his time in Babylon, the exiled Jews had been permitted to return to their homeland by King Cyrus. However, Daniel was not part of the returning Israelites, and instead elected to be a prophet in Babylon. During this time, he was given visions regarding the End of Times. He was given three powerful and famous visions that encompass Daniel 10 through 12.



## SUMMARY:

- Daniel mourned and fasted for three weeks.
- He saw a vision, but the others with him fled. Daniel saw a man who was brilliantly attired and dressed in linen.
- Daniel was given a vision of the future, a time yet to come.
- He saw a vision where Michael the great prince will arise. There will be a great time of distress, but the people will be delivered.
- Multitudes who are dead will be resurrected, some to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt. Many will travel around to increase knowledge.
- Two beings will appear on either side of the river. One asks how long before these things occur, and is answered that it will be for a time, times and half a time.
- Daniel hears but does not understand. The Lord responds that the meaning of Daniel’s visions will be sealed until the end of time.



## THEMES:

**All mysteries will be made known.**

Although Daniel had fasted and prayed for a vision, the vision he received wasn’t understood entirely, and the meaning was withheld from him. Sometimes our patience is tested when we are not provided immediately with the answers we seek. However, God’s truth isn’t diminished by the passage of time, so when those answers are revealed, they will be a testament to His power and knowledge and eternal nature. We can exercise faith and hope, as we trust that we receive what we need when the time is right.

# JONAH RESISTS GOD

**JNH**  
1-2

“Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.” Jonah 1:4



## WRITTEN BY:

Jonah the Prophet



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

760 BC



## LOCATION:

Joppa, the Great Sea



## CHARACTERS:

Jonah the prophet, sailors, the great fish, the Lord



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Jonah was from a place called Gath-heper, located in Zebulun, an Israelite territory near Syria. Nineveh was a major city of the Assyrians, who were enemies of the Israelites. The Assyrians were known for their violence and brutality. However, Jonah likely wasn't afraid of the Assyrians when he fled the call to preach repentance to them. Instead, it is likely that Jonah was resentful that the Lord was giving Israel's enemy a chance to repent, as he believed they deserved the destruction prophesied to them. Jonah's story was referenced by Jesus Christ, foreshadowing Jesus' own death and resurrection.



## SUMMARY:

- The word of the Lord came to Jonah, tell him to preach repentance to the Ninevites.
- Jonah went to Joppa, where he boarded a boat to Tarshish to escape from God.
- The Lord sent a great wind and violent storm, and the sailors were afraid for their lives. Each one prayed to their own god, and decided to cast lots to see who was responsible for the calamity.
- The lot fell to Jonah, and sailors learned that Jonah had offended God. Jonah told them to throw him into the sea, and then the storm would stop.
- The sailors threw Jonah overboard, and he was swallowed by the great fish, which had been prepared by the Lord.
- Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights. Inside the fish, Jonah repented and offered prayer and apologies to the Lord.
- Jonah was spit up by the fish onto the beach.



## THEMES:

**Christians should never run away from responsibilities.**

Jonah found himself called to do something he found distasteful. However, Jonah learned that he could not outrun what God had called him to do. Like Jonah, there may also be some areas in our own lives where we find ourselves rationalizing and running away from our responsibilities. However, when we repent and accept God's will, we can reap joy and happiness in serving others.



# JONAH DELIVERS THE NEWS

**JNH**  
**3-4**

“When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.” Jonah 3:6



**WRITTEN BY:**

**The Prophet  
Jonah**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**760 BC**



**LOCATION:**

**Nineveh,**  
capital of Assyria in the  
northern section of biblical  
geography



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jonah, the Ninevite  
people, King of  
Nineveh, God**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Nineveh was a major city of Assyria and a well-known trade center. At the time of Jonah, the Israelites had great pride in their nation. These feelings of superiority and importance stemmed from the fact that they viewed themselves as God’s chosen nation and literal descendants of Abraham. This sense of pride resulted in a lack of mercy to Gentiles, and was part of the reason Jonah was so resistant to preaching repentance.



**SUMMARY:**

- The word of the Lord came to Jonah, calling him to preach repentance to Nineveh.
- Jonah obeyed and it took three days to travel to the city. Jonah began to preach to the people, warning them to repent, or the city would be destroyed in 40 days.
- The Ninevites believed Jonah and his preaching eventually reached the king. The king commanded the people to fast and repent in sackcloth and ashes.
- God saw their repentance, and the prophesied destruction did not take place.
- Jonah was angry because the Ninevites received God’s mercy.
- God sent a plant, worm, and scorching wind to teach Jonah about how He loves all His children.



**THEMES:**

**God’s Love for Mankind**

When God showed mercy to the Ninevites, Jonah became angry because he felt they did not deserve it. However, God showed Jonah that He was concerned about the Ninevites because they too were His children. God’s love for the Israelites as a nation was not diminished by His love for the Ninevites. From this, we learn that God’s love for Christians today is not diminished by His love for unbelievers. God’s love is not a selfish thing, and when we learn this, we may find ourselves with more love for those around us. We will desire to share God’s love so that others understand their value to Him.



# THE BIRTH OF JESUS FROM LUKE/ THE NATIVITY

**LUK**  
2:1-20

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.” Luke 2:8



### WRITTEN BY:

**Luke,**  
the physician  
and author of  
the Book of Acts



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**7 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Nazareth, Bethlehem,  
Jerusalem**



### CHARACTERS:

**Joseph, Mary, Baby  
Jesus, shepherds,  
Angel of the Lord,  
heavenly host**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the Jews were under Roman rule. Caesar Augustus was a Roman ruler who reigned from 31 BC to 14 AD. The taxing in the story was actually a census to account the people for future taxation purposes. Bethlehem was about 85-90 miles south of Nazareth, which would have been a 4-5-day journey. However, this likely took longer due to Mary’s pregnant condition. Because of the census, the town of Bethlehem was probably overcrowded and the guest rooms of all the relatives full. Amid family, Joseph and Mary wouldn’t have been without a place to stay. They likely stayed in the family quarter of one of their relatives, which would have contained a lower area where the animals would stay at night. This area would be a place where Mary could safely give birth, and have a feeding manger, an appropriate place to lay Baby Jesus as there was no crib.



## SUMMARY:

- Caesar Augustus issued a census of the entire Roman world, and each person was required to go to their own hometown to register.
- Mary and Joseph left Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem, the city of David, as they were both descendants of King David.
- The baby Jesus was born, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and placed in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.
- Shepherds in the fields saw an angel who announced the Savior had been born. Heavenly hosts appeared, praising God.
- Shepherds traveled to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus.
- Shepherds spread the word of what happened, but Mary pondered and treasured the events in her heart.



## THEMES:

### Humility rules.

The story of Jesus’ birth teaches us that nothing is wrong with humility or humble origins. Humility is so important that God sent His son to the earth in modest and unassuming circumstances, and these circumstances took a spiritual awareness to recognize Jesus for who He was. We must also be careful that we don’t look ridiculous or abuse people because of their origins or status. We must be spiritually aware to recognize that the humble are often favored by God, and be careful not to reject those whom God favors.



# THE BIRTH OF JESUS FROM MATTHEW / THE MAGI

**MAT**  
2:1-12

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem...” Matthew 2:1



### WRITTEN BY:

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi the Apostle



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**7 BC**



### LOCATION:

**Bethlehem, Jerusalem**



### CHARACTERS:

**Magi (Wise Men) who came from the East, King Herod, Jesus, Mary**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

There is a lot of speculation about the Magi, as we don't know their exact number, origin, or names. We presume them to be religious wise men from Babylon or Persia, but the term Magi was regularly used to describe many religious practitioners in that region. From this story, we do learn that the Magi were familiar with some prophecies surrounding the Savior and knew the signs surrounding His birth. We don't know how long the Magi had traveled, but it appears that a significant time had passed because Jesus was referred to as a young child, and not a baby during their visit in Bethlehem.



### SUMMARY:

- After Jesus was born, the Magi from the East came to Jerusalem. They asked Herod where the king of the Jews had been born, because they had seen the star as a sign of His birth.
- King Herod consulted the priests and teachers and found out that it had been prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
- King Herod called the Magi secretly, and found out the exact time the star had appeared. Herod sent the Magi to Bethlehem, but told them to return and report to him so he could worship the baby also.
- The Magi continued to Bethlehem, and the star led them to where Jesus lived. They worshipped Jesus and brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they left to their own country by another route.



### THEMES:

#### **Humility for those with important titles and issues.**

It is amazing that the Magi recognized the signs of the Savior's birth, while holy men in Jesus' own lands failed to recognize the same signs. These men sought out knowledge, learned the truth, and acted upon it. We can be like the Magi and seek after God's truth, which may not be evident to the world. In fact, God's truth may be hidden or look like foolishness to others. However, when we act according to what we know to be true, we can receive blessings.



# ESCAPE TO EGYPT (& THE SAD PART OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS)

**MAT**  
2:13-23

“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’” Matthew 2:13



## WRITTEN BY:

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka Levi  
in the Book of Mark



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**7 BC**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem, Bethlehem,  
Egypt**



## CHARACTERS:

**Angel, Joseph, Mary,  
Jesus, Herod, citizens  
of Bethlehem**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Herod was the ruler in Jerusalem and considered the king of the Jews, a title that had been bestowed on him by Rome. Herod was politically successful as a ruler in Jerusalem, as he had rebuilt the temple and constructed other buildings and strongholds. Herod had also been successful in keeping political peace between Rome and Jerusalem. It is somewhat understandable that Herod, who was considered the king of Jews or ruler of Jerusalem was upset by the Magi’s visit. The Magi had referred to Jesus as the “king of the Jews,” and Herod was jealous, not wanting anyone to usurp him. Herod was aging, and in his later years he suffered from paranoia; Herod even went so far as to commit genocide in Bethlehem and many other violent actions. He had fits of cruelty where he killed even his own children.



## SUMMARY:

- After the Magi departed, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him to take his family to Egypt, because Herod wanted to kill Jesus.
- Joseph got up in the night, and left with the family to Egypt.
- Hosea’s prophecy was fulfilled as it stated that God’s son would be called out of Egypt.
- Herod realized he had been outwitted and became furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and the surrounding area who were two years old and younger.
- After Herod’s death, an angel appeared to Joseph and told him to return to Israel. Joseph returned with his family to Galilee instead of Judea, and they lived in the city of Nazareth.



## THEMES:

### God Prepares the Way

Through miraculous means, Jesus was preserved as a baby when Herod attempted to kill Him. The long-awaited Messiah was protected and those miraculous events fulfilled prophecies from hundreds of years earlier. The preservation of Jesus’ life is evidence that God has power to perform miracles and intervene when necessary. There are many ways we may see God’s hand and power in our lives, although those miracles may be smaller than the one in this story.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**24 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Unnamed mountainside  
in the north of Israel,**  
likely just above the Sea of  
Galilee



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, His disciples,  
and the crowds**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The Beatitudes are the beginning of Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount (which encompasses Matthew 5-7). Jesus began His ministry in Galilee with this incredible sermon, which itself was such a magnificent message that, at its conclusion, the people were astonished at His teachings. The Beatitudes consist of eight statements that begin with the phrase “Blessed are...” The word blessed in each beatitude comes the Latin beatus, meaning fortunate or happy. Each statement can be read alternatively as “Happy are...”



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus saw crowds and went up on a mountainside. His disciples came to Him and He began to teach them. He said:
- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for being righteous, for theirs is the kingdom of God.
- Blessed are those who are insulted, persecuted, and falsely accused when they follow Jesus. They should rejoice and be glad because their reward is great in heaven, and prophets were similarly persecuted.



**THEMES:**

**The Secret to Happiness**

The Beatitudes give us the secret to a happy and meaningful life, with promises beyond this life. However, these statements run counterintuitive to the materialistic messages of the world, where happiness seems to be based on what we have or can buy. The Beatitudes hint that happiness can be found by those who are not wealthy, and even amid hardship. The truth is that the happiness that the world promises is not that same which God has promised us when we choose to follow Him. When we follow Him, our happiness and rewards are eternal and will endure past this life.

# SPECK AND THE PLANK/ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

**MAT**  
7:1-12

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Matthew 7:7



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**24 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Unnamed mountainside  
in the north of Israel,**  
likely just above the Sea of  
Galilee



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, His disciples  
and the crowds**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This section of scripture is part of the Sermon on the Mount, but the entire sermon can be found in Matthew 5-7. Jesus taught doctrine and principles of righteousness, which went beyond what was accepted in Jewish society and the Law taught by Moses. Jesus made it clear that His followers would be held to a higher standard, and taught that righteousness and sin stemmed from more than just actions. Jesus taught about the purpose and the meaning behind the laws that were given, so that they were understood more fully. Jesus' explanations help make the Sermon on the Mount relevant to us today.



**SUMMARY:**

Jesus makes the following statements to encourage average people like you and me:

- Do not judge, or you will be judged. In the same way you judge others, you will be judged.
- Do not look at the speck in your brother's eye and ignore the plank in your eye. First remove the plank from your own eye so you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
- Do not give to dogs what is sacred and do not throw your pearls to pigs
- Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you.
- Father in Heaven gives good gifts to those that ask of Him.



**THEMES:**

**Invitations from God.**

The Sermon on the Mount contains a specific invitation to seek God through prayer. We are assured that God listens to us and is ready to give us answers. He invites us to express our needs, hopes, and desires. But, communication with God isn't a bargain, and there is no promise that we will receive what we want. Instead, we are promised that God will provide us with what we need. He loves us and is a perfect judge of what we need. So when we "ask" and "seek," we may find that the answers we receive aren't the ones we were looking for. But we can be at peace knowing that that what we are given is best for us.





# GOLDEN RULE & THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK AND THE SAND

**MAT**  
7:12-27

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21



### WRITTEN BY:

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**25 AD**



### LOCATION:

**An unnamed mountainside in the north of Israel,**  
likely lying just north of the  
Sea of Galilee



### CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, His disciples  
and the crowds**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

This section of Scripture is just a portion of Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was given on a Galilean hillside where Jesus taught His disciples. The entire sermon can be found in Matthew 5-7, and includes the Beatitudes as well as the Lord’s Prayer. Not only did what Jesus taught amaze the people, but also how He taught. His words were practical and concise, and He did not cite precedence like other scribes or priests, who were considered experts in the Law of Moses. Instead, Jesus taught as one having the authority of God, because He was sent from God who had given that Law.



### SUMMARY:

- Enter through the narrow gate that leads to eternal life, for broad is the road that leads to destruction.
- Beware of false prophets, they will come to you in sheep’s clothing.
- By their fruits you will know them. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
- Not everyone will enter the kingdom of God. Many will say they did things in the Lord’s name, but He will say “I never knew you.”
- A wise man built his house on a rock. A foolish man built his house on the sand. When the rains came, the house on rock did not fall, but the house on sand fell with a great crash.



### THEMES:

#### **A Firm Foundation**

Jesus teaches about the wise and foolish builders, and the foundation they chose to build their lives on. Although both builders experienced the same storm, only one was able to withstand it—the one who had chosen to build on the rock. When we choose to build our lives on the Savior’s teachings, we are building a firm foundation that can help us endure and outlast the storms of life.

# PARABLE OF THE SOWER

**MAT**  
13:1-9,  
18-23

“But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.” Matthew 31:21



## WRITTEN BY:

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**25 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Somewhere in the north of Israel,**  
likely near Capernaum and Nazareth and close to the Sea of Galilee



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, disciples, multitudes, sower/farmer**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Jesus and His disciples were increasingly facing opposition from the religious leaders. As a result, Jesus began teaching in parables. This teaching method was designed to reach listeners on their individual spiritual levels. Jesus' disciples themselves were confused when Jesus taught in parables and asked why He taught this way. Jesus Himself provided them with the explanation, found in Matthew 13:10-17.



## SUMMARY:

Four types of soil symbolize four different types of people:

- **Wayside/Path:** Seeds that landed here did not grow. The hard path prevented the seeds from sinking into the soil and taking root; they were easily snatched away by birds. This symbolizes people who do not accept or seek God.
- **Stony/Rocky Places:** The seeds planted here grew, but did not last. The seeds grew shallow roots; because of this, the seeds were not able to withstand the heat and died. This symbolizes people with shallow faith who are able to grow for a short time, but then their faith withers under pressure.
- **Thorns:** The seeds grew in fertile soil, but the plants became choked out by the thorns. This symbolizes people who get distracted by cares and things of the world. Their faith is overcome and lost amongst competition for spiritual nutrients.
- **Good Soil:** This ground was fertile, sufficiently deep and contained the right nutrients so the seeds could grow and bear crops. This symbolizes people who accept the gospel, understand it, and begin to grow spiritually, blessing those around them.



## THEMES:

### Be fertile ground.

Jesus explained to His disciples the importance of parables, illustrating that those who have a desire to learn will be blessed in abundance with spiritual knowledge, while those who do not have a desire to learn will have their knowledge taken away and lost. We can remember this as we look for ways to be receptive to Bible truths so that our hearts are like the good soil in this parable. We should look for ways to grow our own faith, so we don't lose what has been given to us.

# PARABLE OF WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT

**MAT**  
13:24-30,  
36-43

“Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.’” Matthew 13:24



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**25 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Somewhere in the north of Israel,**  
likely near Capernaum and Nazareth and close to the Sea of Galilee



**CHARACTERS:**

**A farmer**  
(the Son of Man),  
**his enemy** (the devil),  
**the servants** (the Son of Man's followers)



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Jesus and His disciples faced increasing opposition from the religious leaders, so Jesus began teaching using parables, a method designed to reach listeners at their individual levels. Jesus often chose images and subject from the people's way of living, so they could be reminded of spiritual truths while toiling in their daily tasks. Many would have been familiar with the work of farming and the trouble of weeding. The word tare or wheat was meant to describe darnel grass, a poisonous weed that looks similar in appearance to wheat until it matures and comes into ear.



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a field in which a Sower planted good seed in his field. The Sower represents the Son of Man. The field is the world and the good seeds are the people of the kingdom.
- While the Sower slept, an enemy sowed tares/weeds among the wheat. The enemy is the devil and the weeds or tares are evil people. The righteous people are the wheat.
- The servants told the Sower what happened, but the Sower warned the servants not to pull up the tares/weeds for fear of hurting the wheat. Instead, he allowed the wheat and the tares/weeds to grow together until harvest. The good and evil people will live together until the End of Age when Jesus comes again.
- The tares/weeds will be gathered at the harvest and burned and the wheat will be gathered into the barn. The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are the angels. The harvesters will weed everything that causes sin and all who do evil and they will be burned. The righteous will be gathered into the kingdom of their Father.



**THEMES:**

**Appearances can be deceiving**

In this parable, the wheat and tares were left to grow together because their appearances were indistinguishable from each other while the plants were still growing. If the servants had tried to pull up the weeds or tares, the harvest of wheat would have been compromised as wheat would have been pulled with the weeds. This teaches us that we are not always going able to judge people accurately, and we may make inaccurate assumptions about those around us. We must instead be patient and wait for God, who will judge everyone perfectly.

# PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

**MAT**  
18:21-35

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me? Up to seven times?’” Matthew 18:21



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**25 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Capernaum,**  
in northern Israel near the  
Sea of Galilee



**CHARACTERS:**

**A king, an indebted  
servant, a fellow  
servant**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This parable refers to several amounts of money. The first debt owed was 10,000 talents or bags of gold, and second amount owed was 100 pence or silver coins. To put these amounts in perspective, it's estimated that 10,000 talents was the same as 100,000,000 denarii. Just one denarius was a typical day's wage for a common laborer, so if that common laborer worked every single day of the year, it would take over 27 years to earn just ONE talent! And 270,000 years to earn 10,000 talents! In comparison, the 100 pence owed by the fellow servant is about one million times less than the original debt owed to the king, a vast difference.



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus teaches about forgiveness by likening the kingdom of God to a king who wants to settle his debts.
- A servant who owed 10,000 talents or bags of gold was brought before the king. The servant was not able to pay, so was commanded to sell all his things, including his wife and children, so that the debt could be paid.
- The servant fell down and begged for mercy and patience, saying he would pay all the debt. The king had compassion and forgave him the debt.
- The same servant went out and found another man who owed him 100 pence or silver coins, and demanded payment.
- The other servant could not pay, and asked for patience so that he could pay it back. But the servant refused and threw him into prison until the debt could be paid.
- The king heard about the unforgiving servant, and told him that he should have compassion just like he had been given. The king then sent the servant to prison until he could pay back all that was owed.



**THEMES:**

**Our own debt**

This amount of the two debts illustrated in this parable reminds us our own debt to the Savior. The first debt represents the forgiveness that Jesus extends to us, an astronomical number that is beyond our ability to earn. This number illustrates the profound sacrifice Jesus made for each of us and His wonderful gift of mercy and grace. The second debt represents the forgiveness that we are expected to extend to others. A reasonable amount, and well within our means, it is very little in light of the magnitude of forgiveness God extends to us all.



# IF YOU DID IT FOR THE LEAST OF THESE

**MAT**  
25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.” Matthew 25:31



### WRITTEN BY:

**Matthew**  
the Apostle,  
aka Levi



### ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



### LOCATION:

**The Mount of Olives,**  
just outside Jerusalem



### CHARACTERS:

**Jesus and His  
disciples**



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Jesus delivered this parable on the Mount of Olives, and it is one of the last teachings given to the disciples. This is part of the Olivet discourse, given on Wednesday afternoon of Holy Week, and Jesus’ arrest would take place the very next night. The disciples came to Jesus privately with two questions: when will these things happen—meaning the destruction of the temple—and what are the signs of the Second Coming and the end of world? This Parable of the Sheep and the Goats was one of several Jesus shared to help the disciples better understand the Second Coming.



### SUMMARY:

- When the Son of Man comes, all nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them like sheep and goats are separated at the end of the day. The sheep will be placed on the right and the goats on the left.
- To those on the right, the king will welcome and invite them to take their inheritance. The king explains that when he was hungry, a stranger, needed clothes, was sick, and was in prison, these people looked after him.
- The righteous are confused and asked when they saw the king this way. He answered that whenever they did these things for others, they had done it for him.
- To those on the left, the king curses them into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The king explains that when he was hungry, a stranger, needed clothes, was sick, and was in prison, these people DID NOT look after him.
- The wicked are confused and asked when they saw the king this way. He answers that whenever they DID NOT do these things for others, they DID NOT do them for him.



### THEMES:

#### **Works are important!**

From this parable, we learn that the righteous will be prepared for the Second Coming because of what they had done and the unrighteous will be unprepared because of the things they had not done. While we are understandably saved by grace, it doesn’t diminish the importance of works. Our actions are important because they are how we prepare ourselves for Christ to come again. And we learn that from this parable, a big part of our works should be how we treat those around us, as they an extension of how much we love God.

# JESUS CASTS THE DEMONS INTO THE HERD

**MAR**  
**5:1-20**

“He shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!’” Mark 5:7



## WRITTEN BY:

**John Mark**, a friend and companion to Apostles Paul and Peter



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**25 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Region of the Gerasenes in northern Israel**, on the far or east side of the Sea of Galilee



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, possessed man, demonic legion, large herd of pigs**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Gerasenes was an area on the east side of the Sea of Galilee where Gentiles lived, and helps explain the presence of the swine. Jews were forbidden from eating pork by the Law of Moses, and would not have raised or kept pigs as livestock. The possessed man referred to himself as “Legion.” At the time, the word typically referred to a division of Roman soldiers, either of 3,000 or 6,000 in number. Although in many instances, Jesus told people to keep His miracles quiet, here He did the opposite and told the man to tell His friends. This may have been because they were in the Gentile region, away from the influence of Jewish religious leaders. Jesus was still asked to leave the region after freeing the possessed man, likely due to the loss of profit when the 2,000 swine drowned in the lake.



## SUMMARY:

- Jesus traveled to the Gerasenes and was met at the shore by a demon-possessed man. The man lived in tombs, and could not be bound by anyone, even with chains.
- The man recognized Jesus and asked what He wanted. Jesus commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man, but then asked him his name. The possessed man claimed his name was Legion because there were many spirits possessing him.
- There was a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside, and the demons asked Jesus to send them into the swine. Jesus agreed and the impure spirits went into the pigs.
- The pigs rushed down to the lake and drowned themselves, and the people ran to find out what had happened. They saw the man who had been possessed, now sane.
- The swineherds asked Jesus to leave the region, and the formerly possessed man asked to go with Jesus. Jesus told him to go home and tell his neighbors all that had happened and what the Lord had done for him.



## THEMES:

### Possession is a real problem; Jesus is a real solution

The account of the possessed man here is just one of the miracles in which Jesus provided a physical healing. It is interesting that the evil spirits also acknowledged Jesus as the Savior and recognized Him. However, the comforting part of the story is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, with power over the physical body and call heal all things, even possession. We should consider the connection between physical and spiritual healings, and how one might affect the other. We might also ask ourselves what kind of healing we would seek for ourselves.

# JESUS TURNS WATER TO WINE

**JHN**  
**2:1-11**

"Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons." John 2:6



**WRITTEN BY:**

**John the Apostle**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**24 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Cana,**  
a small town near Nazareth where Jesus' family lived



**CHARACTERS:**

**Mary, Jesus, wedding guests, master, Jesus' disciples**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This story contains Jesus' first recorded miracle. The wedding may have been for a family member, as Jesus' mother Mary seemed to feel some responsibility for the wine. Each of the water pots could hold about 2-3 firkin of water, a measurement from the KJV. A firkin was about 9 gallons, so together the six stone pots would have held 100-160 gallons, or according the NIV 120-180 gallons—a substantial amount of liquid. The quality of wine that Jesus provided was noteworthy. Typically, the best wine would have been served at the beginning of the feast, and the lesser quality was served later after the guests had been drinking when the quality wouldn't have been as noticeable.



**SUMMARY:**

- A wedding was in Galilee and Mary, Jesus' mother was in attendance. Jesus and His disciples were invited and Mary told Jesus that there was no more wine.
- Jesus asked Mary what He should do, as His hour had not yet come.
- Mary instructed the servants to do anything Jesus asked them to. Jesus then told the servants to fill up six waterpots of stone with water, and they filled the pots to the brim.
- Jesus then instructed the servant to take some out and serve it to the master or governor of the feast. The master declared this wine better than the original.



**THEMES:**

**Jesus honored His mother Mary**

When Jesus spoke to His mother Mary, he called her "Woman," which may sound somewhat harsh to us today. However, from the Greek translation, we learn that the word was a term of endearment. Jesus respected and loved His mother, to the point of performing a miracle on her behalf. We can learn about the importance of showing respect and love to our parents, as even Jesus was not above the commandment to honor His parents.

# JESUS WALKS ON WATER

**MAT**  
14:22-36

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.” Matthew 14:22



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**25 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**An unnamed place on the other side of a lake than Gennesaret,**  
which was a small plain bordering on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Magdala



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, Peter, some of the other disciples**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Jesus had just performed the miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes and feeding the 5,000 people. Likely exhausted, Jesus sent the people away, along with the disciples, so that He could be alone. From the story, it's not clear exactly when the boat with the disciples started the journey across the sea, but it is likely that they left before night fell and the storm arose. However, Jesus didn't appear on the water until near dawn, which meant that the disciples likely spent the entire night on the boat, battling both the winds and waves. Here the disciples saw Jesus in a new light as they recognized that Jesus was in command of the elements and really the Son of God.



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus sent the disciples across the Sea of Galilee in a boat, then went up into mountain to be alone. Night fell and Jesus was still alone.
- The boat with the disciples had not been able to cross the sea because a storm had arisen and the boat was tossed by the wind and waves.
- Just before dawn, Jesus left the shore and walked on water out to the boat. The disciples thought that Jesus was a ghost or spirit, but He told them not to be afraid.
- Peter asked to come to Jesus on the water, and Jesus agreed. Peter walked on water, but when he saw the wind, he became afraid and started to sink.
- Jesus caught Peter, and asked him why he doubted. When they climbed into the boat, the winds died down and the disciples declared that Jesus was the Son of God.



**THEMES:**

**Jesus watches us through our storms.**

The winds and the waves from the storm hold some parallels for the challenges and distractions we face in life. Like Peter, when we look to the Savior and keep our eyes on Him, we exercise our faith and miracles can occur. However, when we are distracted by our surroundings, we may be filled with fear and sink under doubt and despair. The good news is that just like when Peter sank, Jesus is there to save us too. With Him, we can find peace once more as we recognize He has saved us all.



# JESUS RAISES A WIDOW'S SON

**LUK**  
7:11-17

"As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out - the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her." Luke 7:12



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**25 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Nain,**  
a Galilean city just north of Mount Moreh, southwest of the Sea of Galilee



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, His disciples, a large crowd, a widow, her dead son**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

There are only three recorded times Jesus brought someone back from death, and this is one of those occurrences. The young man who died was the only son of his mother, who also had lost her husband. This meant that his death had devastating consequences for her, as she would have been left impoverished, without any means of support. After Jesus performed the miracle, the people referred to Him as a great prophet, as they likely saw similarities between Jesus and the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah had brought back from the dead the son of a widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24) and Elisha had done so with the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:17-37).



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus arrived in Nain with His disciples and a large crowd.
- At the town gate, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of a widow.
- Jesus felt compassion for the grieving mother and comforted her.
- Jesus then touched the bier than the body was on and told the man to get up.
- The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.
- The people were amazed and praised Jesus as a great prophet. The news of the miracle spread throughout Judea and surrounding area.



**THEMES:**

**Compassion for others**

In this story, Jesus takes compassion on the widow who had not only lost her most special loved one, but also her means of being provided for. This is a great example of how Jesus felt compassion and noticed the heartache of those around Him. Although Jesus was able to raise the widow's son, we will likely not be able to fix the pain and heartache that others experience. However, we can notice them, feel compassion for them, and look for ways we can be present for them amid their challenges.

# JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.” John 9:1



**WRITTEN BY:**

**John the Apostle**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**25-26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Streets of Jerusalem**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, the disciples, a blind man, the Pharisees, the blind man's parents**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

During this time in Jesus' ministry, He faced increasing opposition from the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees. They often tried to find ways to trap or find fault with Jesus. However, none of their attempts were successful as Jesus outmaneuvered them—often pointing out their own faults and failures, which angered them even more. It is important to note that the Jews held a common belief that any adversity or hardship were consequences of sin or wrongdoing. Punishments for sin in the Old Testament were commonly passed to successive generations, so the disciples' questions to Jesus of who was at fault for the man's blindness were genuine.



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth and His disciples asked who had sinned, the man or his parents, causing him to be born blind.
- Jesus answered that neither had sinned, but it had happened so that the work of God would be known. He then spit on the ground and made a mud, putting it on the blind man's eyes.
- Jesus then commanded the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam; he did and was cured. The neighbors saw the blind man cured, and asked how it had happened. The man told them that Jesus had done it.
- The people then sent for the Pharisees. The Pharisees were divided about the miracle, as they considered it a sin that the miracle had been performed on the Sabbath, but knew a sinner would not have been able to do it.
- The Pharisees questioned the man and his family. The man responded that he knew Jesus was sent from God, and the Pharisees threw the man out of the synagogue. Jesus found the man and told him that He was the Son of Man, and the man worshipped Jesus.
- Jesus taught that He came so that the blind would see, and those who see would become blind. The Pharisees questioned Jesus, and He taught about spiritual blindness.



**THEMES:**

**Miracles and Conversion**

Although the blind man received his sight, it wasn't until after he saw Jesus Christ that the man recognized Him and worshipped Him as the Son of God. Jesus performed many miracles as signs of His divinity, but these miracles by themselves were not enough for people to be converted and follow Him. We should consider that while miracles are important and have their place, our own conversion must come from within as we recognize Jesus Christ as our own Savior.

# THE GOOD SAMARITAN

**LUK**  
10:25-37

“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’” Luke 10:25



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**  
the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**25 AD**



## LOCATION:

**An unnamed town in the north of Israel near the Sea of Galilee**



## CHARACTERS:

**Man attacked by robbers, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan, the innkeeper**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Both the priest and the Levite in this story would have been Jewish leaders with roles requiring service. They would have been aware of the commandment to love their neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). However, when they ignored the wounded man, they followed a tradition from the rabbis, in which no obligation was required to aid Gentiles or someone with unknown ethnicity, as they were not considered a “neighbor.” Although their actions were socially acceptable, they prioritized tradition over the Law God had given. In contrast, the beaten man was assisted by a Samaritan, a race detested by the Jews. Samaritans were descendants of Israelites who had intermarried with Gentiles, and were believed to have corrupted the Israelite faith. Jews would often travel miles around Samaritan lands to avoid contact with them.



## SUMMARY:

- Jesus was asked by a lawyer what must be done to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him what was written in the Law. The man responded saying, “love God and love your neighbor.” Jesus said he had answered correctly, but the man then asked who was his neighbor.
- Jesus told him a story about a man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was set upon by thieves, who stole his clothes and beat him and left him in the road.
- A priest traveled down the same road, and passed the beaten man on the other side. A Levite also passed the man on the other side. But a Samaritan saw the wounded man and stopped, and bandaged his wounds. He took the man to an inn, and paid for the innkeeper’s care, then promised reimbursement for any extra money spent on his care.
- Jesus asked the lawyer who was the neighbor of wounded man. He responded that it was the one who had mercy on him. Jesus responded by telling him to go and do the same.



## THEMES:

### Helping Our Neighbor.

In this story, the priest and the Levite both ignored the wounded man and went on their way. They had an excuse for their actions, but passed by someone who needed their aid. We may find ourselves in a position where service to others isn’t particularly convenient or easy. However, we can be inspired by the example of the Samaritan, who went out of his way to help. We can choose to help others, knowing we are living one of the greatest commandments given by the Savior.

“Jesus replied, ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?’” Luke 12:14



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke**  
the physician and  
also author of the  
Book of Acts



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**25 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Probably Bethany,**  
in Judea, near Jerusalem



**CHARACTERS:**

**A certain rich man,**  
**God**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

A father’s inheritance would typically be divided between sons, in such a way that the firstborn son would receive twice as much as the younger son (Deuteronomy 21:17). This meant that if there were only two sons, the older one would inherit two-thirds, while the younger one would inherit one-third. The listener in this story appears to be taking issue with the proper division of inheritance. However, instead of deciding the matter as requested, Jesus actually addresses the real issue behind the dispute—greed.



**SUMMARY:**

- A listener asked Jesus to intercede and tell his brother to divide the inheritance.
- Jesus told him that He was not the arbiter between them, then warned against greed and abundant possessions.
- Jesus told the parable of the rich man who had an abundant harvest. He had no place to store his crops, and decided to tear down his barns and build bigger ones, thinking that the surplus would last for many years and his life would then be easy.
- But that very night, God demanded his soul and asked who would receive what he had prepared for himself.
- Jesus then taught the disciples not to worry about their lives, as God would provide for them as He provided for the raven who had no storehouse and flowers who grew without labor.
- Jesus told the disciples that God knew their needs and if they left behind their material possessions, they would gain a treasure in heaven that endures forever.



**THEMES:**

**Make peace with your Maker**

The rich fool from this story looked at his abundance and thought that it would give him security; that he could be happy and have an easy life. However, Jesus taught about the impermanence of worldly wealth, as the rich man died and was not able to enjoy it. From this, we must learn that our security should not come from seeking riches or financial stability. Instead, it should come from seeking the Kingdom of God, and then provisions will follow. As we do this, like the disciples, we can discover a treasure that will last beyond this life.

# LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

**LUK**  
16:19-31

“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” Luke 16:31



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Judean Countryside**



## CHARACTERS:

**The rich man, Lazarus, Father Abraham**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

This parable was shared just after Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees. He had taught that one could not serve both God and money (or Mammon). However, because the Pharisees loved money, this teaching angered them. They tried to justify themselves, as many of them had gained riches and wealth as religious leaders. It is important to note that in this story, Jesus did not say that the rich man was evil or a sinner. The rich man’s punishment came as a result of not sharing his wealth to bless someone in need, a warning for others to use temporal blessings wisely.



## SUMMARY:

Jesus told this story:

- A rich man lived and dressed in luxury every day while a beggar named Lazarus lay at his gate.
- Lazarus died and was carried to heaven at Abraham’s side. The rich man died and was buried in hell, tormented.
- The rich man looked up and saw Abraham, begging him to send Lazarus to relieve his thirst.
- Abraham explained that there is chasm between them that can never be crossed.
- The rich man then begged for Lazarus to be sent to warn his family so they wouldn’t end up in hell, but Abraham explained that they had prophets to warn them.
- The rich man said that if someone from the dead was sent to them, they would repent. But Abraham explained if they didn’t believe in the prophets, they wouldn’t believe someone who was raised from the dead.



## THEMES:

### Faith not Signs

When the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his family, he was wanting them to experience a life-changing event that would make them repent. However, Abraham taught that signs would not be enough if they did not believe the prophets. From this we learn the importance of developing faith, as we likely haven’t received heavenly messengers calling us to repent. However, we can read the words of the holy prophets that God has sent to share His word. As we read them and live their words, we will develop faith that can be life-changing and assure us an eternal reward.

# THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR/ LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO JESUS

**LUK**  
18:9-17

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:” Luke 18:9



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Unnamed town**

either in the Judean small towns (near Jerusalem) or in the Perea small towns (area to the east of the Jordan River)



**CHARACTERS:**

**Pharisee, tax collector**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Pharisees were religious leaders who were generally admired and thought to be very righteous, obedient to God’s law. However, tax collectors or publicans were people who were hated and shunned. The general sentiment among the Jews was that Roman taxes were often unfair as they taxed very heavily. Tax collectors were Jews who received payment from Romans for collecting taxes and were often seen as traitors. It was a common practice for tax collectors to cheat people by demanding more money than what was required, then pocketing the excess as income for themselves. These tax collectors would have been outcasts in Jewish society and forbidden from entering synagogues, the centerpiece of the Jewish community.



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus told the story of two men who went up the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and one a tax collector.
- The Pharisee prayed, thanking God that he was righteous and not like other sinners because he fasted and gave tithes.
- The tax collector prayed, asking God to have mercy on him, a sinner.
- Jesus taught that the tax collector was justified before God, because all those exalt themselves will be humbled and all those who are humble will be exalted.
- People tried to bring their children and babies to Jesus, but the disciples criticized them.
- However, Jesus invited the children to come to Him. He taught that all who enter the kingdom of God must be like the little children.



**THEMES:**

**Pride and Humility**

In comparing the Pharisee and the tax collector, Jesus taught some important lessons about pride and humility. Like the Pharisee, those that are prideful list their own works or accomplishments, but in so doing rely on themselves and not God. They shut out God’s mercy and grace, which are necessary because we are human and make mistakes. However, the humble acknowledge their own weakness, recognize the need for mercy, and in so doing, invite God into their lives. We can choose to follow the example of the tax collector, and look for ways be humble and to encourage God’s mercy to fill our hearts.

# JESUS HEALS PARALYTIC MAN

**MAR**  
**2:1-12**

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”  
Mark 2:5



## WRITTEN BY:

**John Mark,**  
a friend of  
Apostles Peter and  
Paul



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**24 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Capernaum,**  
a city by the Sea of Galilee,  
where Jesus actually kept  
a dwelling place in the  
beginning of His ministry



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, large crowd,  
paralyzed man and his  
four friends, teachers  
of the law**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The paralyzed man could not walk and needed to be carried to Jesus. Homes in New Testament times had walls made of stone which were permanent, but their roofs were made with wood beams, thatch, or packed earth. In the situation where a large crowd was gathered and the doorway entry was not available or wide enough to accommodate a stretcher, the roof would have been a feasible alternative. The large tear in the roof, necessary to lower the paralyzed man, would have been fairly easy to repair.



## SUMMARY:

- Jesus returned to Capernaum and preached to a large crowd gathered inside a home.
- Four friends of a paralyzed man carried him to see Jesus, but they could not get through the crowd, so they dropped him in through the roof, directly in front of Jesus.
- Jesus told the man that his sins were forgiven, but the teachers of the law were upset and thought this statement was blasphemy.
- Jesus then asked them if it was easier to forgive the man his sins or heal him. He then told the man to get up and walk, as a sign of His authority to do both.
- The man picked up his mat and left walking, amazing everyone present.



## THEMES:

### Faith as a Community

In this scripture, Jesus notices their faith, meaning the faith of the paralyzed man and his friends. These men came together and exercised their faith on behalf of one who needed help. We may think about faith on our own, as something we need to work on or increase individually. However, here Jesus points out how the faith of several people and their persistence was instrumental in blessing one of their own members. Likewise, our faith can be exercised as a group. We can help each other and lift each other up when we come together as a community of Christians.

# JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND

**MAT**  
14:13-21

“When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.”  
Matthew 14:13



## WRITTEN BY:

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi the Apostle



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**25 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Bethsaida,**  
a town northwest of the  
Sea of Galilee



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, a large crowd,  
the disciples**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

This is one of the only miracles to be included in each of the four Gospels. Although this account is often referred to as “the 5,000,” it is clear that the number refers to only the males and actual count of the crowd would have been much greater since it included women and children. In Mark’s account (Mark 6:37), the disciples were incredulous when Jesus asked them to give the people something to eat. From the Greek translation, the disciples claimed they would have had to spend two hundred denarii to feed a crowd that size, which was about eight months’ wages for a common worker—a vast amount of money!



## SUMMARY:

- Jesus withdrew to a boat, but the crowds followed Him on foot and met Him by the shore. He had compassion on them and healed their sick.
- Dark approached, and the disciples told Jesus to send the people away so they could get food.
- Jesus told the disciples not to send the people away, but to give them something to eat. The disciples reported that they only had five loaves of bread and two fishes.
- Jesus told them to bring the food to Him. Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves and fishes, then gave the food to the disciples to distribute to the people.
- All ate and were filled and the disciples gathered twelve baskets that were left over.



## THEMES:

### God’s Abundant Grace

When Jesus commanded the disciples to give the people food, it was beyond their ability to provide what was necessary to feed such a large number. But then Jesus asked them to give what they had, and Jesus was able to multiply their provisions, surpassing what was needed so that all could eat and be filled. This parallels God’s grace. We fall short of God’s glory, but when we offer what we do have, God’s abundant grace compensates for our failures. His abundant grace is sufficient for all of us. It will never run out and is always available for us.





# JESUS' RESURRECTION

**LUK**  
24:1-12

"The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." Luke 7:7



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Jesus' tomb outside of Jerusalem**



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus' female disciples, two men in gleaming clothes, the 11 disciples, Peter**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Jesus' death had occurred on Friday afternoon, the day following the Passover feast. Although Saturday was the Sabbath, it began at nightfall, so the disciples were under a deadline to take care of Jesus' body quickly. Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked permission to bury Jesus' body prior to the Sabbath, then used his own tomb for the burial. The preparation of the Lord's body hadn't been completed yet, as the women appeared on Sunday morning with spices to finish the task. Spices and ointments were scented and considered an important part of a Jewish burial. After the Resurrection, the disciples of Jesus began observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week, Sunday.



## SUMMARY:

- On the first day of the week (Sunday) the women arrived at the tomb early with spices. The women included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James.
- They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but did not find the body of Jesus inside.
- Suddenly two angels appeared, telling them that Jesus had risen.
- The women returned from the tomb and told the eleven disciples what had happened.
- The disciples didn't believe the women, but Peter ran to the grave anyway. He saw the strips of linen that Jesus had been wrapped in and wondered what happened.



## THEMES:

### What Jesus' Disciples Didn't Know

Jesus' disciples had difficulty believing the news of the Resurrection when they first heard it. We may underestimate their faith, however, as nothing like this had ever happened before. While there were recorded miracles of people being raised by the dead, none of these people were resurrected like Jesus Christ. After seeing the Savior and witnessing the fulfillment of God's long-awaited Messiah, these men transformed their fear and unbelief into faith and became heroic preachers of God's Word. Like the disciples, our knowledge and belief in Jesus Christ and His resurrection has the power to transform our lives, and erase our doubts and fears as we learn what this promise means to us.

# THE LAST SUPPER

**MAT**  
26:17-30

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’” Matthew 26:26



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Matthew**  
the Apostle, aka  
Levi the Apostle



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**The Upper Room, in  
Jerusalem**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, His disciples**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Jesus and His disciples gathered together to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was a feast designed to celebrate how the children of Israel were delivered from the last plague. While a destroying angel killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, it “passed over” the houses of the Israelites who had painted the doorways with the blood of sacrificial lambs. Like the Passover, the Last Supper was also a meal instituted by the Savior to observe His sacrifice; His suffering and death release us from our bondage of sin.



**SUMMARY:**

- The disciples asked Jesus where to make preparations for the Passover feast. Jesus gave them specific instructions to go to the house of a man who would let them use a room.
- During the evening, Jesus announced that one of twelve would betray Him. The disciples all wondered if it was one of them. Judas quietly asks if is him and Jesus confirms.
- Jesus took the bread and broke it, then gave it to His disciples, telling them to take it and eat it, as it was His body.
- Jesus took the cup and told the disciples to drink it, as it was His blood of the new covenant or testament, which would be shed for the forgiveness of sin.
- They sung a hymn and departed for the Mount of Olives.



**THEMES:**

**Looking Inward**

When Jesus revealed that one of the disciples would betray Him, all of them became sorrowful and asked if it was them. Instead of looking around the room with suspicion and pointing a finger at everyone else, these holy men looked inwardly to ask if they were perhaps at fault. We can learn from their example and look inward to assess our spiritual wellbeing, our own faults, rather than pointing out the failures and weaknesses of others. We might ask ourselves what weaknesses and failings could be better, and how to begin that path to self-improvement.

# WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

**JHN**  
13:1-17

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:15



## WRITTEN BY:

**The Apostle John,** often thought of as Jesus' closest earthly friend



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem, the Upper Room**



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, the Twelve**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In Jesus' day, people generally wore open sandals and walked along dirt roads that were dusty and muddy, and often contained animal filth. Washing the feet of another person was an act of hospitality, but would have been quite an unsavory task, typically performed by the lowest servant. When Peter rejected Jesus' offer to wash his feet, Peter was likely uncomfortable that Jesus would be performing such a menial task as it was considered below His station, especially by one who recognized His deity and divine role.



## SUMMARY:

- The Passover meal was in progress and Judas Iscariot had already left the room when Jesus began to wash the disciples' feet.
- Simon Peter asked Jesus if He was really going to wash his feet. Jesus said yes and that Peter would understand what He was doing later.
- Peter declared that Jesus should never wash his feet, but Jesus told them unless He washed Peter's feet, Peter would have no part with Him.
- Peter then declared that Jesus could wash his hands and his head as well, but Jesus said that only the feet were necessary.
- Jesus then told the disciples that they were all clean except one, alluding to Judas Iscariot.



## THEMES:

### Imitate the Lord

When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, He was exercising humility. The Son of God did not consider Himself above the task. This is a great example for us, teaching us the importance of humility—we should not consider ourselves more important than others. Jesus washed the disciples' feet, but we don't need to literally follow His example. Instead, we can look for ways to help or serve in a capacity that we might overlook. We can look to help in ways we might normally consider "below" us and then do them in an effort to be like our Savior.

# THE ARREST OF JESUS

**LUK**  
22:39-53

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”  
Luke 22:42



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke**  
the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Garden of Gethsemane**  
on the Mount of Olives, just outside of Jerusalem



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, His disciples, a crowd, servant of the high priest**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Jesus and the disciples had completed the Passover and the Last Supper, then went to the Garden of Gethsemane, a garden near Jerusalem’s walls. This was a known location that Jesus frequently visited, where He could be found by His accusers. The word Gethsemane in Hebrew actually means ‘oil press,’ and likely a reflection of the atmosphere as Jesus was described as distressed, troubled, and overwhelmed with sorrow. In Jesus’ prayer, He refers to His suffering and death as a cup, a term heavy with symbolism. A cup sometimes symbolized God’s wrath or judgment and punishment of the wicked (see Isaiah 51:17). But after Jesus death and resurrection, that cup was referred to with blessing and thanksgiving (see 1 Corinthians 10:16), a sign of His victory.



**SUMMARY:**

- Jesus and His disciples went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus told them to pray so they wouldn’t fall into temptation.
- Jesus went a little way by Himself and prayed to the Father, asking Him to remove the cup if possible, but accepted God’s will regardless.
- An angel appeared, strengthening Jesus. In anguish, He prayed more earnestly and began to sweat drops of blood.
- Jesus rose from prayer and found the disciples sleeping, and chastised them.
- A crowd approached, and Judas kissed Jesus, the agreed-upon sign of betrayal.
- The disciples realized they had been ambushed and pulled their weapons. Malchus, a servant of a high priest, had his ear cut off with a sword, but Jesus healed him.
- Jesus was seized and taken prisoner. He told the religious leaders that this was to be their hour, when darkness fell.



**THEMES:**

**Understanding God’s Will**

Jesus prayed that Heavenly Father’s will would be done rather than His own, even though this led to His pain, suffering, and death. As we pray, we should consider Jesus’ example, and think about ways we can also submit to the will of the Father. Although we pray for things that are important to us, we should know that God will answer and give us those things when they are good for us. If we find ourselves met with silence or don’t see our prayers answered in the way we intend, we should consider that God’s will may lie in another direction.

# JESUS' TRIAL, PETER'S DENIALS

**JHN**  
18:12-40

"Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.'" John 18:36



## WRITTEN BY:

**Apostle John**, often known as Jesus' closest earthly friend



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Home of Annas**, father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest, in Jerusalem



## CHARACTERS:

**Simon Peter, John** (identified as "another disciple" in v. 15), servant girl, servant of the high priest, Pontius Pilate, angry mob



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After Jesus was arrested, He was taken first to Annas, then to Caiaphas. Annas had been a high priest with considerable power before he was eventually removed from office by Roman authorities. However, he continued to influence Jerusalem politics as five of his sons held the office of high priest at different times and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was in office at the time Jesus was arrested. Caiaphas is mentioned as having advised the Jewish leaders that it was better for one man to die than for a whole nation to perish (see John 11:49-53). In saying these words, Caiaphas prophesied how Jesus would suffer and die for all people everywhere, allowing salvation for all God's children.



## SUMMARY:

- Jewish officials bound Jesus and took Him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas.
- Simon Peter and John followed Jesus to the high priests' courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside. A servant girl asked Peter if he was one of Jesus' disciples, but he denied it.
- The high priest questioned Jesus about His teaching. Jesus said that He had always taught openly. An official then slapped Jesus, thinking He was disrespectful, but Jesus asked him to tell Him what He had said wrongly.
- Peter was warming himself by the fire in the courtyard with other servants, when he was asked by a servant if he was one of the disciples. He denied it again.
- One of the high priest's servants asked Peter if he had seen him in the garden, but Peter denied it again. Then a rooster crowed, fulfilling Jesus' prophecy.



## THEMES:

### **Don't be afraid of defending your faith.**

When Peter denied Jesus, just as had been prophesied, it's likely Peter was afraid and bowed under social pressure. It is easy to become afraid when we find ourselves facing peer pressure. However, Peter eventually rose above his situation and became a mighty preacher and defender of the faith. We can also rise above our fears and become strong in our faith. We can share our testimonies like Peter, so that we are adding our strength to God's kingdom.

# THE CRUCIFIXION

**LUK**  
23:26-52  
**MAT**  
27:32-65

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” Luke 23:34



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke and Matthew**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Calvary or Golgotha**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Jesus, Roman Soldiers, Simon of Cyrene, Two Criminals, Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James and Joseph, Joseph of Arimathea, Pilate, Pharisees,**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Jesus lived in Roman territory, where crucifixion was a tortuous death sentence. Despite the physical pain, death for victims most often occurred by asphyxiation. The body weight would put pressure on the lungs and the only way to draw a full breath would have been to put weight on the feet. The victim’s death could occur in just a few hours or within a few days, but commonly soldiers would break legs to speed up the process. It was also common at the time to medicate victims with wine and herbs. Jesus, however, refused this drink, deliberately choosing not to decrease the pain of the crucifixion and remained conscious until His death.



**SUMMARY:**

- Soldiers seized Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus’ cross. Many people followed the procession, mourning, but Jesus told them to mourn for themselves and their children.
- Two men were led to be crucified with Jesus.
- Jesus asked God to forgive them because they didn’t know what they were doing.
- People mocked Jesus, saying He should save Himself. Soldiers tried to feed Jesus wine and vinegar, but He refused it.
- Soldiers then crucified Him, and divided up His clothes. They hung a sign above His head that said “King of the Jews.”
- Darkness came over all the land from noon to three in the afternoon. Jesus then called out, committing His spirit to God, and died.
- Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. Tombs broke open and bodies of holy people appeared.
- Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus’ body, which was wrapped and placed in His own tomb, then sealed with a big stone.
- The chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to place guards to secure the tomb, so Jesus’ body could not be stolen and people claim Jesus had risen from the dead.



**THEMES:**

**Jesus’ Death Is a Sacrifice**

It’s astounding how an innocent man was tried, convicted, and suffered such a gruesome death. It can be easy to get overwhelmed with the gory details, and lose focus on the fact that Jesus’ death was foreordained and was part of God’s plan. We can instead think about Jesus’ death as the ultimate sacrifice and recognize with gratitude how He provides salvation for us all. It is through Jesus’ suffering and death that we are able to return to live with our God again.

# MARY MAGDALENE SEES JESUS FIRST

**JHN**  
20:1-18

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” John 20:1



## WRITTEN BY:

**Apostle John**, often known as Jesus’ closest earthly friend



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Tomb of Jesus**, just outside Jerusalem



## CHARACTERS:

**Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, John** (identified as the other disciple), **two angels, the remaining nine disciples**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

After Jesus’ death, Jewish leadership had gone to Pilate and requested a guard be placed around the tomb. They expected Jesus’ disciples to steal the body and say Jesus had arisen from the dead. The request was granted, so the fact that Jesus’ tomb was guarded made the disappearance of His all the more astonishing. When the disciples found the empty tomb, they found the burial clothes that Jesus had been laid to rest in. It was customary to wrap the dead in strips of linen cloths (the othonion) and cover the face with a handkerchief (the soudarion). Finding these must have surprised the disciples because it wouldn’t have made sense for any grave robbers to unwrap Jesus’ body, take it away, and leave the burial cloths behind.



## SUMMARY:

- Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus and saw that the stone had been removed.
- She ran and told Simon Peter and John.
- Simon Peter and John ran to the tomb. Although John arrived first, Peter was the first to enter the tomb. They both saw the strips of linen Jesus was wrapped in as well as the cloth around His head. Then they returned to their dwelling in the city.
- Mary wept outside the tomb. Two angels appeared and asked her why she was crying. She was upset because Jesus’ body was not to be found.
- She turned and saw Jesus, but did not recognize Him, thinking He was the gardener. Jesus asked her why she was crying and she asked Him if He had taken away the body.
- Jesus called Mary by name, and then she recognized Him. Jesus told her not to touch Him, because He had not ascended to the Father.
- Mary went and told the disciples the good news.



## THEMES:

### Women Are Important to Jesus

Mary Magdalene was a disciple of Jesus and one of His closest friends, and was the only person who was a witness to the Crucifixion, burial, and empty tomb. Her importance to Jesus illustrates how much He valued her and reflects how much regard He had for all women, as they were present and served in pivotal ways in His ministry. Just like Mary, women today can serve in important roles at home and in church leadership. We should respect and value them, and work to recognize their efforts in serving God.

# JESUS' APPEARANCE ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

**LUK**  
24:13-35

"Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem." Luke 24:13



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**  
the physician and also author of the Book of Acts



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**The Road to Emmaus, a village near Jerusalem**



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, Cleopas and another unidentified disciple of Jesus, the Eleven**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In New Testament times, Jews were in bondage to the Romans. Although they lived separately, they were subject to Roman rules and were heavily taxed. The oppressed status was a far cry from the days of the mighty Israelite nation in the Old Testament. The Jews were familiar with Old Testament prophecies, and those about the coming Messiah were typically interpreted to mean the Savior would come as a political Messiah, restoring the Jews to their former glory. As the disciples spoke to Jesus, they explained that they were hoping that He would be the one who would redeem Israel (Luke 24:21), referencing this idea of a political Messiah.



## SUMMARY:

- The two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus when they were joined by a third man, but they didn't recognize Him as Jesus.
- Jesus asked what they were talking about, and they explained about Jesus' death and finding the empty tomb.
- As they walked, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself, that the Messiah's sufferings and death were an important part of His mission.
- The disciples invited Jesus to stay and dine with them. He agreed and sat down with them at the table to break bread. The disciples recognized Jesus, but then He disappeared.
- The two disciples remembered their hearts burning while Jesus spoke, then returned to Jerusalem and found the Eleven, explaining what had happened.



## THEMES:

### Jesus Taught Using Scripture

When Jesus taught the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He taught them from Scripture and from the words of the ancient prophets. He knew the scriptures and the prophecies in them, what they meant, and explained what the disciples should have known. The words of these prophets and the other writings in the Bible are still important to us. Through them, we can understand more about the Savior's mission and gain knowledge and our testimony of His role as our Savior.





# JESUS VISITS HIS DISCIPLES ON THE BEACH

**JHN**  
**21**

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ John 21:15



## WRITTEN BY:

**John the Apostle,** often considered Jesus’ closest earthly friend



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Beach by the Sea of Galilee**



## CHARACTERS:

**Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two other unnamed disciples, Jesus**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

This appearance of the resurrected Jesus had been promised beforehand (see Matthew 28:10 and Mark 16:7), after Jesus had appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem. When Jesus asked Peter to feed His sheep, the nuances of the three statements can be better understood from the Greek text. The first time, the word feed comes from the Greek word bosko, which means ‘to nourish or to pasture’ and lambs comes from the term arnion, meaning ‘little lamb.’ The second time, feed comes from the word poimaino, which means ‘to tend or to care for,’ but sheep comes from the term probaton, meaning ‘mature sheep.’ The third time, feed comes from the word bosko again, meaning ‘nourish,’ and the word sheep comes from the term probaton, meaning ‘adult sheep.’



## SUMMARY:

- A group of disciples—including Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two others—were gathered by the Sea of Galilee to go fishing.
- They went out at night, but didn’t catch anything. Early in the morning, Jesus was on the shore, but the disciples didn’t recognize Him. He asked if they had caught any fish but they answered that they had not.
- Jesus gave the disciples instructions to throw the net on the right side of the boat. When they did, they could not pull the net in because there were so many fish.
- John immediately recognized Jesus, and Peter jumped in the water, wading to shore while the other disciples brought in the net. Jesus told them to come and eat breakfast.
- Afterward, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, and Peter replied yes. Jesus then told him to feed His sheep. This was repeated two more times.
- Jesus then alluded to the fact that Peter would die similarly to Him. Jesus also alluded that John will be spared a violent death and remain alive until He comes again.



## THEMES:

### How We Love Jesus

When Jesus taught Peter the importance of feeding His sheep, He was teaching Peter the importance of love and loyalty, and preaching His gospel and defending the faith. We might picture ourselves answering the same question, “Do you love me?” We can look to how we should respond to that question in John 14:15, where Jesus declared that if we love Him, we are to keep His commandments. We can show Jesus that we are true disciples by demonstrating our love for Him by blessing the lives of those around us and looking for ways to share His Word with them.

# JESUS APPEARS TO DOUBTING THOMAS

**JHN**  
20:24-31

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:31



**WRITTEN BY:**

**John the Apostle**



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Jerusalem**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Thomas, Jesus, the other disciples**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Although Jesus had prophesied about His death and Resurrection, it is evident that the disciples didn't fully understand that the Messiah would rise from the dead. Peter and John had seen the evidence of the empty tomb and still hadn't quite comprehended until they saw Jesus Christ and witnessed the miracle of His Resurrection. Thomas was the only one of the disciples who had not yet had that same experience of physically seeing the Lord, so his doubt is somewhat understandable. After seeing Jesus, Thomas declared, "My Lord and My God," an exclamation of understanding that Jesus was in fact Deity, the Son of God.



**SUMMARY:**

- Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them after the Resurrection. They told Thomas that they had seen the Lord.
- Thomas declared that unless he could see the nail marks and feel them, and touch Jesus' side, he would not believe.
- A week later the disciples were gathered at the same house again. The doors were locked, but Jesus appeared among them.
- Jesus let Thomas touch His wounds, and told him to stop doubting but believe.
- Thomas praised Jesus. Jesus said because he had seen, he believed, but others would be blessed who believed without having seen.



**THEMES:**

**So We Can Believe**

After appearing to Thomas, Jesus claimed that those that have not seen but believed are blessed. We can apply these words to ourselves, as we have not seen the Lord or had proof of His divinity through physical evidence. But when we believe the words of the disciples and their testimonies of Christ, we are also blessed. After all, John explained that the purpose of His gospel in John 21:31 was so that we could believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that we can have eternal life through His name. As we read about Jesus, we can build our faith in Him and gain our own testimony so that we recognize Him and acknowledge that by Him we are saved.

# THE ASCENSION

**ACTS  
1:1-11**

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”  
Acts 1:8



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Luke



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**26 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Mount of Olives,**  
aka Mount Olivet



## CHARACTERS:

**Jesus, the Eleven,**  
two unidentified men  
dressed in white



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Many of Jesus' followers thought that He would be a political Messiah, sent to free the Jews from Roman power and return Israel to its former glory. The disciples were familiar with these beliefs and thought that Jesus would establish a kingdom on earth, like the Israel nation under King David. Jesus had testified that He completed His mission and purpose as the Savior of the world, so the disciples likely were wondering when exactly that kingdom would be restored. They likely did not understand that Jesus would be a very long time in returning, thinking it would occur at some point in their lifetimes. Jesus did promise them power in the gift of the Holy Ghost, which would later occur on the day of Pentecost.



## SUMMARY:

- Jesus died and was resurrected, but remained on earth and appeared and ministered to His disciples for a period of 40 days.
- Jesus told the disciples to not leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- The disciples asked Jesus if He was going to restore the kingdom of Israel, but Jesus said that it was not for them to know the times or dates. He promised that they would receive power from the Holy Ghost and they would be witnesses all over the world.
- After He said these things, Jesus was taken up to heaven before their eyes.
- As the disciples looked toward heaven, suddenly two men dressed in white appeared and asked them why they were looking at the sky



## THEMES:

### **Don't look for times or dates; but do know seasons**

Jesus stated clearly here that we should not try to pinpoint the exact date of his Second Coming; those who guessed and predicted dates have been proven wrong, as those dates have come and gone without event. However, Jesus did encourage us to always be looking to see if the season is right for harvest. Matthew 24 presents Jesus' most detailed view of the end of days. We can study His own words so that we are able to recognize signs of His coming and so we can be prepared for it.

# DAY OF PENTECOST

**ACTS**  
**2**

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 2:38



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Luke



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**26 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Jerusalem, the Upper Room**



**CHARACTERS:**

**The Twelve**

(Judas had been replaced by a man named Matthias)



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Under the law given by Moses, the feast of Pentecost was held fifty days after the feast of the Passover. This feast was a pilgrimage, meaning that all male Jews were required to come to Jerusalem; this explains why so many Jews were present from other countries and spoke different languages. The Pentecostal feast was given to celebrate the harvest, so it seems appropriate at this feast that 3,000 souls were ready to be “harvested” as they listened to Peter and decided to get baptized.



**SUMMARY:**

- All Jesus’ followers were gathered together in one place, when a sound came like a violent wind and filled the room. They saw what appeared to be tongues of fire. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages.
- Jews from every nation were amazed at hearing their own language spoken.
- Peter stood up and addressed the crowd, telling them about Jesus and the miracles and signs done in His name. He told them that Jesus was crucified and He was the Messiah.
- People asked what they needed to do, and Peter told them they should repent and be baptized. Three thousand listened and were added to their number.
- The believers were amazed at the signs and wonders performed by the apostles. They gathered together to break bread and pray. They kept everything in common and continued to praise God.



**THEMES:**

**The ancient miracles are still relevant.**

On the day of Pentecost, a mighty miracle was performed, and through this miracle, many people believed and were converted. Although we don’t live in times of great miracles manifested before crowds of people, that doesn’t mean we can’t also believe. Both God the Father and Jesus have strongly implied we are supposed to believe the miraculous regardless of the periods in which we live, and having miracles in our day and age would not add to our faith.

# ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA

**ACTS 5**

“Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?’” Acts 5:3



**WRITTEN BY:**

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Luke



**ESTIMATED YEAR:**

**30 AD**



**LOCATION:**

**Jerusalem**



**CHARACTERS:**

**Ananias, Sapphira, Peter**



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The early believers of the Church lived by joining forces and sharing their assets, with “all things in common” (Acts 4:32-35). They donated all their possessions and money to the Church, which were then distributed to the members based on their individual needs. This way of living was solemnized with a covenant or promise, so breaking that oath would have been a very serious offense. In lying about the price of the property sold, and keeping back part of the profit, Ananias and Sapphira were being selfish and putting their wants above the needs of the others.



**SUMMARY:**

- Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, but held back part of the money.
- Peter called out Ananias for lying to everyone and to God.
- Ananias fell down and died.
- Three hours later, Sapphira appeared and Peter questioned her about the price of the property sold. She maintained that the money given to Peter was the same amount they had received for the sale.
- Peter called her out for lying and she, like her husband, fell down dead.
- The apostles continued to perform miracles.
- Religious leaders arrested the apostles and put them in jail, but an angel opened the doors and let them out. They began preaching at daybreak in the temple courts.
- The apostles were brought before the religious leaders, and were asked not to preach, but the apostles declared they would only obey God’s law.
- The apostles were flogged, then let go, and they rejoiced that they had been worthy to suffer in Jesus’ name.



**THEMES:**

**Importance of Honesty**

From the example of Ananias and Sapphira, we can learn the importance of honesty. Honesty is an important part of a Christian life, as we understand that we cannot lie before God. Honesty allows us to evaluate our sinful nature, and the need for a Savior. It allows us to follow the example of Jesus in treating others fairly. Although like Ananias and Sapphira, lying may seem to be beneficial in the short term, it actually destroys our self-respect and integrity, and has no place among true followers of Christ.

# STEPHEN: CHRISTIANITY'S FIRST MARTYR

**ACTS 6-7**

"All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel." Acts 6:15



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**

the physician and also author of the Book of Luke



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**27 AD**



## LOCATION:

**Jerusalem**



## CHARACTERS:

**Many disciples, Stephen, members of the Synagogue of the Freed Men, Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria, Cicity and Asia**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The opposition against Stephen arose from synagogues where foreign Jews worshipped. Libertines or Freedman were former slaves, Cyrenians were from Africa, Alexandrians were from Egypt, and Cicilians were from a Roman province in Asia. These Jews were upset with Stephen because he taught that ancient Israel had rejected three blessings: the land of Israel, the Law of Moses, and the Temple. He then told his accusers that they had similarly rejected Jesus, and were responsible for His betrayal and crucifixion. This incited the Jews to so much anger that they stoned Stephen without a trial or hearing. Stoning was a death sentence where a group throws stones at a person until they die a slow and deliberate death.



## SUMMARY:

- Stephen was chosen as one of the seven and could perform signs and wonders. Opposition arose, but none could not stand or argue against Stephen, who was filled with the Spirit.
- Stephen was seized by opposition and brought before the Sanhedrin, where false witnesses testified that he had blasphemed.
- All the Sanhedrin saw Stephen's face was like that of an angel.
- Stephen spoke to the Sanhedrin members, and testified of their sins.
- Stephen saw the heavens open and Jesus at the right hand of God. The Sanhedrin was furious and stoned Stephen. As he lay dying, he asked that his accusers receive forgiveness and asked God to receive his spirit.



## THEMES:

### Responding to Guilt

In this story, Stephen accuses the religious leaders of egregious faults. In response, his accusers were outraged and incited to violent and illegal behavior. In comparison, on the day of Pentecost, when other Jews learned that their own people had crucified the Messiah, they asked Peter what they needed to do. As we consider our own guilt and shortcomings, we should turn to the example of the Jews at Pentecost, and ask ourselves what we should do or change. We should address the situation with humility and understanding that we make mistakes and look for ways to make amends.

# CONVERSION OF APOSTLE PAUL

**ACTS**  
**9:1-19**

“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest.” Acts 9:1



## WRITTEN BY:

**Luke**  
the physician and also author of the Book of Luke



## ESTIMATED YEAR:

**30 AD,**  
or around four years after the Ascension



## LOCATION:

**Road to Damascus;**  
in Damascus, he is taken to a street called Straight. Damascus still exists in modern-day Syria.



## CHARACTERS:

**Saul of Tarsus, Jesus, Saul’s Travel Companions, Ananias**



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle shortly after the Ascension of Christ. Saul was born in Tarsus, and was a Roman citizen by birth. He was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee, a religious leader. His behavior was typical of many Jewish religious leaders who did not recognize Jesus as Messiah and did not approve of the divisions His ministry had caused. Saul himself had pursued and tormented the disciples of Jesus Christ and was present at the stoning of Stephen.



## SUMMARY:

- Saul went to Damascus to ask for letters so that he could take any disciples of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem as prisoners.
- Near Damascus, Saul saw a light from heaven. He fell down and heard a voice asking him why he was persecuting that person. Saul asked who the man was, and the voice answered that He was Jesus. Jesus then commanded Saul to get up and do what he was told.
- Saul got up, but was blind. He was traveling with men who heard sounds, but did not see anyone. These men led him into Damascus.
- For three days Saul remained blind. The Lord told a man named Ananias where to find Saul and gave him instructions to restore Saul’s sight.
- Ananias was hesitant to help Saul, because he had heard of Saul’s misdeeds, but Jesus told him that Saul would be an instrument in His hands.
- Ananias healed Saul. Saul gained his vision back and was baptized.



## THEMES:

### How We Are Converted

Saul had a vision that marked a drastic conversion. He was persecuting early Christians, then was baptized and became numbered with them. We should remember that although this is an example of a remarkable experience, most changes and conversions appear gradually and over time. However, these more common conversion experiences are no less important or impactful on our spiritual journey, and still allow the same change of heart to take place.