

The Gospel

According to Luke-Acts

A Spiritual Translation

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I. A New Beginning | Luke 1:1—4:30

Intro to the Gospel | Luke 1:1-4

^{1,1} Many have written and compiled a narrative about Jesus and what happened with him in our very midst. ² These narratives are based on what was handed down to us by those who were eyewitnesses and saw it all from the beginning for themselves. ³ Because I have carefully researched and followed everything from a bird's eye view, I decided to also compile and arrange an accurate account for those of you who have already begun your journey of apprenticing with Jesus. ⁴ I am doing this so you may know the certainty of the story and teachings with which you are being trained and on which you are staking your very lives.

Gabriel's Announcements | Luke 1:5-56

⁵ During the latter days of Herod the Great, who ruled Israel and the surrounding areas on behalf of the Roman Empire from 37 to 1 BC, there was a temple-caretaker named Zechariah. In addition to the major festivals, Zechariah worked in the Jerusalem Temple for one week, twice a year, with his priestly group that was eighth in the rotation of twenty-four. His wife was named Elizabeth and she was a descendant of Moses's brother, Aaron. ⁶ Both Zechariah and Elizabeth were living lives of justice in the eyes of the Creator, for they obeyed his words and commands and appropriately repented when they unintentionally went astray. ⁷ However, they lived with the great social shame of having no children, because Elizabeth was infertile and now well beyond child-bearing age.

⁸ One week in 4 BC, Zechariah was on duty with his group as a temple-caretaker. ⁹ He was randomly selected, according to the custom of the temple-caretakers, for a once-in-a-lifetime job—to enter all alone into the Temple's inner sanctuary and burn the incense that symbolized the Creator's acceptance of his people's prayers. ¹⁰ During this hour of prayer and incense, all the people of Jerusalem, about 60,000, were gathered to pray as they waited on Zechariah. ¹¹ Suddenly there was a messenger from the Creator standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² Seeing him, Zechariah was deeply disturbed and greatly terrified. ¹³ The messenger said to him,

“Do not fear, Zechariah! The Creator, not the Roman emperor, is the true Lord and he has listened to your begging. He is going to work through your infertile family in the way he has done since Abraham and Sarah. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a child and you will call his name John, which means ‘gift of the Creator.’ ¹⁴ After all these years of sadness, you will finally be filled with great joy and many will rejoice at your son's birth. ¹⁵ Your child will be great, not in the eyes of humanity but in the eyes of the Creator. Like the prophet Samuel, he must be wholly dedicated to the Lord's service and must take a Nazarite vow to never drink alcohol. He will be filled with the Creator's Spirit and Breath, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ John will turn many of the children of Israel back to the Lord, their Creator. ¹⁷ As the

prophet Malachi foretold, John will be the long-expected return of the prophet Elijah. He will do the Creator's work of preaching true justice in order to turn arrogance into humility and disobedience into faithfulness. He will help prepare a people who are ready and willing to receive the Lord at his great return."

¹⁸ Zechariah said to the messenger,

"How am I supposed to know that what you say is true? I am old and my wife is well beyond child-bearing age!"

¹⁹ Replying to him, the messenger said,

"I am Gabriel, who foretold the 490 years between the decree to restore Jerusalem and the arrival of the Creator's Messiah and Chosen Ruler. I also foretold the destruction coming upon the people of the Creator, the Messiah, and the Temple. I was sent by the Creator to declare to you that the 490 years are coming to their completion. I am proclaiming the Gospel to you—the Creator's Rule is about to come to earth! ²⁰ Look! You and your socially privileged voice will be silenced and unable to speak until the day your son is named, because you did not trust my words—which you will see are true."

²¹ The people were expecting Zechariah to come back out of the Temple's inner sanctuary at any moment and were confused and marveling at his delay. ²² When Zechariah finally came out, he was not able to use his voice or speak at all to the gathered crowd. Through his gestures the people eventually learned that he had seen a vision in the Temple's inner sanctuary. ²³ Then, when the days of Zechariah's work in the Jerusalem Temple were completed, he returned back home. ²⁴ When they were back home, Elizabeth, his wife, became pregnant and she hid herself for five months, saying,

²⁵ "The Lord has finally come through for me in this season! He has looked upon me with favor and has taken away the low status and shame of my infertility!"

²⁶ During the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the Creator sent his messenger Gabriel to Nazareth, a village of around 300 people in the northern region of Galilee. ²⁷ He was sent to a young woman who was promised for marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of David. The young woman's name was Mary. ²⁸ Entering, Gabriel said to Mary,

"Rejoice, for the Creator is generous and has shown you favor! The Creator himself is with you!"

²⁹ But Mary was deeply disturbed and began wondering what this could all mean. ³⁰ The messenger said to her,

"Do not fear, Mary! The Creator is showing you his generosity. ³¹ Look! You will become pregnant and you will give birth to a child and you will name him Jesus, which means, 'the Creator rescues.' ³² Jesus will be great in the Lord's eyes and will be called a child of the Creator. The Creator, not the Roman emperor, is the true Lord and he will give Jesus the throne that was promised to the line of David. ³³ He will rule over the true people of Israel throughout this age and the age to come—his rule will never end!"

³⁴ Then Mary said to the messenger,
“How will this take place? For I am a virgin and have never been united with a man.”

³⁵ Answering, the messenger said to her,
“The Creator’s Spirit and Breath will fill you and the power of the Creator himself will overshadow you. Therefore, your child will be distinctly different from the disobedient people of civilization and he will be called, ‘Child of the Creator.’ ³⁶ Look! Your relative, Elizabeth, who is infertile, has also conceived a child in her old age and she is already in her sixth month. ³⁷ The word of the Creator is capable of anything and everything!”

³⁸ Mary said,
“Look! I am simply the servant of the Lord! Let this all happen to me just like you have spoken.”

Then Gabriel left her. ³⁹ During those days, Mary quickly went south into a city in the hill country of the region of Judea. ⁴⁰ She entered Zechariah’s house and embraced Elizabeth.

⁴¹ As Elizabeth listened to Mary’s greeting, the infant in her womb kicked. Elizabeth was then filled with the Creator’s Spirit ⁴² and she suddenly spoke up with a great shout,

“You are truly special among women! The child in your womb is truly special! ⁴³ How is it possible that I am worthy to have the mother of my Lord come to me?! ⁴⁴ Look! As soon as I heard your voice, the child in my womb kicked with extreme joy! ⁴⁵ Privileged is the one who completely trusts the Creator, because what was spoken by the Lord will be completed!”

⁴⁶ Then Mary in her poverty and lowliness began declaring the Creator’s word, saying,
“I hope that my life can bring glory to the name of the Creator! ⁴⁷ Everything within me rejoices over the Creator because he rescues me from all slavery! ⁴⁸ He has favorably looked upon my low status! Look! From now on, all generations will see that despite my lowliness I am privileged to be the Lord’s servant! ⁴⁹ This is all because he, who is more powerful than all, has done great things in my life! His way and character are distinctly different from those of civilization. ⁵⁰ His compassion is always upon those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ The Creator does mighty things on the earth. He scatters those of high status by giving them over to follow their own hearts. ⁵² He takes down the rulers and powers from their thrones and lifts up those of low status. ⁵³ Those who are hungering he fills with good things, while those who are wealthy he sends away empty. ⁵⁴ He is supportive and compassionate toward his faithful people. ⁵⁵ He has always spoken to our ancestors, to the faithful descendants of Abraham.”

⁵⁶ Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months till the birth of John and then returned to her own house.

New Birth | Luke 1:57—2:52

⁵⁷ When it was time, Elizabeth gave birth to her child. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard

how the Lord was being so compassionate toward her and they began rejoicing with her.⁵⁹ On the eighth day they went to circumcise the child, marking him as a child of the Creator that was free from the rulers of civilization and part of the new creation. While they were there, their relatives and neighbors began calling the child by the name of his father, Zechariah, so that he would continue in the family line of temple-caretakers.⁶⁰ Responding, Elizabeth said,

“No! His name will be John!”

⁶¹ They said to her,

“But no one in your family has this name!”

⁶² Then they made motions to his father, to see what he wanted to name the child.⁶³ After receiving a writing tablet, Zechariah wrote,

“John is his name.”

They were all stunned at Zechariah giving his child a name that broke free from the family line.⁶⁴ But immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again and he began giving honor to the Creator.⁶⁵ Fear then filled everyone living nearby because of the signs of Zechariah’s silence, Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy, and the child’s break from the family line that should have made him a temple-caretaker. All these things began being discussed throughout the entire hill country of the southern region of Israel.⁶⁶ Everyone who heard, wrestled with these things, saying,

“If this child will not be a temple-caretaker, then what will he be?”

It was clear to all that the hand of the Lord had chosen John for a different path in life.⁶⁷ His father, Zechariah, after once again trusting and submitting to the Creator’s path was filled with the Creator’s Spirit and prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸ “The Creator, not the Roman emperor, is the true Lord and is to be honored above all! He has favorably looked upon his people and has liberated them from slavery!⁶⁹ He is bringing the power of his presence to the earth through the line of David in order to bring us this freedom!⁷⁰ He promised this through the mouth of his distinctly different prophets throughout this age.⁷¹ He is coming to rescue us from our enemies and from the hand of everyone who disowns us!⁷² He is coming to be compassionate with us and to be faithful to his covenant with us!⁷³ He will fulfill his promise to our father Abraham!⁷⁴ He is doing this so that, once we are free from the fear and oppression of our enemies, we will give him our undivided allegiance,⁷⁵ obediently walking with him in faithfulness and justice all of our days.

⁷⁶ But you, John, will be a prophet of the Creator, for you will live and preach according to the Way of the Creator in order to prepare the earth for his arrival.⁷⁷ You will show his people the path of salvation that leads to freedom from civilization’s disobedience.⁷⁸ Because of our Creator’s compassionate empathy for his creation, he will bring a day of new creation upon us.⁷⁹ He will appear to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to change our lives so that we faithfully walk on the Way that leads to peace and harmony for all creation!”

⁸⁰ As John grew, he became strong through the power of the Creator’s Spirit. After

Zechariah was killed in the Jerusalem Temple for standing up against Herod the Great and the Temple authorities, John was hidden away in the wilderness. He grew up apart from civilization and its influences until the day he stepped forward to publicly preach the Creator's word.

^{2,1} During the days surrounding John's birth, Emperor Augustus ordered the whole Roman Empire to be registered so he might collect taxes and place young men into the Roman military. ² This was the first registration while Quirinius was governing in the province of Syria. ³ So in 3 BC, every family began returning to their city of origin in order to be registered. ⁴ Joseph headed south to the region of Judea, to David's city of Bethlehem, because he was from the house and family line of David. ⁵ He went there to be registered with Mary, who was pregnant and promised for marriage to him. ⁶ While they were there, it was time for Mary to give birth. ⁷ But, because Mary was an unwed mother that was bringing shame on the whole family and community, she was not allowed to stay in the guest room. So in the fall of 3 BC, Mary gave birth to her firstborn child out in the stable, wrapped him in cloths, and placed him in an animal's feeding-box. ⁸ In nearby land, outcast and hated shepherders, who lived outside of civilization, were guarding their flocks during the night. ⁹ Suddenly, a messenger of the Creator stood over them and the power of the Lord shone around them and they were overwhelmed with great fear. ¹⁰ The messenger said to the shepherders,

“Do not fear! I have come to declare a Gospel unlike that of the Roman Empire, one from the Creator that will bring great joy to you and all people! ¹¹ The Creator has sent you a rescuer, who is the Chosen Ruler and Lord of the whole earth! The Messiah was born for you today in David's city! ¹² This is the sign for you to seek—you will find a poor and rejected baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding-box for animals.”

¹³ Suddenly, along with the messenger, there was a heavenly multitude praising the Creator and saying,

¹⁴ “All power and victory belong to the Creator! Peace and harmony have now arrived upon the earth to dwell among those who are faithful and obedient to the Creator!”

¹⁵ After the messengers returned to the Creator's invisible realm, the shepherders began saying to one another,

“Yes! Let us head to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has revealed to us!”

¹⁶ They quickly went and found Mary and Joseph, as well as their baby, who was lying in an animal's feeding-box. ¹⁷ After seeing this, they spoke of how the messenger had told them that this child was to be the rescuer and Chosen Ruler of the whole earth. ¹⁸ All those who listened, marveled at this message from the shepherders. ¹⁹ Mary made a point to remember all these things and she treasured them in her heart. ²⁰ Having seen everything just as it was promised to them, the shepherders then returned to their fields while declaring and praising the Creator's victory. ²¹ On the eighth day, Mary and Joseph had the

child circumcised to mark him as free from civilization and part of the Creator's new creation. Then they named him Jesus, just as the messenger had instructed them before he was conceived in the womb.

²² When it came time for them to obey the Law of Moses and be purified from the uncleanness of birth, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and remember their rescue from slavery in Egypt. ²³ It is written in the Law of the Lord, in the thirteenth chapter of Exodus,

“Every firstborn male will belong completely to the Lord, for he saved the firstborns of his people in Egypt.”

²⁴ Because they were poor, they offered the appropriate sacrifice as required in the Law of the Lord, in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus,

“A pair of pigeons or two young doves.”

²⁵ In Jerusalem there was a man filled with the Creator's Spirit named Simeon, who was living in the Creator's justice and was attentively waiting for the restoration of the Creator's people. ²⁶ Simeon had been informed by the Creator's Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Creator's Messiah and Chosen Ruler with his own eyes. ²⁷ With the Creator's Spirit leading him, Simeon came into the Jerusalem Temple while Jesus was being brought in to follow the customs of Moses's Law. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, Simeon embraced him in his arms and honored the Creator, saying,

²⁹ “Master, you are now letting your servant die in peace and harmony, just as you promised. ³⁰ For my own eyes now see your rescue plan, ³¹ which you have been preparing for all the earth! ³² This child is a light that will reveal the disobedience of the nations and, through him, victory will come to your chosen and faithful people.”

³³ Jesus's parents were marveling at what was being spoken about their son. ³⁴ Simeon then blessed them and said to Mary, his mother,

“Look! This child is destined to be the downfall and the resurrection of many within the Creator's chosen people. He will be hated, disowned, and spoken against. ³⁵ He will cause you great pain and will rip apart your life as you know it. But through all this, the truth and inner-workings of all hearts will be revealed and brought into the light.”

³⁶ The elderly prophet Anna, from the lowly tribe of Asher, was also there in the Jerusalem Temple. After being married for seven years as a young woman, ³⁷ she was now an eighty-four year old widow. She never left the Jerusalem Temple and, night and day, she was giving her allegiance to the Creator and urging his return by praying and going without food. ³⁸ She was standing by at that very hour and when she saw Jesus, she began to declare her loyalty to the Creator and to tell everyone that Jesus was going to bring liberation to Jerusalem. ³⁹ After Jesus's parents completed everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in the northern region of Galilee that was a hotbed of revolutionary activity against the Roman Empire.

⁴⁰ As Jesus grew up and became strong, the generosity of the Creator was showered upon

him and he was filled, not with civilization's wisdom, but with the Creator's wisdom.⁴¹ Every year, for the Passover Festival, when they remembered the Creator rescuing his people from slavery to the Egyptian Empire, Jesus's parents journeyed to Jerusalem.⁴² In the spring of 11 AD, when Jesus was twelve years old, his family headed south to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the Passover Festival.⁴³ After the celebration of the Passover was complete and while the family was returning to Nazareth in the north, Jesus remained in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it.⁴⁴ Supposing Jesus to be among the great multitude of journeyers, his parents traveled toward home for a whole day before they began searching for him among their relatives and friends.⁴⁵ Unable to find Jesus, his parents frantically returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.⁴⁶ After three days of panicked searching, they finally found Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple, sitting in the middle of the Scriptural teachers. Jesus was listening to them, questioning them, and demanding answers out of them.⁴⁷ All who listened to Jesus speak, were blown away at his understanding of the Scriptures and his answers to the questions of the teachers.⁴⁸ Seeing Jesus sitting there, his parents were amazed and his mother said to him,

“Child, why have you done this to us?! Look! Your father and I were in complete distress trying to find you!”

⁴⁹ Jesus said to them,

“Why were you trying to find me? Do you not know that I must be immersed in the things of my Father? The Creator is my true Father and my loyalty is to him, above all else.”

⁵⁰ But his parents did not fully understand what Jesus was saying to them.⁵¹ So Jesus returned to Nazareth with them and lovingly submitted himself to them. His mother carefully remembered and treasured all these things in her heart.⁵² Jesus then continued to grow and increase in wisdom, stature, and generosity in the eyes of both the Creator and the people.

Preparing the Way | Luke 3:1-20

^{3.1} In the fall of 26 AD, during the fifteenth year of the rule of Emperor Tiberius, Pontius Pilate was governing the whole nation of Israel with Herod Antipas, who was the son of Herod the Great, assisting him in the northern region of Galilee.² Additionally, Annas and Caiaphas had been appointed by the Roman Empire as the leaders of the temple-caretakers. During this time, however, the word of the Creator did not come through any of these powerful rulers, but through John, the child of Zechariah, out in the wilderness.³ John was in the land of the Jordan River, the river that symbolized the Creator's people entering into the promised land of new creation. There he was proclaiming a baptism of preparation for the Creator's arrival—calling the people to change their ways of thinking and be cleansed of the ways of civilization.⁴ As it is written in the fortieth chapter of the prophet Isaiah,

“Out in the wilderness and not in the cities and centers of power, a voice is crying out, ‘Prepare your lives for the arrival of the Lord! Clear the disobedience and

injustice out of your lives so that his coming won't be painful for you! ⁵ Every imbalance of wealth and power will be leveled out, as the poor and weak are lifted up and the rich and powerful are brought low! Every crooked and unjust way will be turned into a straight path of justice! ⁶ All creatures, not just humans, will experience the Creator's rescue that is coming to the earth!'”

⁷ Therefore, John the Baptist began saying to the crowds, which were coming out to be baptized by him,

“You were born, raised, and trained by wicked cultures, societies, and civilizations that came about through humanity's desire-to-be-in-control! Who warned you, calling you to flee from the approaching consequences of civilization's way of life?

⁸ Produce a life of obedience to the Creator that reveals the fundamental change of your mind and heart! Do not begin to say to yourselves,

‘We are blood-related to Abraham, therefore we are the Creator's people!’

For I say to you, the Creator is able to create true children for Abraham from these stones in the wilderness! ⁹ Look! The axe is already at the root of civilization! Every person that does not produce a beautiful life of obedience to the Creator is starting to be cut down and thrown into the fire!”

¹⁰ The crowds began asking John the Baptist,

“What then must we do?”

¹¹ Replying, John the Baptist began saying to them,

“Whoever has even one extra piece of clothing, must share with those who have none. Whoever has food, must also share with those who have none.”

¹² Tax-collectors, who were hated by the people for getting wealthy by working for the Roman Empire, also came to be baptized and said to John the Baptist,

“Teacher, what must we do?”

¹³ John the Baptist said to them,

“It is better to quit your job and do nothing, rather than to support oppression by doing what you have been ordered to do.”

¹⁴ Those doing time in the military also began asking John the Baptist,

“What then must we do?”

John the Baptist said to them,

“Since Rome gives you no choice but to remain in the military, you must be conscientious objectors by how you live. You must do no violence. You must not participate in oppressing and exploiting the people you encounter. And you must be content with the minimal food they give you.”

¹⁵ Hearing this, the people began wondering in their hearts if John the Baptist was the long-awaited Messiah. ¹⁶ John the Baptist answered them all, saying,

“I baptize, immerse, and cleanse you with water, but one much more powerful than me is coming! I am not worthy to even touch his feet. He will baptize and immerse you in the Creator's Spirit and story while cleansing you with the refining fire of judgment. ¹⁷ He is coming to clean up the earth and gather the faithful into the

protection and care of the Creator, while giving the unfaithful over to the permanent destruction of their ways.”

¹⁸ While calling many others to change their lives in similar ways, John the Baptist was declaring the Gospel of the Creator’s arrival on the earth. ¹⁹ In his preaching, John the Baptist exposed Herod Antipas, the ruler of the region of Galilee, as a wicked man who was part of a fraudulent marriage and had no right to the power and wealth he claimed. ²⁰ In response, Herod Antipas threw John the Baptist into prison in the summer of 29 AD.

Walking the Way | Luke 3:21—4:30

²¹ A couple months before John the Baptist was arrested, during a time when all the people were going out to the Jordan River to be baptized, Jesus was also baptized. He was washed clean of the ways of civilization and prepared for the Creator’s arrival. But something different happened while Jesus was praying during his baptism—there was an opening into the Creator’s invisible realm. ²² The Creator’s Spirit and Breath descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, signaling that peace and new creation were coming upon the earth. Then the Creator declared to Jesus,

“You are my beloved Child! My presence will be with you in all that you do.”

²³⁻³⁸ Jesus was thirty years old when his baptism into the Creator’s Spirit launched his ministry. He was the child of the faithful line of humanity—of Joseph (so they thought), of Nathan not Solomon, of David, of Judah, of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, of Noah, of Methuselah, of Enoch, of Seth not Cain, of Adam, and of the Creator himself.

^{4.1} Jesus, now filled with and guided by the Creator’s Spirit and Breath, left the Jordan River and escaped into the wilderness, away from the comforts and luxuries of civilization.

² For forty days Jesus detoxed from the seductive ways of civilization as he was tempted and tested by its satanic desire-to-be-in-control. Jesus ate nothing during those days and, when they were almost over, he was very hungry. ³ In this moment of great physical weakness, the desire-to-be-in-control said to Jesus,

“If you are the true Child of the Creator, then use your power to create food for yourself by forcing this stone to become a loaf of bread. Certainly the Creator would want you to use your power to make sure you have daily bread.”

⁴ Jesus responded,

“It is written in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, *‘Humanity does not live upon bread alone, but upon every word that comes from the mouth of the Creator.’* I refuse the economic power of civilization and its unnatural ways of producing food. I will wait on my Father and his creation to provide.”

⁵ Then the desire-to-be-in-control showed Jesus all the empires of civilization in a moment of time. ⁶ Then it said to Jesus,

“I will give you all the authority and power of civilization, for it is my domain and it is mine to give to whomever I want. ⁷ Therefore, if you serve me and live in my way, then all the authority and power of the empires of civilization will be yours.”

⁸ Responding, Jesus said,

“It is written in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, *‘You will only serve and live in the way of the Lord your Creator and you will never give allegiance to any other ruler, empire, or nation—allegiance belongs to the Creator alone.’* I refuse the political power of civilization and its ways of trying to rule the earth. I will let my Father be in charge of the earth.”

⁹ Then the desire-to-be-in-control brought Jesus to the Jerusalem Temple and said to him,

“If you are the true Child of the Creator, then throw yourself down from the Temple pinnacle for all to see. Prove to everyone that the Creator’s word can be trusted. ¹⁰ For it is written in the ninety-first Psalm, *‘The Creator will command his messengers for you, to protect you,’* ¹¹ and *‘they will always watch over you so you will never cut your foot against a stone.’*”

¹² Responding, Jesus said,

“It is written in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, *‘You will not force the hand of the Lord your Creator.’* I refuse the religious power of civilization and its attempts to force the Creator to be faithful to his word. I will wait on my Father to fulfill his word in his own way and timing.”

¹³ After Jesus successfully resisted every seduction of civilization’s ways, the desire-to-be-in-control left Jesus alone for a time.

¹⁴ Jesus then returned north to Galilee, filled with the power of the Creator’s Spirit. News concerning Jesus spread throughout the entire surrounding land. ¹⁵ Jesus began teaching in their synagogues, which were the sacred gathering places of worship, much to the acclaim and fascination of the people. ¹⁶ Jesus then went into Nazareth, where he had grown up. According to his custom on the Sabbath, which was the sacred day of rest, he entered into the synagogue and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The book of the prophet Isaiah was given to Jesus and, opening the book, he read this passage from the sixty-first chapter,

¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and has chosen me for this purpose—to declare to the poor the Gospel of the Creator’s arrival. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the captives of civilization and sight for those blinded by the ways of civilization. He has sent me to bring freedom and liberation to those oppressed under the rulers of humanity. ¹⁹ He has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord’s hospitality—the year of Jubilee where all slaves are set free, all debts are forgiven, and all land is redistributed.”*

²⁰ Closing the book and giving it back to the attendant, Jesus sat down. All eyes in the synagogue were staring at him in anticipation. ²¹ Then Jesus began to say to them,

“Today, as you hear these words from my mouth, this writing has come to its fulfillment. The Creator’s perpetual Sabbath of freedom and justice is happening right now as the new creation is beginning to arrive on the earth.”

²² Stunned and blown away by these words of generous liberation that would radically upend the basic structure of civilization, they all began to speak against Jesus. They were saying,

“Is this not the poor and illegitimate child of Joseph that was born out of wedlock and brought shame and humiliation to our whole town?!”

²³ Jesus responded to them,

“You will certainly say to me, ‘Healer, take care of yourself first! Fix your own situation of poverty, debt, slavery, and shame before claiming to offer that to others! And prove you are legit by doing for us all the amazing things you supposedly did in our neighboring town!’”

²⁴ Jesus then said,

“Truly I say to you, no prophet is listened to in his homeland and among those who know him well! ²⁵ For instance, there were many widows among the Creator’s people during the time of the prophet Elijah, when there was a great famine upon all the land and there was no rain for three years and six months. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was sent to none of them and was only sent to a foreign widow in the land of the wealthy and hated Tyre and Sidon! ²⁷ Then during the time of the prophet Elisha, there were also many among the Creator’s people with a flesh-eating disease that was slowly destroying their bodies. Yet none of them were rescued, it was only Naaman, the foreign military officer! Don’t be a privileged insider who cuts yourself off from the Creator’s work because of your sense of entitlement and what you think you know!”

²⁸ Hearing these words, all those in the sacred gathering place of worship were filled with passionate anger. ²⁹ Standing up, they threw Jesus out of the city and dragged him to the edge of the great hill, upon which their city had been built. Then they tried to throw him off the cliff to his death. ³⁰ But Jesus walked right through the middle of them, left their town, and kept going on his way.

II. The Way of Liberation | Luke 4:31—8:39

Liberation From Israel | Luke 4:31—5:11

³¹ Jesus then went to Capernaum, a city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, and he began teaching them on the sacred day of rest. ³² The people were absolutely amazed at Jesus's teachings, for he asserted himself with great authority. ³³ There was a man in the synagogue who was controlled by the voices and expectations of Israel's sacred authorities and institutions. He couldn't stand what Jesus was teaching, so he attacked Jesus, saying,

³⁴ "What are you doing here, Jesus of Nazareth?! Are you trying to destroy everything we treasure and hold dear?! Get in your rightful place, we are the ones in control here!"

³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying,

"Be silent! And be set free from your bondage!"

After the voice and influence of Israel's culture put up one last fight, it released its control over the man without doing any lasting harm. ³⁶ Everyone watching was stunned and they began saying to each other,

"What gives this man such power and authority?! Even the spiritual forces and worldviews of civilization have no power when faced with his word!"

³⁷ Concerned reports and rumors about Jesus exploded into all the surrounding land.

³⁸ After leaving that sacred gathering place of worship, Jesus entered into the house of Simon Peter. Simon Peter's mother-in-law was in the grip of a great fever because civilization's way of life had taken its toll on her body. Those close to her begged Jesus to help her. ³⁹ Standing over her, Jesus rebuked the fever and she was set free from its bondage. Immediately she regained her dignity and place within the community. The whole community was strengthened and healed as she once again began to serve those around her. ⁴⁰ While the sun was setting and they were less likely to draw the attention of the authorities, the people then brought to Jesus all those who were broken and suffering because of the inhumane conditions of civilization—the dangerous working conditions, the toxic living conditions, and the unhealthy food. Jesus placed his hands upon them, healing them and bringing them into the Creator's community. ⁴¹ Jesus was also rescuing many people from the grip of their false hopes and expectations for the Creator's Messiah and Chosen Ruler. Jesus rebuked them and was not allowing them to speak or control his path.

⁴² After sunrise, Jesus was wanting to get away from civilization in order to get some rest out in the wilderness. But the crowds were relentlessly seeking after him and pressing all around him. They began grabbing and clinging to him so he would not leave them. ⁴³ But Jesus said to them,

"I must go, for it is necessary for me to declare the Gospel of the Creator's Rule to the other cities. Spreading the message and liberation of the Creator's Rule is my very purpose in life."

⁴⁴ Jesus then began proclaiming the Gospel in the sacred gathering places of worship

throughout the lands of Israel.

^{5.1} One day, Jesus was standing beside the Sea of Galilee when a crowd pressed against him in order to listen to him teach about the Creator. ² Looking around, Jesus saw some fishermen washing their nets while their two boats were sitting on the shore. ³ Getting into the boat that belonged to Simon Peter, Jesus asked him to take the boat out a little distance from the shore. Sitting down, Jesus then began to teach the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished teaching, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“After faithfully listening to my teachings, now go back out to the deep and lower your nets for a catch.”

⁵ Answering, Simon Peter said,

“Teacher, we are experts and, after fishing throughout the prime catching time of the night, we caught nothing! But, because I trust the power of your word, I will ignore my expertise and what I think I know and go back out during this bad time of the day for fishing.”

⁶ When they did this and obeyed the word of Jesus, they caught an amount of fish so massive that their nets began to break. ⁷ They called for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats with so many fish that the boats began to sink.

⁸ After seeing how Jesus’s word, and not the expertise of civilization, brought true success, Simon Peter fell down at the feet of Jesus, saying,

“I am not worthy to even be in your presence! You are the true Lord and I am a disobedient man who has been listening to the voices of civilization instead of the Creator’s!”

⁹ Simon Peter and his partners, Jacob and John Zebedee, were completely astonished and blown away at the amount of fish they had caught when they obeyed Jesus’s word. ¹⁰ Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“Do not fear! From now on you will be part of the Creator’s judgment as he tears the powerful and wealthy off of their thrones of oppression! You will also be part of rescuing and saving people from the chaos of civilization and its empires!”

¹¹ After bringing their boats to the shore, they bought their freedom by leaving the catch of fish with the tax collectors and those who held their debts. Then they left everything behind to follow Jesus.

Ignoring the Old Way | Luke 5:12—6:11

¹² When Jesus was in one of the cities of the region of Galilee, there was a man with a flesh-eating disease that was slowly destroying his body, symbolic of the destructive power of civilization. Seeing Jesus, he fell to his face, begging him,

“If you desire to do so, I know you are able to rescue me and bring me into the Creator’s community!”

¹³ Jesus then broke the law of his culture by reaching out and touching this diseased man, saying,

“I want to. You are now set free from the destruction of civilization and are part of the Creator’s community!”

Immediately the man was healed, set free, and welcomed into the Creator’s community.¹⁴ Jesus then again broke the law of his culture by not waiting for the temple-caretaker to come out to inspect the man. Instead, Jesus directed him to tell no one, saying,

“Go into the city to show your healed condition to the temple-caretaker and then offer the gift for your healing just as Moses commanded as a witness against their oppressive and unloving ways!”

¹⁵ But Jesus could not keep news of this incident contained and even more rumors and reports about him began spreading. Many crowds of those who were on the bottom of society, gathered to listen to Jesus’s teachings and be rescued from oppression.¹⁶ But needing to rest and recharge, Jesus frequently went back to the wilderness to listen to the voice of his heavenly Father and be filled with his strength.

¹⁷ On one of the days that Jesus was teaching the crowds, some members of the political party of the Pharisees and some teachers of the Law of Moses had come from Galilee, Judea, and even from Jerusalem to see him. These authorities were sitting and watching while Jesus was filled with the Creator’s healing and liberating power.¹⁸ Meanwhile, some men were carrying their paralyzed friend on a cot and they were trying to get him into the sight of Jesus.¹⁹ Unable to get him through the crowd to Jesus, they went up on the roof of the building, pulled out the roof tiles, and then let their friend down on his cot into the middle of the room.²⁰ Seeing the paralyzed man’s friends and their love, devotion, and trust in the Creator, Jesus said to him,

“You have been set free from your spiritual and social bondage!”

²¹ The Biblical scholars and those from the political party of the Pharisees began to say to themselves,

“Who is this man who is insulting our society and its structures?! Who is able to free a person from spiritual and social bondage apart from our Temple and its sacrificial and priestly system?! That is the only place where the Creator works!”

²² Seeing their frustration and anger, Jesus said to them,

“What is going on in your hearts?²³ Which is easier to say? ‘You have been set free from your spiritual and social bondage’ or ‘Get up and walk!’²⁴ But in order that you may know that the Human One and his community have authority over the earth to bring spiritual and social freedom...”

Jesus then turned to the paralyzed man and said,

“Get up! Pick up your cot and walk home! For the Creator’s spiritual healing has made you physically whole!”

²⁵ Immediately the paralyzed man stood up in front of everyone, picked up his cot, and walked home while praising the power and goodness of the Creator.²⁶ All those watching were beside themselves. They began praising the power and goodness of the Creator, but they were also filled with great fear, saying,

“Today, we witnessed things that make us question everything we think we know

and all that we are comfortable with!”

²⁷ When he was finished there, Jesus left the house and saw a powerful, wealthy, and yet very hated tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax-office. Jesus said to him,

“Drop everything and follow me.”

²⁸ So Levi stood up, left everything of his old life behind, and began following Jesus. ²⁹ Levi then threw a great party for Jesus in his house and there was a crowd of many tax-collectors and other social outcasts who were dining with them. ³⁰ The members of the political party of the Pharisees and their Biblical scholars began complaining to Jesus’s apprentices, saying,

“Why are you breaking our laws by eating and drinking with tax collectors and social outcasts who disobey the Creator?!”

³¹ Answering, Jesus said to them,

“A healthy person doesn’t need a doctor, only a sick person does. ³² Therefore, I am not calling those who already live in the Creator’s justice to transform. Instead, I am here to call those who live outside the Creator’s ways to radically change their hearts, minds, and lives.”

³³ Then they said to Jesus,

“John the Baptist’s apprentices and the members of the political party of the Pharisees keep our society’s law by observing the appointed times of going without food in the hope that the Creator will return to us. But your apprentices ignore this and go around partying whenever they can!”

³⁴ But Jesus said to them,

“The guests of a wedding must party and celebrate when the long-awaited groom finally arrives! Indeed, the celebration of the Creator’s return is upon us! ³⁵ But, yes, the days will come when I, the groom, will be taken away from my apprentices and then in that time they will have good reason to mourn and go without food.”

³⁶ Jesus then began teaching them with an analogy, saying,

“No one sews a new piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old piece of clothing, because when it is washed the new patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth—making things even worse than before. The new cannot fit with the old. ³⁷ Likewise, no one pours new wine into already stretched wineskins, otherwise the new wine will burst the old and brittle wineskins and the wine will be lost along with the wineskins. ³⁸ Old and new cannot be mixed! New teachings and ways of life cannot be patched onto old structures, institutions, and ways of doing and seeing things. When the new comes there must be a total rebuild from the ground up. New wine must be put into new wineskins! ³⁹ Yet people will passionately resist change even when it is for their good. They will just stay in their familiar and old ways because they are comfortable.”

^{6.1} On one Sabbath, Jesus was walking through some grainfields while his poor and hungry apprentices were breaking the Sabbath law by picking, rubbing, and eating heads of grain.

² Some of the members of the political party of the Pharisees were watching this and said, “Why are you doing what is illegal on the sacred day of rest?! A person can be lawfully killed for breaking the Sabbath!”

³ Answering, Jesus said to them,

“Have you not read what David, your most beloved ruler, did when he and those with him were hungry? ⁴ He entered into your sacred Temple and took the bread set aside for the Creator. He ate this bread, which is illegal for anyone to eat except for the temple-caretakers, and gave it to those with him.”

⁵ Jesus began saying to them,

“The Sabbath was made to serve humanity, the animals, and the land—humans were not made to serve the Sabbath! Therefore, the Human One and his community are in charge of the Sabbath!”

⁶ On another sacred day of rest, Jesus came into the synagogue in order to teach the Creator’s Way of life. A man there had a withered right hand, a symbol of being powerless in civilization. ⁷ The Biblical scholars and the members of the political party of the Pharisees were hanging around Jesus in order to see if he was healing people on the Sabbath. They were looking for a way to get him in trouble and even put him to death. ⁸ Jesus perceived what they were up to and said to the man with the withered hand,

“Rise and stand in the middle so everyone can see you.”

The man stood up. ⁹ Then Jesus said to those gathered,

“I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath? Is the Sabbath meant to rescue life or to destroy it?”

¹⁰ After looking around at all of them, Jesus said to the man,

“Extend your hand!”

As soon as the man obeyed Jesus’s word, his hand was restored to full health. ¹¹ Seeing this, the authorities were furious because Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath but didn’t do anything technically defined as work in the process. So the authorities began plotting among themselves how they could come up with a way to destroy Jesus.

Creating the New Way | Luke 6:12—7:17

¹² After running into conflict with the laws of the culture and being rejected by the authorities, Jesus climbed a mountain to be by himself. There he spent the night in prayer in order to seek the Creator’s guidance and direction. ¹³ When it became day, Jesus called his apprentices together on the mountain and chose twelve from among them to be the new twelve sons of Israel. Having been rejected by the rulers of Israel, Jesus chose these twelve to be the foundation and representatives of a new people of Israel. ¹⁴ These twelve representatives were Simon (whom he renamed Peter, meaning “rock”), Peter’s brother Andrew, Jacob Zebedee, John Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, Jacob Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot (a member of the political party of the Zealots that hated Roman occupation), ¹⁶ Judah Jacob, and Judah Daggerman (a member of a radical group of

Zealots who assassinated Roman soldiers) who later betrayed Jesus.

¹⁷ Coming down from the mountain after his encounter with the Creator, Jesus stood on a level place. There a large crowd of his apprentices and a large multitude of people, from all the area of Israel and even from the wealthy and powerful seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, gathered to him. ¹⁸ They came to listen to his teachings and to be rescued from their physical, spiritual, and social afflictions. Many who were under civilization's control received Jesus's liberating care. ¹⁹ All the crowd began seeking to touch Jesus, because the power of the Creator was coming out from him and renewing all things. ²⁰ Looking directly at his apprentices, Jesus began saying,

“Privileged are you who have become poor by leaving everything behind to follow me, for you are living trustfully under the provision and protection of the Creator's Rule. ²¹ Privileged are you who are hungry now, for you will be fed by the hand of the Creator. Privileged are you who are weeping now, for you will laugh and have joy in the Creator's presence. ²² Privileged are you whenever your family or society disowns you, excludes you, verbally abuses you, and rejects you as evil because you are living as part of the Human One's community. ²³ Rejoice in the midst of your rejection, for the Creator is on your side and is looking out for you. Remember, every generation has rejected the Creator's true prophets.

²⁴ But condemned are you who have ignored my words and have stayed comfortable and wealthy, for you are stubbornly keeping away from the Creator's call into a life of radical trust. ²⁵ Condemned are you who are filled now, for you will eventually be hungry when your wealth fails you. Condemned are you who are laughing now, for you will eventually mourn and weep when the Creator brings civilization crashing down. ²⁶ Condemned are you when you are loved by all of society, for every generation has loved the false prophets who preach a false peace and misrepresent the Creator.

²⁷ Moreover, I say to you who have open hearts and are truly listening with the intent to let the Creator change your lives: Love your enemies. Do beautiful and good things to those who disown you. ²⁸ Speak well of those who speak against you and want you to fail. Pray for the good of those who abuse you. ²⁹ When someone hits you in the face, do not fight back and instead courageously and defiantly offer the rest of yourself as well. When someone takes your outer garment, do not stop him from taking your shirt as well. ³⁰ Give good things to everyone who asks you. When someone borrows or steals from you, do not demand anything back. ³¹ Treat others in the way you want them to treat you. ³² If you only love those who love you first or love you in return, how is that generous of you? Even the worst people love those who love them in return. ³³ If you only do good to those who do good to you first or do good to you in return, how is that generous of you? Even the worst people do that. ³⁴ If you lend hoping to to get repaid or receive something in return, how is that generous of you? Even the worst people lend to others when they can receive equal in return. ³⁵ So be different and truly generous by loving and doing good to

your enemies and lending to others while expecting nothing in return. If you do this, then you can be certain that you are a child of the Creator and that he will take care of your every need. Remember that the Creator himself is loving and kind even to the ungenerous and evil. ³⁶ Be shaped into the image of the Creator and become compassionate, just as your heavenly Father is compassionate.

³⁷ Do not be judge over others and then you will not be judged. Do not take vengeance against others and then vengeance will not be taken against you. Liberate others and then you will be liberated. ³⁸ Give to others and then the Creator will give to you so abundantly that all his goodness will overflow all around you. For you will be treated by the Creator in the same way that you treat others.”

³⁹ Jesus then taught them with an analogy, saying,

“Is a blind person able to guide the way for another blind person? Will they not both fall into a ditch? ⁴⁰ As such, an apprentice must first be guided by her experienced teacher. But, when her training is complete, every attentive apprentice will become like her teacher. ⁴¹ So why do you see the twig in your brother’s eye, but do not observe the log in your own eye? ⁴² How are you able to say to your brother,

‘Brother, allow me to remove the twig which is in your eye,’

while you are still blind and do not see the log which is in your eye? Hypocrite! First you must change yourself and clear your vision by removing the log from your own eye. Then, and only then, will you see clearly enough to help remove the twig from your brother’s eye.

⁴³ For a healthy tree does not produce rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree produce healthy fruit. ⁴⁴ The truth of each tree is known by the fruit it produces—figs and grapes are not picked from thornbushes. ⁴⁵ Likewise, a good person brings forth good from the good stored in his heart and the evil person brings forth evil from the evil stored in his heart. For the mouth speaks and the body acts from what fills the heart. Your lived life always reveals the truth of your heart and what it is filled with.

⁴⁶ Therefore, why are you calling me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and then not obeying my teachings? ⁴⁷ Every person, who comes to me and is listening to and obeying my words, ⁴⁸ is like a person who digs deep and builds a house on a foundation of solid rock. When the floods of life come and break against that house, they are not strong enough to bring the house down because it is built on a solid foundation. ⁴⁹ But whoever is listening and not obeying, is like a person building a house without a foundation. When the floods of life crash against it, then it immediately fractures and collapses in complete ruin. Listening without obeying is worthless.”

^{7.1} When Jesus finished all of his teaching for the people to listen to, he entered into Capernaum, a city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee.

² Meanwhile, the valued slave of a Roman military officer had been injured in battle and was about to die. ³ When the Roman military officer heard about Jesus, he sent some of the patriarchs of the rich and powerful families of Israel to request Jesus to come and rescue

his slave. ⁴ Coming up to Jesus, these patriarchs began earnestly begging him, saying,

“This man is worthy of your help, ⁵ for he is not like most of our Roman enemies—he loves our nation and he even helped build our synagogue!”

⁶ Jesus went with them, but when he was not far away from the house, the Roman military officer sent friends saying to him,

“I now recognize that you, and not the Roman emperor, are Lord of all. So please do not come into my house, for I am a wicked man who is part of great violence and oppression. ⁷ As such, I did not want to come to you in person. But please, just speak the word and my slave will be healed from this injury I have caused. ⁸ I am also a person with authority and have soldiers under me who obey my every word. I trust in the power of your word and authority, which is far greater than mine.”

⁹ While Jesus listened to these things, he marveled at the Roman military officer and, turning to the crowd which was following him, he said,

“I say to you, not even among the people of Israel have I found so much trust and faith!”

¹⁰ When those sent by the Roman military officer returned to the house, they found the injured slave was healed and restored.

¹¹ During the next day, Jesus and his apprentices, followed by a large crowd, went to the city of Nain in the southern part of Galilee. ¹² Just outside the city gate, there was a large crowd from the city leading the funeral procession of the only son of a widow. ¹³ When the Lord Jesus saw the widow, he had empathy and compassion toward her, knowing that she was now on the bottom of civilization and would soon face the possibility of starvation. Jesus said to her,

“Do not weep.”

¹⁴ Jesus then went up to and grabbed the platform on which her dead son was lying. Those carrying it stood still and Jesus said,

“Young man, I say to you, arise!”

¹⁵ At the command of Jesus, the dead young man sat up and began to speak. Jesus then gave him to his mother, giving her a new chance at life as well. ¹⁶ Fear overwhelmed everyone there because they saw the one thing most certain in their lives, death, being overcome. But they also began marvelling at the power of the Creator, saying,

“A great prophet has arisen among us!”

and

“The Creator has begun returning to his people!”

¹⁷ News about Jesus began spreading into all the regions of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, as well as all the surrounding lands.

Eyes to See & Ears to Hear | Luke 7:18—8:21

¹⁸ While John the Baptist was still waiting in prison, his apprentices reported to him all the things that Jesus was teaching and doing. Beginning to doubt if Jesus was ever going to

bring the revolution of liberation he had been preaching, John the Baptist summoned two of his apprentices. ¹⁹ He sent them to the Lord Jesus, saying,

“Are you the chosen one we have been waiting on to deliver us from tyranny or should we be looking for someone else?”

²⁰ When they came to Jesus, the men said,

“John the Baptist sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the chosen one we have been waiting on to deliver us from tyranny or should we be looking for someone else?’”

²¹ In response, Jesus rescued many who were physically, socially, and spiritually oppressed, abused, and enslaved by civilization and opened the eyes of many who were blinded by civilization’s worldview. ²² Then Jesus said to John the Baptist’s apprentices,

“When you go, report to John the Baptist the things you listened to with your own ears and saw with your own eyes. Just like it says in the thirty-fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah,

‘The blind see. The disabled walk. The unclean are purified. The deaf-mute listen. The dead are raised. And the poor have the Gospel of the Creator’s return declared to them.’

²³ Privileged is the one who is not discouraged and who continues to faithfully follow me.”

²⁴ When the messengers of John the Baptist had departed, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John the Baptist,

“What did you come out to the wilderness to see? Grass blowing in the wind? ²⁵ What then did you come out to see? A person in fancy and expensive clothes? Look! Those with fancy, luxurious, and expensive clothes and possessions live in palaces!

²⁶ What then did you come out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet! ²⁷ This is what has been written in the third chapter of the prophet Malachi concerning John the Baptist,

‘Look! I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare the way for your work.’

²⁸ I say to you, among all humanity no one is greater than John the Baptist! Yet even the least in the Creator’s Rule is greater than he!”

²⁹ When all those who had been baptized by John the Baptist listened to this, they declared that the Creator was full of justice for working outside the bounds of the powerful and wealthy. ³⁰ But those who had not been baptized by John the Baptist, like the members of the political party of the Pharisees and the scholars of Moses’s Law, rejected Jesus’s word and the Creator’s transformative work in their lives. Jesus then continued,

³¹ “To what will I compare the hard-hearted people of this culture and what are they like? ³² They are like whiny children sitting in the marketplace wanting others to play along with their games, saying,

‘We played music for you and you did not dance! We were sad and you did not weep!’

³³ For John the Baptist came eating no bread and drinking no wine and you said,

‘He is occupied and controlled by evil!’

³⁴ Now the Human One has come eating and drinking and you say,

‘Look! He is a glutton and a drunk! A friend of our Roman oppressors and the outcasts of society!’

³⁵ Nothing will make you happy! The emptiness of your so-called ‘wisdom’ is being revealed through the foolishness of your lives!”

³⁶ Then one of the members of the political party of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After entering into the man’s house, Jesus took a seat. ³⁷ A prostitute learned that Jesus was eating in this house, so she brought a flask of expensive, perfumed oil, which was essential to her livelihood, and snuck into the dinner party. ³⁸ Approaching Jesus, she knelt at his feet and began weeping in joy at the possibility of being liberated by Jesus from her life as a prostitute. Her tears began falling upon Jesus’s feet and, scandalously letting her hair down, she began wiping his feet with her hair. Then she began pouring the expensive, perfumed oil on Jesus’s feet, letting go of its wealth and any future as a prostitute. ³⁹ Seeing this scandalous love from a prostitute, the member of the political party of the Pharisees, who had invited Jesus to dinner, said to himself,

“If this Jesus was a true prophet he would have known what sort of woman is touching him, since she is an obvious prostitute.”

⁴⁰ Jesus then said to his dinner host,

“Simon, I have something to tell to you.”

Simon said,

“Teacher, enlighten me.”

Jesus replied,

⁴¹ “Two needy people were in debt to their master. One was in debt five hundred days’ pay and the other was in debt fifty days’ pay. ⁴² Because the master was generous to both of them, he forgave their debts and did not require them to give anything back to him. Therefore, which of the two will love their master more?”

⁴³ Answering, Simon said,

“I would assume it is the one who had the greater debt.”

And Jesus said to him,

“You have judged correctly.”

⁴⁴ While turning to the woman, Jesus said to Simon,

“Now, you see this woman? I entered into your house and you did not give me water to clean my feet, but she has cleansed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You showed me no signs of friendship, but she, from the moment she entered, has not stopped showing love to my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not pour olive oil on my head, but she poured perfumed oil on my feet. ⁴⁷ I say to you, because of her great love and generosity, she has been set free from her many prisons. But those who have been set free from little, love little.”

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the woman,

“You have been set free from everything that has been holding you in bondage.”

⁴⁹ Those who were gathered for the dinner began to say among themselves,
“Who is this man, who thinks he can just give a prostitute a clean slate in life?!”

⁵⁰ Then Jesus said to the woman,
“Your trust in the Creator has rescued you. Go in peace and harmony, living your new life!”

^{8.1} According to his plan, Jesus then began traveling through city and village, proclaiming the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule. The twelve men he had appointed as the foundation of the new Israel were with him. ² Additionally, there were some women with him, who had been rescued from civilization’s control: Mary Magdalene (who had been rescued from seven of the culture’s afflictions), ³ Joanna the wife of an administrator for Herod Antipas (who was rescued from her life of wealth and power), Susanna, and many others, who were all taking care of Jesus and his apprentices with their possessions and resources. ⁴ While a great crowd was with him, including many who had come out from the cities to see what he was about, Jesus said in an analogy,

⁵ “A gardener went out to scatter his seeds. During the scattering, some of the seeds fell beyond the prepared way, which led to the seeds being trampled and eaten up by the birds. ⁶ Other seeds fell upon rocky soil and, when the plants grew, they eventually dried up because they did not have deep enough roots to access water. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thornbushes and, growing together with the thornbushes, the new plants were eventually suffocated by them. ⁸ Other seeds fell into the good and prepared earth and the plants grew to produce a hundred times more fruit.”

While saying these things, Jesus began declaring,

“If you have the ears to hear the truth of what I am saying, then listen!”

⁹ Afterward, Jesus’s apprentices began asking him the meaning of this analogy. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them,

“Because you have left everything behind to follow me, the mysteries of the Creator’s Rule will be revealed to you. But for those who are still lingering in their old lives, the message comes in analogies in order to further harden their hearts until their empty lives collapse all around them. As the sixth chapter of the prophet Isaiah says, ‘*So that they will be blind in their seeing and not understanding in their listening.*’ ¹¹ The meaning of the analogy is this:

The seed is the word of the Creator. ¹² The soil beyond the prepared way represents the people that listen to the Creator’s word but are so influenced by civilization that they immediately dismiss the word as crazy and irresponsible. This keeps them from trusting and finding rescue. ¹³ The rocky soil represents the people that listen and embrace the word with initial joy. However, because they keep things superficial and shallow and don’t want to go deep, they have no real roots. They trust in the Creator for a season, but when hard times and struggles come they fall away from trusting in his word. ¹⁴ The soil cluttered with thornbushes represents the people who listen to the word of the Creator but their trust and faith is suffocated because they refuse to clear out their busy lives, their responsibilities in civilization,

and their pursuits of wealth, possessions, and power. ¹⁵ The beautiful soil represents the people who listen to the word, clear out everything in their lives for it, and then go deep with it, treasuring it in their hearts above all else. These produce the good fruit of the Creator's justice with long-lasting endurance.

¹⁶ Listen. After lighting a lamp, no one covers it up or puts it under a bed—instead, he puts it on a lampstand so that the light fills the room. ¹⁷ Likewise, nothing is hidden in this life that will not be made known to all and brought into the light. I am here to pull back the curtains that hide the lies of civilization! ¹⁸ Therefore, watch out how you listen! Things can be understood in different ways based on your assumptions and worldview! Civilization thinks the wealthy have it all while the poor have nothing. But those who are poor in wealth and yet rich in faith are the ones who will receive the daily care of the Creator. While those who are rich in earthly possessions are only going to lose what they think they possess.”

¹⁹ After this, Jesus's mother and brothers came looking for him, but they were not able to meet with him because of the crowds. ²⁰ It was reported to Jesus,

“Your mother and your brothers have been standing outside wanting to see you.”

²¹ Answering, Jesus said to them,

“My mother, my brothers, and my true family are not my blood-relatives, they are those who are listening to and living out the word of the Creator.”

Liberation From the Roman Empire | Luke 8:22-39

²² During one of those days, Jesus and his apprentices got into a boat and he said to them, “Let us leave this familiar side of the Sea of Galilee and cross over to the other side, which is foreign and enemy territory.”

²³ Then Jesus peacefully went to sleep, trusting his Father to protect and provide. As they were making this treacherous crossing into a dangerous social context, a great storm of wind and rain assaulted them. Their boat began filling with water and they were in great danger. ²⁴ Going to Jesus, his apprentices frantically woke him up, saying,

“Teacher, teacher! We are going to die!”

Waking up, Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves of water. The creation listened to him and it became calm. ²⁵ Jesus then said to his apprentices,

“Where is your trust in the Creator?”

Fearing and marveling, they said to one another,

“Who is this man? The wind and water listen to him and obey!”

²⁶ They arrived and came to shore in the Roman region on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. ²⁷ While they were getting out of the boat, a man from the city, who was controlled by Roman culture, confronted Jesus. He was in open rebellion against the Creator and was living in the Roman Empire's ways of violence and death. ²⁸ Seeing Jesus, he rushed against him and cried out in a great voice,

“What are you doing here, Jesus?! This is not your territory! I command you to

leave us alone!”

²⁹ Many had tried to bind and control the Roman Empire with the power of chains and shackles, but it always broke free and roamed wherever it wanted. Jesus then directed this power to set the man free ³⁰ while asking,

“What is your name?”

It answered,

“Roman Legion,”

because the power and ideology of the numerous Roman armies was controlling the man.

³¹ This power of the Roman Legion then began urging Jesus to back down and not throw them into total destruction. ³² A large herd of pigs, the mascot and symbol of the Tenth Roman Legion which occupied the lands of Israel, was nearby, grazing on a mountain. After the Roman Legion urged Jesus to allow them to enter into the pigs, Jesus permitted it. ³³ Coming out from the man, the power of the Roman Legion entered into the pigs. The herd then charged down the steep slope and into the sea to drown, just like the Egyptian Empire’s armies when Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery.

³⁴ The pig-herders, seeing what had happened, fled and reported it in the city and farms. ³⁵ Many then came out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man, who had been possessed by the power of the Roman Empire, totally changed and now learning at the feet of Jesus. Seeing this, they were greatly afraid, for there was now a power at work greater than that of the Roman Legions. ³⁶ Those who witnessed it, continued to spread the news of how the man, who had been occupied by the Roman Legion, had been rescued by Jesus. ³⁷ Then great crowds gathered from the surrounding region and asked Jesus to leave their land, for they were terrified that the Roman Empire would hear of this and bring its wrath and vengeance upon them. So getting into the boat, Jesus started to return to Galilee. ³⁸ But the man, who had been rescued from the grips of the Roman Legion, was begging to go with Jesus. But Jesus wouldn’t allow him, saying,

³⁹ “Return to your home and describe everything the Creator has done to rescue you from the power of the Roman Empire!”

So the man returned home, proclaiming throughout the whole city everything that Jesus had done to rescue him from the voices, expectations, and spiritual forces of the Roman military.

III. The Way of Trust | Luke 8:40—10:24

Trust & Fear | Luke 8:40-56

⁴⁰ When Jesus returned to Galilee, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all eagerly expecting him. ⁴¹ A man named Jairus, who was the rich and powerful leader of a synagogue, came to Jesus and fell down at his feet, urgently begging him to come to his house. ⁴² Jairus had only one daughter and she was dying. This young woman from a rich and powerful family was twelve years old and was entering the peak of her fertility—she thereby represented the privileged few in Israel. Filled with compassion, Jesus went with Jairus, but the crowds continued to relentlessly press around him. ⁴³ In the crowd, there was a poor, unclean, and infertile woman, who had been suffering for the last twelve years with a persistent menstrual flow of blood. She had spent everything she had on doctors, but no one was able to heal her. ⁴⁴ Sneaking up behind Jesus, this unclean woman crossed a strictly forbidden social line by reaching out and grabbing the clothes of a clean man. Immediately, when she held onto Jesus, her flow of blood ceased. ⁴⁵ Suddenly, Jesus stopped and said,

“Who held me?!”

While everyone was denying it, Peter said,

“Teacher, the crowds are constantly touching you and we need to get going to save the daughter of Jairus—he is an important man!”

⁴⁶ But Jesus would not continue his journey and insisted,

“Someone held me! This was different, for I felt the Creator’s power come out from me.”

⁴⁷ After a time, the woman concluded that she could not keep secret and so she came forward with great fear and trembling. Falling down before Jesus, she openly told her whole story in front of everyone. She told them of why she had held onto Jesus and then how clinging to him brought her immediate healing, representing the immediate liberation available to those on the bottom of civilization. ⁴⁸ After patiently listening to her whole story Jesus said to her,

“You are a daughter of the Creator, your trust has rescued you from your bondage! Go and continue to live in the Creator’s peace and harmony.”

⁴⁹ While Jesus was still delaying his journey and giving priority to this poor woman, a messenger came to the leader of the synagogue, saying,

“It’s too late, your daughter has died. It is pointless to bother the teacher any longer.”

⁵⁰ But, when Jesus heard this, he responded,

“Do not fear! Only trust in the power of the Creator and she will be rescued.”

⁵¹ When Jesus finally came to Jairus’s house, he did not allow anyone to enter except Peter, John Zebedee, Jacob Zebedee, and the parents of the twelve-year old young woman. ⁵² Everyone was weeping and lamenting over her, but Jesus said,

“Do not weep! She is not dead. She is only sleeping.”

⁵³ Clearly seeing that she was dead, they began chastising Jesus for making such an insensitive and callous statement. ⁵⁴ But Jesus then grabbed the young woman’s hand and said,

“Young woman, arise!”

⁵⁵ Immediately, the Creator’s life breath filled her once again and she stood up, representing the need of the privileged to die to their old lives before rising to new life with the Creator. Jesus then ordered them to give the young woman something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were beside themselves, but Jesus directed them to tell no one what had happened so he would not draw unwanted attention from the authorities.

Receiving & Giving | Luke 9:1-17

^{9.1} Calling together the twelve men who now represented the new Israel, Jesus gave them authority over the spiritual forces and worldviews of civilization and gave them the power to rescue people from their afflictions. ² Then he sent the twelve men to proclaim the Creator’s Rule and to heal the broken. ³ Jesus said to them,

“As you bear witness to the Way of the Creator, go out empty and vulnerable by taking nothing with you for safety or security! Take no staff for protection and no pack, food, money, or extra clothes for provision. The Creator himself will protect and provide while keeping you safe and secure. ⁴ Whatever house welcomes you, stay there and receive their care until you leave so that no one thinks you are working the town. ⁵ If a town does not welcome you, then leave there and brush off the dust from your feet as a symbol that they are rejecting and separating themselves from the Creator himself.”

⁶ Departing for their journey, the twelve representatives began passing through villages, everywhere declaring the Gospel of the Creator’s arrival and bringing freedom and liberation to those in bondage. ⁷ Herod Antipas, the ruler of the region of Galilee, heard all that was happening and he became confused by all the rumors which said,

“John the Baptist has been raised from the dead,”

⁸ and,

“The prophet Elijah has appeared,”

and,

“One of the ancient prophets has come back!”

⁹ But Herod Antipas said,

“How could this be John the Baptist?! I finally beheaded him! Who is this revolutionary that is breaking the laws of the culture and starting a new people of Israel while spreading the message that the Creator has returned to the earth?!”

So Herod Antipas began seeking Jesus in order to learn exactly who he was.

¹⁰ Returning from their journey, the twelve representatives described to Jesus everything they had done. Jesus then took them with him and privately withdrew from the city of

Bethsaida, on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. ¹¹ But learning of this, the crowd relentlessly followed Jesus. Welcoming them, Jesus began teaching them about the Creator's Rule while also healing and liberating those in need. ¹² As the hours dragged on and as daylight was fading, the twelve representatives came to Jesus and said,

“Dismiss the crowd, so they can go into the surrounding villages and farms to relax and find food. We are out in the wilderness, in the middle of nowhere, with little food.”

¹³ But Jesus said to them,

“You give them something to eat.”

But they said,

“Are you kidding?! The five loaves of bread and two fish that we have are barely enough to feed us! Or are you proposing that we head into town and somehow come up with the money to buy food for all these people?!”

¹⁴ There were about five thousand people gathered there to listen to Jesus's teachings. Jesus said to his apprentices,

“Have the people who are listening to my teachings organize into communities, no bigger than fifty people, for sharing food and resources.”

¹⁵ They did so and everyone sat down. ¹⁶ After receiving the five loaves of bread and the two fish, Jesus looked in trust and thankfulness to his heavenly Father and honored the bread and fish for their sacrifice. Then he broke the food into pieces and handed the pieces to the apprentices to share with the crowds. ¹⁷ All that were there ate their fill and twelve baskets of excess pieces were gathered, showing the overflowing abundance that comes from the Creator's hand when his faithful people share all they have with each other.

The Way of the Cross | Luke 9:18-36

¹⁸ After the crowd had dispersed, Jesus gathered himself through prayer in order to discern the Father's will and direction for his ministry. Only his apprentices were with him and he asked them,

“According to the crowds, who am I?”

¹⁹ Answering, they said,

“Some say you are John the Baptist. But others say the prophet Elijah. And others say that an ancient prophet has been raised from the dead.”

²⁰ Jesus said to them,

“But what about you? According to you, who am I?”

Answering, Peter said,

“The Messiah—the Creator's Chosen Ruler.”

²¹ Jesus sternly directed them not to use this title with anyone for it had too much false baggage and expectation with the people and authorities. ²² Jesus then said,

“Just as the prophets Daniel and Hosea foretold, it is necessary for the Human One and his community to greatly suffer, to be rejected by the most powerful political and religious leaders, to be killed, and to be raised from the dead by the Creator on

the third day.”

²³ Then Jesus began saying to all who would listen,

“If you want to learn from me and find true freedom and life, then you must say ‘no’ to every other voice, especially the voice of self, ego, and survival. Then you must daily pick up your cross and willingly embrace being disowned, persecuted, and killed by your families and your nation. Finally, you must follow me by listening to my teachings and imitating my example. ²⁴ For if you try to preserve your current life in civilization, then you will end up destroying the true essence of your life. But if you destroy your life of privilege, wealth, and power, in obedience to my teachings and the Creator’s Rule, then you will be rescued and find true life. ²⁵ For what does it benefit a person to gain all the power, wealth, and privilege of civilization while losing the very essence of his life in the process?! ²⁶ If you are dismissive of me and my teachings in favor of listening to the ways of civilization, then you will be dismissed by the Human One and his community when the Creator’s judgment comes upon the earth. ²⁷ Truthfully I say to you, there are some standing here who will not die until they see the Creator’s Rule arrive on the earth!”

²⁸ Eight days after this, symbolizing the first day of new creation, Jesus took Peter, John Zebedee, and Jacob Zebedee and he went up on a mountain to be with his Father in prayer.

²⁹ As Jesus was praying and opening himself up to the Creator, the truth of who he was and what he was about became clear. Jesus took on the appearance of humanity washed clean, rescued, and renewed from the corruption of disobeying the Creator. ³⁰ Two men—Moses, representing the sacred Law of Israel, and Elijah, representing the prophets of Israel—began speaking with Jesus. ³¹ Trusting in the Creator’s victory, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus began speaking about the great final Exodus from slavery that Jesus was going to lead in Jerusalem. ³² Peter, John, and Jacob had fallen asleep, but, waking up and coming to their senses, they saw Moses and Elijah standing with a transformed Jesus. ³³ As Moses and Elijah were about to leave, Peter said to Jesus,

“Teacher, this is great! Let us enshrine and preserve all three of your voices equally!”

He had no idea what he was saying. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, the Creator’s presence covered them with a cloud and they were terrified as they entered into it. ³⁵ The Creator then spoke to the apprentices,

“This one is my beloved Child. Listen to him above all else!”

³⁶ When the Creator said these words, the apprentices no longer saw Moses or Elijah, for it was only Jesus who was to be listened to above all. This reality blew their minds and stunned them into silence. The possibility of Jesus replacing the Law and the prophets as the voice of the Creator was so revolutionary that they told no one in those days of what they had seen.

³⁷ The next day, like Moses coming down from Mount Sinai to find the people having walked away from the Creator, they came down from their time of prayer on the mountain to find the rest of Jesus's apprentices having gone astray with a large crowd. ³⁸ A man from the crowd cried out to Jesus, saying,

“Teacher, I beg you to help my child—he is my only one! ³⁹ Look! He is controlled by the spiritual forces of the culture and out of nowhere they will bind him and make him completely powerless to live his life for the Creator. ⁴⁰ I begged your apprentices to rescue him, but they were not powerful enough!”

⁴¹ Answering, Jesus said,

“Oh faithless culture and society! How much more faithlessness will I put up with?! How much longer will I be patient with you, allowing you to endure?! Bring the child to me.”

⁴² While the child was brought to Jesus, the culture's power within the boy fiercely resisted and fought against it. But Jesus overpowered it with his word and liberated the child from its grip, giving him back to his dad. ⁴³ Everyone who saw this was amazed at the power and greatness of the Creator. But while everyone was marveling at all he was doing, Jesus said to his apprentices,

⁴⁴ “You! Put these words into your ears. Just as the prophet Daniel foretold, the Human One and his community are about to be given over into the hands of human authorities.”

⁴⁵ But Jesus's apprentices were not understanding what he meant—the truth of his words was hidden from them behind the teachings and ways of civilization. But because they were fearful of having their ignorance exposed, they did not ask Jesus to clarify what he meant.

⁴⁶ Faced with their own failure to save the boy and then the success of Jesus, the apprentices got competitive and began wondering which among them was the greatest in power. ⁴⁷ But Jesus, discerning their hearts, took a lowly child, stood her in the middle of them, ⁴⁸ and said to them,

“Whoever embraces this lowly child in obedience to my teachings, is embracing me. And whoever embraces me, is embracing our heavenly Father who sent me. Therefore, let this sink in. The one among you who possesses the least, in regard to wealth, power, and ego, is the greatest. Civilization's whole idea of greatness is backward and upside down.”

⁴⁹ Hearing this, John Zebedee confessed,

“Teacher, we saw someone obeying your teachings and liberating people from the afflictions of the culture and we stopped him, because he was not part of our inner circle.”

⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him,

“Do not stop someone like him! Do not try to keep a monopoly on the Creator's power for yourself! The Creator's work is so much bigger and wider than you ever

dreamed! Therefore, whoever is not opposing your obedience to my teachings is also on your side.”

⁵¹ Seeing the climax of his life and ministry ahead of him, Jesus became confident that his end goal was in Jerusalem where he would walk into that great center of power and confront the authorities once and for all. ⁵² In preparation for this great confrontation, Jesus continued spreading his message in the hopes of accumulating a large enough following to allow him to survive his initial entrance into Jerusalem. So Jesus sent messengers to prepare the way for his arrival in the villages of Samaria, the central region of Israel. ⁵³ But the Samaritans would not welcome Jesus because they knew he was planning on going to Jerusalem. They could not stand the fact that he would choose Jerusalem, Mount Zion, and its Temple over the city of Samaria and Mount Gerizim. ⁵⁴ Learning of this blatant rejection of their teacher, Jacob and John Zebedee said to Jesus,

“Lord, do you want us, like the prophet Elijah, to call fire down from heaven in order to destroy the Samaritans?”

⁵⁵ But turning to face them, Jesus sternly rebuked them for not listening to his call to love their enemies and for not following his example over Elijah’s. ⁵⁶ Then they moved on to another village.

⁵⁷ As they were journeying, someone said to Jesus,
“I will follow you wherever you go!”

⁵⁸ Jesus said to him,
“Foxes have dens and birds have nests, while powerful rulers and Roman authorities have fancy palaces. But the Human One and his community are homeless and have nowhere stable to call home because civilization disowns and rejects them.”

⁵⁹ Jesus then said to someone else,
“Follow me!”

But the man replied,
“Lord, first allow me to go back home and finish serving my dad until he passes away! I am part of his household and even the Law of Moses says I have to obey him!”

⁶⁰ But Jesus said to him,
“Leave those who are dead in their pursuits of civilization to worry about those kind of things! But you, listen to the call of the Creator and leave everything behind to reveal the Creator’s Rule that is arriving upon the earth and making all family loyalties irrelevant!”

⁶¹ Then someone else said to Jesus,
“I will follow you, Lord! But first allow me to go back home and say goodbye to my family and let them know where I am going.”

⁶² But Jesus said,
“You cannot walk a straight line while looking behind you. Therefore, if you are concerned with the past or with the old life you are leaving behind, then you will not

be able to truly live your life under the Creator's Rule!"

Like Lambs Among Wolves | Luke 10:1-24

^{10.1} Refusing to be discouraged by his apprentices' unfaithfulness, the Lord Jesus chose a group of seventy apprentices, just as Moses had chosen seventy elders for Israel. Then Jesus sent them out, two by two, pointing back to the Creator's rescue mission in the time of Noah and the flood. These seventy went into every city and place where Jesus was about to go, thereby expanding his rescue mission to all creation. ² Jesus said to them before they left,

"There are many people to gather into the saving harvest of the Creator's Rule, but there are not many workers. Therefore, beg the Creator to send out more faithful workers who will proclaim his Rule with their words and lives.

³ Now go! I am sending you as humble and nonviolent lambs into the midst of arrogant and violent wolves! I want you to rely on the Creator for everything. ⁴ Therefore, do not take money or supplies. Go barefoot in order to show that all creation is now the Creator's holy ground. Do not let anyone stop you or sidetrack you from your mission. ⁵ When you enter a house, first say,

'I bring the Creator's peace and harmony to this house.'

⁶ If a child of peace and harmony is there, then your peace and harmony will open her heart and home. But if their hardened hearts want nothing to do with the Creator's peace, then they will reject you and offer you nothing. ⁷ Stay at whatever house welcomes you. Accept their hospitality, food, and drink, for the Creator wants his workers to have shelter and provision. But do not go around staying in different homes, for that may lead people to think you are working the town and trying to make a profit. ⁸ Whenever you enter into a city that embraces your life and teachings, then eat their food, ⁹ give healing to the weak, and declare to them,

'The Creator's Rule is within your grasp!'

¹⁰ But whenever you enter into a city that does not embrace your life and teachings, then go out into its streets and declare,

¹¹ 'If you reject our teachings then we can have nothing to do with you. We don't even want the dust from your city on our feet! Let it be known, this is your warning: The Creator's Rule is within grasp and you are rejecting it!'

¹² I say to you, when the Creator's judgment comes on that city it will seem like the city of Sodom that was destroyed with fire had it easy!

¹³ Oh cities of Israel, you should know better because you regularly hear the words of the prophets! You will be condemned, for you are rejecting the Creator's Rule that is arriving upon the earth all around you! ¹⁴ Even your hated enemies that are full of arrogance, wealth, and power would repent and transform if they were seeing what you see! Their judgment will be easy compared to yours! ¹⁵ Do not presume that you will be part of the Creator's new creation! For he is going to tear you down and you will be left in the realm of the dead!

¹⁶ Therefore, my apprentices, whoever listens to you, is listening to me. Whoever rejects you, is rejecting me. And whoever rejects me, is rejecting my heavenly Father who sent me.”

¹⁷ So the seventy went out and when they returned they were filled with joy, saying, “Lord, even civilization’s spiritual forces and afflictions are powerless in the face of your teachings and Way of life!”

¹⁸ Jesus said to them,

“As you spread the Creator’s Rule, I am witnessing the defeat of the satanic desire-to-be-in-control! ¹⁹ Look! I have given you authority over every power that stands against the Creator. Like a lamb, you may be persecuted and killed, but nothing will be able to separate you from the Creator! ²⁰ So do not rejoice because you think you have power! Instead, rejoice in humility, because the Creator knows your names and will always have your back!”

²¹ In that same hour, Jesus was filled with the Creator’s Spirit and rejoiced, saying,

“I pledge my allegiance to you alone, Father, Lord and Creator of heaven and earth, because you have hidden the truth of your Way and teachings from the wise and intelligent and have revealed it to the voiceless on the bottom of civilization. Yes, Father, this is your desire and it is for the good of the earth as you set all things right.

²² I have nothing and know nothing that isn’t my Father’s and hasn’t come from him. Civilization doesn’t know what it means to be a true child of the Creator because civilization doesn’t truly know the Creator and what he is like. Yet it is only through the Child of the Creator and his teachings that the truth of the Creator is revealed.”

²³ Turning to his apprentices, Jesus said,

“Privileged are the eyes which truly see the things that are now happening all around you. ²⁴ For I say to you, many prophets and rulers wanted to see the things that you are seeing and did not see them because of their spiritual blindness. And many wanted to listen to the things that you are listening to and did not listen because of their spiritual deafness. Pay attention! Open your eyes! Open your ears!”

IV. The Way of Life | Luke 10:25—18:30

All-In Obedience | Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ A scholar of Moses’s Law approached Jesus to see if he would stay faithful to the teachings of Moses, saying,

“What must I do to inherit and participate in the life and new creation of the age to come?”

²⁶ Jesus said to him,

“What is written in the Law of Moses? How do you read, interpret, and understand its teachings on this?”

²⁷ Answering, the scholar of Moses’s Law quoted from the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy and the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus,

“*You will love the Lord your Creator with your whole heart, with your whole life, with your whole strength, and with all of your decisions, and then love your fellow creatures as much as yourself.*”

²⁸ Jesus said to him,

“You have answered correctly. Do this and you will already be living and sharing in the life of new creation.”

²⁹ But, wanting to get himself out of total obedience and limit the scope of the Creator’s command, he said to Jesus,

“But who is my ‘fellow creature’? Who is it exactly that I am required to love?”

³⁰ Gladly taking up his question, Jesus said,

“A man was coming down the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho and he was attacked and robbed by terrorists. They took everything he had, stripped him of his clothes, beat him half to death, and left him to die. ³¹ Coincidentally, a temple-caretaker was also coming down that way. When he saw the dying man, he passed by on the opposite side because he did not want to be interrupted from his important Temple business, made ceremonially unclean by touching blood, or attacked by the terrorists himself. ³² Likewise, a member of the tribe of Levi, an assistant to the temple-caretakers, also came to that place on the road. When he saw the dying man, he passed by on the opposite side for the same reasons as the temple-caretaker. ³³ Then a traveler from Samaria, passing through this enemy land, came by and, when he saw the dying man, he had empathy for him. ³⁴ Risking everything, including his safety, the Samaritan came up to this hated enemy of his, poured expensive olive oil and wine on his wounds, and took care of his injuries. Mounting the dying man on his own animal, he took him to a lodge and helped care for him there. ³⁵ On the next day, he gave two days’ pay to the owner of the lodge and said,

‘Assist him and take care of him. I will repay you whatever it costs when I return.’

³⁶ Now which of these three do you think acted like a fellow creature to the one who got attacked by the terrorists?”

³⁷ The scholar of Moses’s Law said,

“I suppose it was the one who compassionately walked alongside him during his time of need.”

Then Jesus said to him,

“Exactly. Go and do likewise. Be a fellow creature to all, even your enemies.”

Humility | Luke 10:38—11:13

³⁸ While they continued their journey, Jesus came into a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary who immediately began breaking social convention by sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus in order to listen to his word and teachings. ⁴⁰ Martha was very busy and distracted by all the tasks that needed to get done for dinner. So in frustration Martha stood over them and said,

“Lord, are you not concerned or bothered that my sister leaves me to serve all alone?! Speak to her, so she will assist and help me with these necessary tasks!”

⁴¹ Answering, Jesus said to her,

“Martha, Martha, relax. You are worrying and being disturbed by so many things that you think are important. ⁴² But only one thing is truly necessary. Mary has chosen this one thing by humbly sitting at my feet and learning my teachings. This will not be taken away from her. Learn from her humble example.”

^{11.1} One day, while Jesus was spending time in prayer, one of his apprentices said to him when he stopped,

“John the Baptist taught his apprentices to pray. So, Lord, teach us how we should properly pray to the Creator.”

² Jesus said to them,

“When you pray, humble yourself and say,

‘Creator, you are the only true Father, provider, and protector we have. Teach us your distinctly different Way and set yourself above all other authorities by bringing your Rule to the earth and into our lives. ³ Provide for us whatever it is we need for this day. ⁴ Set us free from everything that holds us in bondage and slavery while empowering us to forgive every debt owed to us. Protect our spiritual lives of faith so that we do not fall away in times of testing.’”

⁵ Jesus then said to them,

“If one of you went to a friend at midnight and said to him,

‘Friend, I need some food! ⁶ A friend of mine has just arrived at my house after a long journey and I do not have anything to offer him,’

⁷ will he answer from within, saying,

‘Don’t bother and trouble me! Everything is closed up and my children are in bed, as am I. I will not help you!’?”

⁸ Of course not! I say to you, he will give you everything you need, not because you are friends, but because of your humility, shamelessness, and courage in waking him up.

⁹ Therefore, I also say to you, humble yourselves and pray boldly, shamelessly, and courageously! Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, whoever seeks finds, and for whoever knocks it will be opened.

¹¹ For which dad among you, if his child asks for a fish, will give him a deadly snake? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give him a stinging scorpion? If a child asks for something good, then his dad will eagerly give it to him! ¹³ Therefore, if you evil people, blinded by the spiritual forces and worldview of civilization, know how to give good and not bad gifts to your children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the one good gift, his very Spirit and presence, to those who ask him?”

Single-Hearted Focus | Luke 11:14-36

¹⁴ One day, Jesus physically and spiritually liberated a man who had been deafened to the Creator’s word by the spiritual forces of civilization. The man had his ears and mouth opened by Jesus and the crowds marveled. ¹⁵ But some among them said,

“Jesus is occupied by the powers of death and decay! He is doing all this with forces that are opposed to the Creator!”

¹⁶ Testing Jesus to see if he would give them what they wanted, others began demanding a sign from the Creator that fit their expectations. ¹⁷ But perceiving their thoughts and intentions, Jesus said to them,

“Every government that is divided against itself is ultimately toppled. And every household that is divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If the satanic desire-to-be-in-control has been divided and turned against itself, how will it maintain its power on the earth? Yet you are claiming that I liberate people from the death and decay of civilization using the very power of death and decay. ¹⁹ If you are right, then your very own students are also using the same power of death and decay and they will turn against you and take you down. ²⁰ But, if you are wrong and I am liberating people from the death and decay of civilization with the very power of the Creator, then the Creator’s Rule has arrived upon the earth to oppose and stand against you—just like it did against the Egyptian Empire in the time of Moses!

²¹ When a fully-armed and powerful man is guarding his own house, he thinks his possessions are safe and secure. ²² But eventually someone stronger comes along and conquers him, taking everything he has and revealing that his trusted weapons are worthless. You think you are safe and standing firm, but the Creator’s power will overwhelm you and expose you as frauds! ²³ Whoever refuses to stand with me and my teachings, is against me. Whoever is not helping me in my cause, is working against the Creator.

²⁴ So be aware! Whenever an affliction of civilization loses its control over a person, it will always try to return and regain its power. ²⁵ And when it returns it often finds the person unprepared to resist its temptations and seductions because the person has not filled his life with the Creator's word and teachings. ²⁶ So the affliction of civilization comes back to reoccupy the person while bringing seven other afflictions with it as well. Therefore, the person has actually become worse off than before! Being liberated from the afflictions of civilization is worthless unless there is a whole new life to replace the old and fill its void."

²⁷ As Jesus said these things, a woman yelled out from the crowd, saying,
"You are truly special! Privileged is your mother and family for raising you!"

²⁸ Jesus replied,
"True privilege does not come from one's family. Instead, privileged are those who listen to, treasure, and obey the word of the Creator! For this is the true sign of the Creator's Rule and presence on the earth."

²⁹ As the crowds were gathering together around him, Jesus began to say,
"This culture is an evil culture! It is seeking a sign to validate the Creator's presence on the earth, but it will not be given a sign, other than the sign of the prophet Jonah. ³⁰ Jonah became a sign for those in the capital city of the Assyrian Empire, as he preached the word of the Creator to them and led them to transform their lives. Likewise, the Human One and his community will be a sign for this culture, preaching the word of the Creator to them and leading some to transform their lives. ³¹ The Queen of Southern Arabia will be raised at the judgment and judge against the people of this culture. For she came from far away just to listen to the Creator's word through Solomon, even though he was a disobedient, filthy-rich, womanizing ruler who enslaved his own people! One much greater than Solomon is here, one who actually practices what he preaches! ³² Likewise, the people of the capital city of the Assyrian Empire will stand up at the judgment and judge against this culture. For they transformed because of the proclamation of the prophet Jonah, even though he tried to run away from the Creator and never wanted his enemies to be saved! One much greater than Jonah is here, one who actually practices what he preaches! You have no excuse for refusing to listen!

³³ Look! No one opens a window to just cover it up, it is always opened in order to allow light to flow into the house. ³⁴ Your eyes are a window for your body, whatever they open themselves up to is brought into your life and body. When your eyes are opened to the Creator's word, then your entire body and life is guided and filled by this good light. But when your eyes are not opened to the Creator's word and are instead focused on civilization and its evil ways, then your body and life will be shaped and filled by that darkness. ³⁵ Therefore, make sure that you are being guided by the light of the Creator's word and not by the darkness of civilization! ³⁶ If your focus is only on the word of the Creator, then your entire body and life will

be free of darkness and you will reflect the Creator's light with great brilliance throughout the earth."

Sincerity | Luke 11:37—12:12

³⁷ While Jesus was teaching, a member of the political party of the Pharisees invited him over to eat. Jesus accepted and, entering into the man's house, he sat down. ³⁸ The man marveled when he saw that Jesus ignored the purity laws of their society by not ceremonially washing himself before the meal. ³⁹ The Lord Jesus responded to him,

"You members of the political party of the Pharisees worry about superficial and exterior cleansing, but on the inside your lives are full of stolen-wealth and works of injustice. ⁴⁰ Fools! You cannot separate the inside and outside of your lives! ⁴¹ Give away the wealth and possessions that you are storing up for yourselves and then everything in your life will finally be pure!

⁴² You members of the political party of the Pharisees are condemned, for you tithe and give a tenth of your things thinking that makes you generous. But as you hold onto ninety percent you are ignoring the true justice and love that the Creator is calling you into! Love and justice are essential and necessary—you cannot disregard these things! ⁴³ You are condemned, for you pursue political and economic power, status, and privilege! ⁴⁴ You are condemned, for you are leading the people into fellowship with death and decay without them knowing it!"

⁴⁵ Responding to Jesus, one of the scholars of Moses's Law said,

"By saying these things you are shaming and attacking us as well!"

⁴⁶ Jesus said,

"Well you scholars of Moses's Law are condemned as well! For you burden the people with your man-made rules, laws, and expectations and then you don't even live up to them yourselves! ⁴⁷ You are condemned, for you praise the prophets by honoring their graves but in reality you refuse to listen to their words and you support your ancestors who put them to death. ⁴⁸ You approve of the deeds of your ancestors, for they killed the prophets and now you honor that by building fancy graves which just reinforce that the prophets are dead and silenced! ⁴⁹ The Creator in his wisdom knew that you would hunt down and kill his prophets and representatives. ⁵⁰ So beware! This culture will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets, who were beaten and killed for proclaiming the Creator's Rule that you are rejecting! ⁵¹ From the blood of Abel, who was killed by his brother Cain for living by trust as a shepherd and not by control as a tiller of the soil, to the blood of John the Baptist's dad, Zechariah, who was killed in the Temple for standing up against its injustice! Yes, I say to you, this culture will be responsible for it all because it is rejecting the Creator's Rule that all the prophets proclaimed. ⁵² So yes, you scholars of Moses's Law are condemned, for you were given the truth of the prophets, but you refused to listen and then you even stopped those who wanted to listen and obey!"

⁵³ The Biblical scholars and the members of the political party of the Pharisees were furious and began to hold a terrible grudge against Jesus. They began intensely questioning Jesus about his teachings, ⁵⁴ eagerly hoping he would say something that could be used to get him killed.

^{12.1} Soon a crowd of thousands had gathered together and they were trampling each other in order to see Jesus. Jesus then began addressing his apprentices who had left everything behind to follow him, saying,

“Be aware of the seductive messages and influences all around you! Especially keep yourselves free from all hypocrisy and two-faced pretending! ² For there is nothing secret or hidden that will not be revealed and made known. ³ Everything done under the cover of darkness will be thrown into the light for all to see. Every whispered secret will be shouted on the rooftops for all to hear. All hypocrisy will be exposed!

⁴ I say to you, my friends, do not fear human rulers who try to control you through the threat of suffering and death. They are ultimately powerless! ⁵ There is only one to fear and only one whose opinion matters—the Creator himself. For he can throw you into the everlasting garbage heap where civilization is going. Yes, I say to you, fear him alone! ⁶ Every single day small birds are sold and given over to their deaths for a small price. Yet not a single one of them is forgotten or abandoned by the Creator. He watches over all his creatures. ⁷ The Creator is so intimately involved in his creation that he even numbers every hair of your head. So do not fear! The Creator is carrying you, providing for you, and watching over you, just as he does all his creatures.

⁸ I say to you, everyone who pledges his undivided allegiance to me before the rulers and authorities, will stand vindicated with the Human One’s community on the day of the Creator’s judgment. ⁹ But everyone who compromises his allegiance to me before the rulers and authorities, will stand alone and without my support on the day of the Creator’s judgment. ¹⁰ Everyone who commits his life to my cause will be liberated and set free. But everyone who rejects the work of the Creator’s Spirit will remain enslaved and imprisoned under the tyranny of civilization. ¹¹ When they put you on trial before the religious and political authorities, do not worry about how to explain yourselves or whether to speak at all. ¹² Trust that the Creator’s Spirit will guide and lead you into what is necessary in those moments.”

Faithfulness | Luke 12:13-40

¹³ Someone from the crowd said to Jesus,

“Teacher, tell my brother to stop being greedy and to divide the family inheritance and wealth with me! We are fighting over this and now he won’t even talk to me!”

¹⁴ Jesus replied to him,

“Man, who appointed me as judge over such petty disputes? Neither of you are right

and both of you are fundamentally wrong.”

¹⁵ Then Jesus said to the crowd,

“Beware and guard yourselves from all desire to have more possessions! For the accumulation of wealth will choke out your life. Anything more than your daily need is deadly.”

¹⁶ Jesus then told a story, saying,

“The land of a wealthy man produced a huge abundance ¹⁷ and he said to himself, ‘What will I do with all this? For I have nowhere to store all this abundance and it would be irresponsible to just give it all away.’

¹⁸ Then he said,

‘I know, I will do this. I will tear down my storehouses and I will build larger ones to hold all my possessions, storing them up for myself and my family. This is the responsible and wise thing to do. ¹⁹ Then our futures will be set. We will have everything we need for years. We will just rest, eat, drink, and celebrate!’

²⁰ But the Creator said to him,

‘You are not wise, you are a fool! This night I am demanding your life back from you! All this wealth you prepared for the future will be left to your family, tearing them away from faith in me and causing strife and division among them. You have destroyed your own life and cursed those who come after you!’

²¹ Learn this lesson! Whoever stores up wealth and possessions is poor in faith and is cutting himself off from the Creator.”

²² Then Jesus said to his apprentices,

“Because of this I say to you, do not worry about your bodily life. Do not be anxious about even the most basic needs of food and clothing. ²³ For true bodily life with the Creator does not come from mere food and clothing.

²⁴ Learn from the birds! They do not plant seeds and harvest and they have no lockboxes or storehouses, and yet the Creator still feeds them! If the Creator cares for the birds, then will he not also care for you? ²⁵ Tell me, which of you, by worrying and stressing, is able to add even a single day to his lifespan? ²⁶ If you are not able to do even that, then why are you worrying? ²⁷ Learn from the wildflowers! How do they grow so beautiful? They do not labor to make clothes, yet I say to you, Solomon in all his luxury and wealth was not as beautifully clothed as even one wildflower! ²⁸ If the Creator beautifully clothes the grasses of the field, which are here today and gone the next, then will he not also clothe you? Why do you have so little trust in the Creator?

²⁹ Therefore, do not strive and waste your energy on figuring out what you will eat or drink. Do not worry at all. ³⁰ For all the nations of the earth are striving and wasting their energy on these things. Your heavenly Father already knows exactly what you need. ³¹ If you strive after your Father’s Rule by obeying his word,

then he will provide everything you need.³² Do not fear, for you are under the Creator's care! Your heavenly Father eagerly wants to provide for you and protect you.³³ So open yourself up to his care by selling your possessions and compassionately giving to those who are in need this day. Generous acts of love are the only investment of true value, for they are remembered eternally by the Creator and can never be taken from you.³⁴ Your heart is wherever you place your resources and possessions. Will your heart be selfishly focused on yourself or on the Creator and his love for all creation?

³⁵ Therefore, live in this way so you are ready in every moment to follow the Creator into the freedom of the new age.³⁶ If you are relying on the Creator for your needs, then you will be ready to participate in the great feast of new creation when he comes knocking on your door.³⁷ Privileged are the servants that the Lord finds awake and attentively obedient to his word. Truly I say to you, he will serve and care for their every need.³⁸ Especially privileged are those who stay attentive to his word while most of the earth has been lulled to sleep and wandered far from his word.³⁹ Know this! Nobody would let his house be robbed if he knew exactly when the thief was coming. Likewise, the only way to be ready for the Creator's judgment is by being attentively obedient in every moment.⁴⁰ So be ready! The hour of civilization's judgment, when the Creator will step in to rescue the Human One and his community, will come when you least expect it."

Repentance | Luke 12:41—13:9

⁴¹ Peter said,

"Lord, is this Way of life just for us or is it for all people?"

⁴² The Lord Jesus said,

"Anyone who wants to be part of the Creator's new creation must live by trust and not worry when managing money, resources, and possessions. Those who live by trust will be cared for and will receive everything they need from the Creator.⁴³ Privileged is anyone who, when the Creator comes, is found living in this trusting way.⁴⁴ Truthfully I say to you, the Creator will give all of his creation to those who trustfully empty themselves in obedience to his word.

⁴⁵ But if one of my followers starts living without trust in the Creator by taking advantage of others and building up wealth for himself,⁴⁶ then the Creator will show up when he is not expecting and will cut this untrusting one out of my community.⁴⁷ The servant who knows the teachings of the Creator and does not obey them, will be punished and disciplined greatly.⁴⁸ While the one who does not know the Creator's teachings and lives unjustly toward his fellow creatures, will only be punished and disciplined lightly. The Creator expects a lot from everyone who has been given his truth. The more he has entrusted to you, the more he expects of you.

⁴⁹ Know this, I came to refine and purify all the earth with the fire of my

word. And I am determined to set it on fire! ⁵⁰ I have my own baptism I still must complete and I am intensely anxious for it to be done. ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to bring superficial peace and harmony to the earth? That is not my objective at all! Instead I say to you, I am coming to bring the true peace and harmony that can only come through the cleansing fire of division and conflict. ⁵² Houses and families will be divided in half and will become enemies with each other because of my word and truth. ⁵³ Even fathers and sons as well as mothers and daughters will be divided and turned against each other as my word reveals the truth of their loyalties and hearts.”

⁵⁴ Jesus then began teaching the crowds,

“When you see clouds growing on the western horizon, you immediately say, ‘A thunderstorm is coming,’ and it happens. ⁵⁵ When the winds shift and blow in from the south, you say, ‘It will be very hot,’ and it happens. ⁵⁶ You are hypocrites and pretenders! You know how to read the signs of heaven and earth in regard to weather! So why are you unwilling to recognize the clear signs of civilization’s collapse and the need to transform your lives?! ⁵⁷ You are even refusing to open your eyes to how true justice works. ⁵⁸ When you find yourself in a conflict or dispute, do not take it or let it be taken to some human court. Instead, work one-on-one with the other party to sort it through, for human judges only bring more injustice by throwing people in prison! ⁵⁹ I say to you, if you seek the judgment of human courts you will eventually suffer great injustice at the hands of their so-called justice systems.”

^{13.1} During that same season, reports were brought to Jesus about some revolutionaries in Galilee who had committed acts of violence and then had been killed by Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. ² Responding to the news, Jesus said to them,

“Do you assume these revolutionaries were considered more rebellious by the Creator than all those in Galilee because they suffered this fate? ³ Not at all! On the contrary, if you do not break free from the madness of both the revolutionaries and the establishment of civilization, then you will also be destroyed in their games! ⁴ Or how about those eighteen people that were killed when the tower in southern Jerusalem collapsed on them? Do you assume that the Creator was more unhappy with them than everyone else living in Jerusalem? ⁵ Not at all! On the contrary, if you do not break free from the madness of civilization, then its buildings and structures will come crashing down on you as well!”

⁶ Jesus then began teaching about the urgent need to change their lives and produce the fruit of the Creator’s justice. He said,

“A man planted a fruit tree in his orchard and, even after years of patient waiting, the tree produced no fruit. ⁷ The man said to his orchard worker,

‘Look! For three years I have come looking for fruit from this tree and I am

still finding nothing. Cut it down. Why should it even waste the soil?’

⁸ Answering, the worker said to him,

‘Lord, give it one more year. I will show it extra attention by digging around it and fertilizing it with manure. ⁹ See if it produces fruit this coming year. If it still does not, then we will cut it down.’

Therefore, know that I am your last chance to change your lives and turn back to the Creator.”

Self-Emptying | Luke 13:10-30

¹⁰ On one Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in one of the sacred gathering places of worship. ¹¹ A woman was there who had been oppressed by an affliction of civilization for eighteen years—she was bent over and was not able to stand up straight under its burden.

¹² When Jesus saw her, he called out to her and said,

“Woman, you are set free and liberated from your oppression!”

¹³ Jesus then placed his hands upon her, thereby welcoming her into the Creator’s community. Immediately she was free from her oppression and began declaring the greatness of the Creator. ¹⁴ The ruler of that synagogue was furious that Jesus had broken the law by caring for someone on the sacred day of rest. So the ruler began rebuking the crowd,

“There are six days when it is legal to work—therefore, come for healing on those days and not on the Sabbath!”

¹⁵ The Lord Jesus responded to this by saying,

“You rulers are raging hypocrites and pretenders! On the Sabbath, every one of you sets free your cow or donkey and takes it out for a drink of water because you are afraid of any economic loss! ¹⁶ This woman is a daughter of the Creator’s people and she has been bound under oppression for eighteen years! How can you liberate your animals on the Sabbath and not see that it is necessary to also liberate her from this oppression?!”

¹⁷ As Jesus was declaring these things, all those who had already made up their minds about Jesus ignored his words. But the poor and lowly in the crowd were rejoicing at all the splendid things happening through Jesus. ¹⁸ Therefore, Jesus began saying,

“What is the Creator’s Rule similar to and with what will I compare it? ¹⁹ It is similar to a tiny and humble seed planted in a garden. This tiny seed starts as nothing as it falls into the ground, seemingly dead. But then it comes to life and grows into a great tree that overtakes and transforms the whole garden, creating a place where many creatures can find protection and provision.”

²⁰ Again Jesus said,

“With what will I compare the Creator’s Rule? ²¹ It is similar to a tiny and small amount of yeast hidden in a great amount of flour. This tiny amount of yeast starts as nothing, seemingly dead. But once it is in the flour, it comes to life and works its way throughout all the dough and radically transforms it into a new and life-giving

creation.”

²² Jesus continued teaching throughout the cities and villages, while still having his eye focused on his end destination, Jerusalem. ²³ Along the way, someone said to Jesus,

“Lord, are only a few people going to truly follow you and be rescued and liberated from the madness of civilization?”

Jesus said to those gathered,

²⁴ “Struggle and strive to empty and strip yourself of all that encumbers, so you can fit through the narrow door into the Creator’s Rule! I say to you, many will be interested in participating in the Creator’s Rule and will not be able to because they will refuse to let go of their power, wealth, and egos. ²⁵ The Creator will eventually close that narrow door and then you will stand outside and knock on the door, saying,

‘Lord, open for us!’

Answering, he will say to you,

‘I do not recognize you as one of my own.’

²⁶ Then you will begin to say,

‘But we ate and drank with you and we heard your teachings!’

²⁷ He will say to you,

‘I do not recognize who you are. Your lives and deeds declare that you belong to someone else. Take your lives of injustice away from me!’

²⁸ There will be great crying and anger from you when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the faithful living under the care of the Creator’s Rule, while you yourselves are left out. ²⁹ The faithful will come from all over the earth and they will feast and relax in the Creator’s Rule. ³⁰ Beware! Those who are least in regard to wealth, power, and ego, will be the greatest in the Creator’s Rule! While those who are first in civilization’s measures, will be last when the new creation dawns!”

Defiance | Luke 13:31-35

³¹ During that hour, some members of the political party of the Pharisees came to Jesus, saying,

“Quickly, get out of here! The ruler of the region of Galilee, Herod Antipas, is looking for you and he wants you dead!”

³² Jesus replied to them,

“Go tell that fox, who is destroying the Creator’s orchard and trying to take over the earth,

‘You listen here! I am liberating and freeing people from the power of civilization and healing them of their oppressive afflictions. I will do that today, the next day, and on the third day I will finish up here. ³³ That is my plan and it is necessary for me to go and accomplish it. You can try, but you will not be able to stop me because it is not allowable for a prophet to be

killed anywhere other than Jerusalem, in the center of power and wealth.”

³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the true prophets and throw stones at those sent from the Creator. How often I have tried to get your people away from trusting in the empires of civilization, like a chicken gathering her own chicks under her wings—but you were not willing! ³⁵ Look! I am coming to liberate your Temple from the clutches of human empires! But you will not see me till you declare the words of the one-hundred-eighteenth Psalm,

‘Honored is the one coming on behalf of the Creator, who is Lord of all!’”

Self-Emptying, Revisited | Luke 14:1-35

^{14.1} On another Sabbath, Jesus came to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the political party of the Pharisees. Those gathered for the dinner were keeping a very close eye on Jesus. ² A man, who was swollen with fluids, representing his oppression under civilization’s expectations, came in and stood in front of Jesus. ³ Jesus spoke to the scholars of Moses’s Law and the members of the political party of the Pharisees, saying,

“What do you think? Is it lawful to care for others on the sacred day of rest or not?”

⁴ They refused to respond and said nothing. So Jesus placed his hands on the man, welcomed him into his new community, and liberated him from his burden and oppression.

⁵ Jesus said to them,

“If a child or a cow falls into a pit on the Sabbath, which of you will not immediately do the work of pulling her out?!”

⁶ The authorities could give no response to Jesus’s words and arguments.

⁷ As the dinner continued, Jesus paused to observe how those who had been invited were trying to climb the social ladders by choosing the best seats for themselves. Jesus then taught those gathered, saying,

⁸ “When you are invited to a feast, do not take the best seat for yourself! For if someone more important than you has been invited, ⁹ then the host will say to you, ‘Give up your seat.’ Then you will be moved down to the lowest seat in the house. ¹⁰ Instead, go sit in the worst seat so the host will see you and say, ‘Friend! Come take this better seat!’ Then you will be lifted up in front of all the dinner guests. ¹¹ Listen! Everyone who is lifting himself up politically, economically, and socially, will be torn down and brought low! But whoever lowers himself politically, economically, and socially, will be lifted up!”

¹² Jesus also began saying to the host who had invited him,

“Whenever you host a party or feast, do not only invite your friends, family, or wealthy neighbors, for they can and will repay the favor to you. ¹³ But, when you host a feast, be certain to invite the poor, outcast, crippled, disabled, and blind. ¹⁴ You will be blessed because they cannot repay you. For the Creator himself will repay you when you and all those who obey his word are raised from the dead.”

¹⁵ Listening to this, one of those eating said to Jesus,

“Privileged is the one who will feast in the Creator’s Rule!”

¹⁶ Jesus said to him,

“The Creator’s new creation is like a great feast and celebration that he is inviting the nations to join. ¹⁷ As this great feast approaches, the Creator is sending out his servants to tell the invited guests,

‘Drop everything and come with us! The long-awaited feast of new creation is about to start!’

¹⁸ But one at a time, the guests begin turning down the Creator’s invitation to the feast. The first says,

‘I just acquired some new land and I am obligated to go see it and I must begin working it so my harvest is big enough this year. So please excuse me from the feast, I do not have the time, I am too busy.’

¹⁹ Another says,

‘I have just acquired five pairs of cattle and I need to go inspect and care for them in order to protect my investment. So please excuse me from the feast, I do not have the time, I am too busy.’

²⁰ Another says,

‘I just got married and so I need to attend to family matters. So please excuse me from the feast, I do not have the time, I am too busy.’

²¹ Returning, the servants report all this to the Creator. Angered by this, the Creator says to his servants,

‘Quickly, go out into the streets and alleys of the city and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and disabled to my feast of new creation! Certainly, they won’t be too busy for me!’

²² The servants return, saying,

‘Sir, they have been brought in and there is still space available in the feast!’

²³ The Creator then says to the servants,

‘Go out beyond the boundaries of the city and urge the total outcasts and rejects to come to the feast so my house will be filled! ²⁴ For I say to you, none of those who rejected my invitation will participate in the feast of new creation!’”

²⁵ As he continued his journey, Jesus turned to face the crowds that were with him and said,

²⁶ “Consider this carefully! To truly be my apprentice and student you must disown and stop being controlled by your parents, spouse, children, siblings, and even your own self. ²⁷ To truly be my apprentice and follow in my example you must also take up your own cross in a daily readiness to die and lose everything in faithfulness to my teachings.

²⁸ A wise man wanting to build a tower will always first sit down and calculate the cost to make sure he has enough resources to complete the project. ²⁹

But the foolish man will lay the foundation and get part way through the building process, only to be forced to abandon the whole project. Those who see this will mock him,³⁰ saying,

‘This man began to build and is not able to complete the project!’

Therefore, don’t follow me, if you aren’t willing to follow through to the end and complete the journey!³¹ Likewise, any ruler caught up in a war, will first sit down and deliberate whether he has enough soldiers to win the upcoming battles against his enemy.³² If he doesn’t have enough soldiers, then he will send an ambassador to try and make peace before it is too late. Therefore, know what you are getting into before you start following me.

³³ To truly be my apprentice you must give up all ownership—of both relationships and possessions. You must let go of being in charge—that is for the Creator alone.³⁴ Apprentices who obey and faithfully walk in these teachings of mine are life-giving parts of the earth. But what happens if this obedience stops or only goes part way?³⁵ A disobedient apprentice is no longer good for the earth—even manure has more use! Therefore, such an apprentice will be cut out of my community and thrown outside of the new creation. If you have the ears to hear the hard truth of what I am saying, then listen!”

Repentance, Revisited | Luke 15:1-32

^{15.1} Many hated tax-collectors and those who refused to conform to society’s norms were hanging around Jesus in order to listen to his teachings.² The members of the political party of the Pharisees and the Biblical scholars began complaining about this, saying,

“This Jesus is mingling and eating with those who refuse to conform to our laws!”

³ Jesus replied, saying,

⁴ “If any one of you had one hundred sheep and lost one of them, then you would drop everything and go look for this lost sheep in order to protect your economic investment.⁵ Then when you found it, you would carry this heavy animal all the way home on your shoulders while rejoicing at its rescue.⁶ At home, you would call together all your friends and neighbors, saying,

‘Join me in celebrating! For I found and rescued my sheep that I thought was lost and dead!’

⁷ I say to you, this is what the Creator is like and what kind of joy he has when just one of his straying creatures returns to his teachings and community!

⁸ Or what if a woman with ten days’ pay had lost one day’s pay? Because she knows the value of what is lost and wants to protect her economic assets, she will most certainly drop everything, light a lamp, sweep the house, and carefully look everywhere until she finds it.⁹ Then after she finds it, she will call together all her friends and neighbors, saying,

‘Join me in celebrating! For I found and rescued my one day’s pay which I thought was gone forever!’

¹⁰ I say to you, this is what the Creator is like and what kind of joy he has when just one of his straying creatures returns to his teachings and community! You hypocrites! You passionately protect your wealth at all costs, yet you get angry when I lovingly pursue the Creator's lost creatures!"

¹¹ Then Jesus said,

"Now imagine the Creator had two children ¹² and the younger one said to him, 'Father, I wish you were dead. Give me the portion of your property which is my inheritance by right. I want to be independent and in charge of my own life!'

Instead of punishing or even killing his disobedient and defiant child, the Father gave the appropriate portion of the inheritance to him. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger child gathered everything he now had and journeyed into a far off land. There he began using his wealth to live in great luxury and self-indulgence. ¹⁴ After spending everything he had, a great famine came upon the land and this younger child began to be in great need. ¹⁵ Stubbornly persisting in his attempt to make it on his own, he hired himself out to one of the citizens of that land. This employer sent him into the fields to do the humiliating and unclean work of herding pigs. ¹⁶ But no one was willing to share any food with him and so he hit rock bottom as his starvation made him crave the food of the pigs. ¹⁷ On the brink of death, he finally came to his senses and realized he could not truly take care of himself or be self-sufficient. So he said to himself,

'All of my Father's servants have an abundance and excess of food—everything they ever need! And here I am being destroyed by this famine because of my arrogance! ¹⁸ I will return to my Father and humble myself before him, saying, "Father, I disobeyed and rebelled against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your child. If you are willing, please take me back and I will be one of your servants.'"

²⁰ So standing up, he left his path of disobedience behind and headed back home to his Father. But while this younger child was still a good distance from the town, his Father, who had been watching for his return everyday, saw him. The Father had great compassion on him and, completely shaming himself, ran out to his child in order to get to him before any angry citizens of their town could stone him to death. The Father excitedly embraced his son and kissed him. ²¹ The younger child then said to him,

'Father, I disobeyed and rebelled against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your child.'

²² Interrupting him, the Father said to his servants,

'Quickly, bring out my best robe and put it on him! Put the family ring on his hand and bring sandals for his feet! ²³ Sacrifice the fattened calf! Spare no expense! We must eat and celebrate! ²⁴ For my child was dead and now he lives! He was completely lost and now he is found!'

And so they began to party and celebrate. ²⁵ Meanwhile, the Father's older child was out working in a field. When he got back and was within sight of the house, he heard the noises of singing and dancing. ²⁶ Calling out to one of the servants, he inquired about what was happening. ²⁷ The servant said to him,

‘Your brother has returned! Your Father has sacrificed the fattened calf because his child has returned to him safe and healthy!’

²⁸ The older child became furious and refused to return to the house, cutting himself out of the family. Learning of this, the Father then shamed and humiliated himself by leaving his guests at the party and by begging his older child to return with him.

²⁹ The older child answered his Father, saying,

‘Listen here! For years I have slaved for you! I have never disobeyed any command of yours! And yet you have never even given me a goat so I could throw a party with my friends! ³⁰ But when this child of yours, who is no longer my brother, wastes your wealth on prostitutes and then has the nerve to come back, you sacrifice the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ Then the Father said to his older child,

‘Child, if you could let go of competing with your brother and trying to hold things for yourself, then you would see that you are always with me and everything I have is already yours. This fattened calf we are eating belongs to you as well as your brother! ³² It is necessary to celebrate and rejoice this day, for your brother was dead and now he lives! He was completely lost and now he is found! Don't let your arrogance and pride cut you out of our family.’”

Faithfulness, Revisited | Luke 16:1-31

^{16.1} Jesus then began saying to his apprentices,

“Once there was a wealthy man, who had an economic-manager, and he got angry at him for not making him richer. ² The wealthy man said to his economic-manager,

‘What is this that I hear about you not making me more money?! Return to me the book that documents all business transactions and all those who owe me, for you will never be my manager again. You are fired!’

³ So the economic-manager said to himself,

‘What will I do without this job?! I am not strong enough to dig and I am too proud to beg. ⁴ Aha! I know what I will do, so that when I am unemployed and homeless I will have friends who welcome me into their homes!’

⁵ So before he returned the book of business transactions, he went and met with each of the clients who were in great debt to his boss. He said to the first,

‘How much are you in debt to my boss?’

⁶ The client replied,

‘A year's worth of olive oil from one-hundred-fifty trees.’

Then the economic-manager said to him,

‘I am forgiving some of your debt. Let us change your document and take off

fifty percent of what you owe.’

⁷ Then to another client he said,

‘How much are you in debt to my boss?’

He said,

‘A year’s worth of grain from one hundred acres.’

The economic-manager said to him,

‘I am forgiving some of your debt. Let us change your document and take off twenty percent of what you owe.’

⁸ When the boss eventually found out, he actually praised the economic-manager, even though he thought he was unjust. He was impressed that the man acted intelligently by seeing the end of his current road and completely changing his approach to life.

Look! You can often learn more about true faithfulness and transformation by looking at ordinary people rather than by looking at those who are piously religious.

⁹ I say to you, do not hold onto money, for it is unjust in its very nature. Instead use it to make friends for yourselves by giving it away or forgiving the debts of those in need. Then when money fails, as it inevitably will, you will have lasting treasure as you are welcomed into the Creator’s community. ¹⁰ The one who lives by trust when handling a worthless thing like money will also live by trust when handling the truly important things in life. On the other hand, the one who lives by control and fear when handling worthless money will also live by control and fear when handling the most important things in life. ¹¹ Therefore, if you are not living by trust when you handle unjust money, then who will trust you with things that really matter? ¹² If you are not living by trust when handling the things of civilization, then why would you ever expect the Creator to trust you with what is truly precious? ¹³ No servant is able to give complete loyalty and allegiance to two different lords. Inevitably a servant will be forced to disown one while obeying the other. Likewise, you are not able to serve both the Creator and money. If you handle money the way it wants to be handled, then you will disown the Creator in the process. But if you faithfully serve the Creator, then you will disown money by spreading it around generously.”

¹⁴ The members of the political party of the Pharisees, who loved money and possessions, heard these teachings on money and began to ridicule Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus responded to them,

“You people like to put on a show in front of others. You try to convince others that you live with justice, but the Creator knows the true darkness of your hearts and lives! The things which are esteemed and valued by civilization, like money, are detestable in the Creator’s eyes—for civilization turns the Creator’s priceless creatures into commodities to be bought and sold. ¹⁶ Up until John the Baptist, the Law of Moses and the prophets were the vehicle for the Creator’s word of truth. Since John the Baptist, however, the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule has taken over and civilization is responding with violence against it. ¹⁷ But do not think the Law of Moses is going away, for the intent of the Law of Moses is being fulfilled with the

arrival of my teachings and the Creator's Rule. ¹⁸ If you treat the Creator's creatures like objects and commodities then you are cutting yourself off from the Creator. If you treat women like objects by using them and tossing them aside, you are breaking the Creator's law. People are not commodities to be passed around and used for your physical pleasure or for social and economic gain!

¹⁹ Once there was a wealthy man, not even worthy to be named, who partied in lavish luxury every day while adorning himself in the fanciest and most expensive clothes. ²⁰ Meanwhile, there was a poor man, named Lazarus, meaning 'the Creator helps,' who was full of sores. The Creator had brought Lazarus into the rich man's life to teach him compassion and generosity. But the rich man had thrown Lazarus off his property, leaving him to sit outside the locked gate. ²¹ Lazarus was hoping to get some food scraps from the rich man's table. Day after day, the rich man ignored him and would not help him, but some stray dogs were compassionately licking Lazarus's sores. ²² Poor Lazarus eventually died and joined the Creator's faithful people while they safely rested and awaited the resurrection. The wealthy man also died, but he was buried and separated from the Creator's presence. ²³ The rich man, greatly humiliated in the realm of the dead, lifted up his eyes and saw that Lazarus was among the Creator's true children. ²⁴ He continued in his arrogant, entitled, and hard-hearted ways by barking out orders,

'Have compassion on me! Make Lazarus come help me and bring me relief! I am in great distress, for the Creator's purifying fire is destroying all the injustice in the world!'

²⁵ But Abraham, representing the faithful people of the Creator, said,

'Child, remember how you took everything good for yourself and ignored those who were poor and in need like Lazarus? The Creator's judgment has come and now Lazarus is being renewed while you are being ignored and allowed to suffer what you did to others in your greedy storing of wealth. ²⁶ This judgment is final, for there is a great and uncrossable chasm between us. You could have repented and changed your ways during your life, but now it is too late.'

²⁷ The rich man replied,

'Then send Lazarus to the house of my father! ²⁸ Have him warn my five brothers to abandon their selfish pursuits of wealth, so they won't also join me in this place of humiliation!'

²⁹ But Abraham replied,

'They have the word of the Creator speaking to them through Moses and the prophets. They must listen to them!'

³⁰ But the rich man said,

'No, Abraham! If someone came back from the dead, then they would listen and share their wealth with the poor!'

³¹ Abraham said to him,

‘If they will not listen to the Creator’s word through Moses and the prophets, then neither will they be persuaded by someone coming back from the dead.’”

Sincerity, Revisited | Luke 17:1-19

^{17.1} Jesus said to his apprentices,

“Seductive traps and stumbling blocks that cause people to stop following me are going to come in life. But the person who leads others to disobey my teachings will be condemned! ² It is better for a person to have a giant stone tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea, than to cause a single person to stop following my teachings.

³ Therefore, you must carefully watch over my community of apprentices! If your brother strays from my teachings, then discipline and correct him. If he turns back to my teachings, then welcome him back into the community. ⁴ The perpetual Sabbath and Jubilee has come, therefore if he strays from my teachings even seven times in one day and yet humbly turns back to my teachings seven times, saying,

‘I am changing my life and turning back to the teachings of the Lord,’ then you must welcome him back into the community.”

⁵ The twelve representatives said to the Lord Jesus,

“That kind of continual forgiveness and liberation from debts is crazy and would turn the world upside down! Make us greater in our trust!”

⁶ The Lord Jesus said,

“Trust is not about becoming greater, but about becoming humble and obedient servants of the Creator. If you trust the Creator, you will empty yourself and become poor and weak. Then in your smallness you will share in the Creator’s unlimited power. You will be able to say to the most deep-rooted obstacles and problems in life, ‘Be uprooted and thrown into the sea,’ and they will obey your word! ⁷ Look, no master says to his servant, who has just finished gardening or herding sheep,

‘Come rest and sit down.’

⁸ Instead, he will say to him,

‘Prepare dinner, so I may eat. Serve me while I eat and drink and then, when I am finished, you may eat and drink.’

⁹ The master does not allow his servant to stop obeying just because he previously did the things he had been commanded. ¹⁰ Therefore, it should be the same for you in your relationship of trust with the Creator. Whenever you do everything the Creator commands, just keep obeying and say,

‘We are not special or great servants, we have simply done what was commanded and required of us.’”

¹¹ While they continued on their journey, focused on their eventual confrontation in Jerusalem, Jesus was passing between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² When Jesus was about to enter a village, ten men stood at a distance and yelled at him. They were total

outcasts because they had a flesh-eating disease, symbolic of the corruption of civilization, that was slowly destroying their bodies. ¹³ They said,

“Jesus, teacher, have compassion on us!”

¹⁴ Seeing them and their condition, Jesus said to them,

“Go and enter the town in order to show yourselves to the temple-caretakers.”

As they listened to and obeyed Jesus’s word over the command of Moses, which forbade them from entering the town, they were liberated and rescued from the flesh-eating disease. ¹⁵ When one of the ten saw that he was healed, he returned to Jesus while shouting about the greatness of the Creator. ¹⁶ He fell to his face at Jesus’s feet and began giving thanks with great humility, recognizing this gift that he did not deserve or earn. This man was a Samaritan who rejected the Temple in Jerusalem as the Creator’s dwelling place. Because of this, he was open-minded to the reality of the Creator’s new temple and presence being in Jesus. ¹⁷ Responding to the situation, Jesus said,

“Were not ten men rescued from their outcast status and the destruction of civilization? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Are they too entitled as children of Abraham to humble themselves in thanksgiving to the Creator? Apparently only this man of foreign birth is humble enough to give thanks and find complete healing through his gratitude.”

¹⁹ Jesus then said to the Samaritan,

“Stand up! Your humble trust in the Creator has fully rescued you from your physical and spiritual slavery.”

Single-Hearted Focus, Revisited | Luke 17:20-37

²⁰ The members of the political party of the Pharisees began asking Jesus when the Rule of the Creator was going to arrive on the earth. Jesus answered them,

“The Creator’s Rule is not arriving through human organizations, governments, and institutions. ²¹ People will not say, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ to point out the Creator’s Rule. For the Creator’s Rule is present within and among those who listen to and obey my teachings!”

²² Jesus then said to his apprentices,

“The days will come when you will be longing for the Creator’s judgment against civilization and the liberation of the Human One and his community. There will be long periods of time when you will not see the Creator’s judgment and you will have to patiently wait for it. ²³ People will say to you,

‘Look over there and look here! We have established the Creator’s Rule!’

Do not trust them, follow them, or even bother with them. ²⁴ For like a bolt of lightning streaking across the sky—here one moment and gone the next, easy to miss if you aren’t looking for it, and unpredictable in its return—so also will be the times when the Creator brings his judgment and rescues the Human One and his community. ²⁵ But before these times of liberation, it is necessary for the Human One and his community to greatly suffer and be rejected by civilization.

²⁶ As it happened in the days of Noah, so also it will be when the Creator brings his judgment in order to rescue the Human One and his community. ²⁷ They were just blindly living their lives for years—eating, drinking, and marrying each other—right up to the day Noah entered into the great ship, shaped like a coffin. Then one day the flood suddenly came and destroyed everything. ²⁸ Likewise, it happened in the days of Lot. They were just blindly eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building for years. ²⁹ They lived their normal lives right up to the day Lot came out from the great city of Sodom. But that day it suddenly rained fire from heaven, destroying everything they had built.

³⁰ It will be similar to these on the day the Creator’s judgment arrives and rescues the Human One and his community from the oppression of civilization. ³¹ If, on that day, you are on the roof of your house, then do not go back down to grab anything. Likewise, if you are out in the fields, then do not turn back to grab anything that was left behind. ³² Remember Lot’s wife! She couldn’t bring herself to leave it all behind and it killed her! You must drop everything about your old life and leave it all behind. ³³ If you try to preserve your life as you know it, then you will destroy yourself. But if you leave it all behind and let it be destroyed, then you will find true life. ³⁴ I say to you, on that night two will be sleeping in the same bed, one of them will linger and get taken while the other will drop everything and be liberated. ³⁵ Two will be grinding grain together, one of them will linger and get taken while the other will drop everything and be liberated.”

³⁷ Responding, Jesus’s apprentices said to him,
“Where will they be taken, Lord?”

Then Jesus said to them,

“They will get caught up and consumed in the destruction of civilization. The dead bodies of those who linger will be found in the ruins of empire. Those who linger to stand with the empire and those who linger to fight against the empire will ultimately suffer the same fate and judgment.”

Humility, Revisited | Luke 18:1-17

^{18.1} Jesus then began teaching his apprentices about how it is necessary to always pray and not be discouraged by the chaos of civilization. ² Jesus said,

“Once there was a city judge who neither feared the Creator nor cared about people.

³ A widow in that city began coming to this terrible judge, saying,

‘Give me justice and save me from my enemy!’

⁴ Initially the judge was not willing to do anything because he did not care. But, after the widow kept coming, day after day, he said to himself,

‘Even if I do not fear the Creator or care about people ⁵ yet, because this widow will not stop bothering me, I will give her the justice she seeks. I will do anything to keep her from wearing me out and exhausting me with her endless appeals!’”

⁶ The Lord Jesus said,

“Listen to what this unjust judge is saying! Even this terrible judge will give justice to those who persist in their appeals. ⁷ In light of this, do you think the Creator himself will withhold justice for his chosen children, who cry out to him day and night? Do you think the Creator will be slow in responding to his own children? ⁸ I say to you, the Creator will give justice to his faithful people and he will do it quickly! But this question remains. When the Creator comes to liberate the Human One and his community, will he find any on the earth who are trustingly placing their whole lives into his hands?”

⁹ Jesus then said this teaching for those hypocrites who are convinced they live in the Creator’s justice while they despise others,

¹⁰ “Two men went up to the Jerusalem Temple to pray. One was an esteemed member of the political party of the Pharisees and the other was a hated tax-collector. ¹¹ The member of the political party of the Pharisees, standing for all to see, began praying these things,

‘Creator, I thank you that I am not like everybody else—violent, greedy, a violator of sexual honor, or even like this treasonous tax-collector! ¹² I go without food twice a week in order to devote myself to prayer! I give away ten percent of everything I earn!’

¹³ But the tax-collector knelt far off by himself because he did not think he was worthy to stand or to lift his eyes to heaven. He was hitting his chest, saying,

‘O Creator, I have been disobedient to your teachings. Please forgive me, return to me, and transform my life.’

¹⁴ I say to you, it was the humble tax-collector, who was placing his life into the Creator’s hands, that was living with true justice, while the arrogant member of the political party of the Pharisees was not. Everyone who lifts himself up in ego, power, and wealth will be torn down by the Creator. But whoever lowers himself in ego, power, and wealth will be lifted up by the Creator.”

¹⁵ People then began bringing their infants to Jesus so he would hold them. But when his apprentices saw this, they rebuked the people for wasting Jesus’s time. ¹⁶ But Jesus called out to his apprentices, saying,

“Do not stop them! Allow the children to come to me! For the Creator’s Rule belongs to those who are political, social, and economic nobodies like these children. ¹⁷ Truly I say to you, you must become like a powerless and possessionless child to participate in the Creator’s Rule.”

All-In Obedience, Revisited | Luke 18:18-30

¹⁸ A ruler approached Jesus and asked him,

“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit and participate in the life and new creation of the age to come?”

¹⁹ Jesus said to him,

“All good comes from the Creator himself, so why do you call me good and still not obey what I teach? ²⁰ Certainly you know the Creator’s commands from the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy,

‘Do not have sex outside of lifelong monogamy, do not kill or do violence of any kind, do not take what is not given to you or more than you need, do not speak lies or live a hypocritical life, honor and take care of your father and mother.’”

²¹ The ruler responded,

“I have carefully obeyed all of these commands since my youth.”

²² Listening to his confident words about obedience while seeing the truth of his life that was plain to all, Jesus said to the ruler,

“You have ignored the one central thing to all of these. Go off and make a complete break with your old life! Sell everything you own, give to those who are poor, and then in your radical emptiness and generosity you will have true treasure that is valuable in the Creator’s eyes. Then come back here and devote your life to learning from me, following my example, and living as part of my new community.”

²³ At hearing Jesus’s word and call to him, the rich ruler was horrified and grieved, for he was deeply attached to his property and wealth. ²⁴ Discerning the man’s emotions, Jesus said to him,

“How difficult is it for those having stored up money and possessions to be part of and submit to the Rule of the Creator? ²⁵ It is easier for a camel, which transports the goods and possessions of the wealthy, to go through the eye of a needle than for a person holding on to and storing up material possessions to be part of and submit to the Creator’s Rule.”

²⁶ Those listening to this said,

“Then who is able to be rescued and participate in the Creator’s Rule? For how can a person just walk away from and let go of all his wealth and possessions?”

²⁷ Jesus replied,

“The things that seem impossible from a human perspective are possible through the Creator’s power.”

²⁸ Peter said,

“Look! We have left everything behind and followed you into the unknown of this new life!”

²⁹ Jesus said to his apprentices,

“Truly I say to you, everyone who has left behind house, property, spouse, siblings, parents, or children, for the sake of obeying me and the Creator’s Rule ³⁰ will receive many times more in this life by joining my new community. Then in the coming age, he will also receive the life of new creation.

V. The Way Confronts Civilization | Luke 18:31—22:53

Jesus Invades Jerusalem | Luke 18:31—19:48

³¹ Taking the twelve representatives of the Creator’s new people aside, Jesus said to them, “Look! It is time for us to invade Jerusalem. Everything will be completed there that was written by the prophets about the Human One and his community. ³² The Human One and his community will be handed over to the nations to be mocked, humiliated, spit upon, ³³ beaten, killed, but then raised from the dead by the Creator on the third day.”

³⁴ But Jesus’s apprentices understood none of this—they were blinded by their cultural assumptions and expectations of what the Creator’s Rule should look like. ³⁵ When Jesus came near to Jericho, which was seventeen miles from Jerusalem, an oppressed blind man was sitting next to the road, begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd coming, he began asking about what was going on. ³⁷ They reported to him,

“Jesus of Nazareth is coming!”

³⁸ The blind man cried out, saying,

“Jesus, Chosen Ruler from the line of David, have compassion on me!”

³⁹ Those in the front of the crowd, began rebuking him,

“Shut up!”

But the blind man began shouting much more,

“Chosen Ruler from the line of David, have compassion on me!”

⁴⁰ Jesus stopped the procession and called the blind man to come to him. The blind man dropped everything and came to stand next to Jesus. Jesus asked him,

⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man said,

“Lord, let me see the world with the Creator’s eyes!”

⁴² Jesus said to him,

“Open your eyes! Your radical faithfulness and trust in the Creator has rescued you from the spiritual and physical blindness of civilization!”

⁴³ Immediately, his eyes were opened and he started seeing the world with the Creator’s eyes. Then, while declaring the Creator’s power, he left everything behind to follow Jesus on the Way. Seeing that this man received his sight and was liberated from his oppression, the people began giving praise to the Creator.

^{19.1} Jesus then entered Jericho, just like Joshua had after the time of Moses. But, where Joshua had failed, Jesus hoped to succeed in subduing the nations on behalf of his Father and bringing his people into the true promised land. ² One of the most powerful and wealthy men in the city was Zacchaeus, the hated and oppressive leader of the Roman tax-collectors. ³ When Zacchaeus heard about Jesus entering the city, he went to see him. However, Zacchaeus could not see over the crowd because he was short like a child. ⁴ Refusing to be deterred, Zacchaeus then shamed and humbled himself and became like a

child by running ahead of the crowd and then climbing a tree so he could see Jesus. ⁵ As Jesus came up to the tree, he looked up and saw this powerful and wealthy grown man sitting in the tree like a child. Seeing the beginnings of repentance and transformation, Jesus said to him,

“Zacchaeus! Get down here, for starting today your home is no longer your own—my apprentices and I are coming to stay with you.”

⁶ Zacchaeus was thrilled to hear this and quickly climbed down the tree. Then he welcomed Jesus into his home with great hospitality. ⁷ Seeing all this, many in the city began complaining, saying,

“Why would Jesus stay with this hated and wretched man who oppresses us and is full of Roman injustice?!”

⁸ Hearing these complaints and being suddenly ashamed at the bad name he was giving the Lord Jesus, Zacchaeus said to Jesus,

“Look! I now know that you alone are Lord—it is not the Roman emperor who I used to serve! Therefore, I am leaving my old life behind, no matter the cost. As of right now, I will give away half of my possessions to the poor! Then with the other half, I will give back four times more than I took from those I oppressed through my job! I am giving it all away and quitting my job in order to start a new life with you!”

⁹ Jesus replied to Zacchaeus,

“Today, you have been rescued and liberated from being an oppressor of civilization. You are now a true and faithful child of the Creator! ¹⁰ The Human One and his community exist for this very purpose—to seek out the oppressed and the oppressor and bring liberation to both before they are destroyed!”

¹¹ Seeing this oppressive and powerful Roman tax-collector completely change his life, the people began eagerly expecting the Creator’s Rule to appear with a great and easy victory. Sensing this, Jesus wanted to sober up their expectations about how all of this would play out as they entered into Jerusalem. ¹² Therefore, Jesus taught them, saying,

“Once there was a man born into privilege, wealth, and power who wanted to be the ruler of his homeland. So he traveled to the far-off capital of the empire in order to be put officially in charge. ¹³ Wanting to know who he could trust and who would work for his cause when he returned, he gave each of his ten servants a year’s pay and said to them,

‘Do business till I come back, I want to see who is cutthroat enough to keep me in charge and make me even more powerful and wealthy.’

¹⁴ The citizens of the land despised this man and wanted nothing to do with his oppressive ways. So they also sent an ambassador to the empire, saying,

‘We do not want this man to be our ruler!’

¹⁵ But the empire liked what it saw in this wealthy man and so it made him the ruler of his region. When he returned, he called together his ten servants in order to see how much money they had made while he was gone. ¹⁶ The first came forward,

saying,

‘Master, I used the money you gave me to cheat people out of their wealth and made ten times as much with it.’

¹⁷ The new ruler said to him,

‘Well done! You are a good servant! Because you obeyed me, I will give you power and authority over ten cities!’

¹⁸ The second servant came forward, saying,

‘Master, I used the money you gave me to cheat people out of their wealth and made five times as much with it.’

¹⁹ The new ruler also said to this one,

‘Excellent! Now you will have power and authority over five cities!’

²⁰ Then another servant came forward, saying,

‘Look! I have wrapped your filthy money in a snotty tissue! ²¹ I refuse to obey you because you are a brutal and violent man who does not care for the Creator’s ways. You break the Law of Moses by charging interest and by constantly taking everything for yourself without doing any real work!’

²² The new ruler was furious with this man’s resistance and said to him,

‘I will judge you according to your own words, evil servant! If you knew I was a brutal and violent man that grabs everything for myself, ²³ then you were stupid not to use my money to give out loans at great interest in order to swindle people out of their land!’

²⁴ The new ruler said to his soldiers standing by,

‘Take away this man’s money and give it to the one who made ten times more!’

²⁵ But they said to him,

‘But master, he already has more money than he will ever need!’

²⁶ The new ruler replied,

‘I say to you, the rich will get richer under my rule! And the poor will get poorer! ²⁷ Now take this man and all who resist my authority and rule. Kill them in front of me. For I will destroy all my enemies!’”

²⁸ After saying these words of warning, about how those who defy the authorities will be eventually hunted down and killed, Jesus began boldly leading the charge into Jerusalem.

²⁹ As Jesus approached two small towns just east of Jerusalem, he sent two of his apprentices, ³⁰ saying,

“I have carefully planned all of this ahead of time. Go into the village. There you will find a young donkey tied up, which has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³¹ If someone asks you,

‘Why are you taking the donkey?’

you will say,

‘The Lord needs it.’”

³² Those who were sent found it just as Jesus had said to them. ³³ As they were untying the

young donkey its owners said to them,

“Why are you taking the donkey?”

³⁴ The apprentices responded,

“Because the Lord needs it.”

³⁵ So they brought the donkey, covered it in their garments, and then mounted Jesus upon it. ³⁶ During the week of the Passover celebration in 33 AD, Jesus rode to Jerusalem in a mock military parade, fulfilling the prophet Zechariah’s words of the Creator’s return to bring true peace to the world. As he went, the people were spreading out their garments on the road. ³⁷ As Jesus was descending the Mount of Olives, the mountain on which the prophet Zechariah said the Creator would come to rescue his people, the entire multitude of Jesus’s apprentices began praising the Creator with a loud voice. ³⁸ They were saying in the words of the one-hundred-eighteenth Psalm,

“*Honored is the one who is coming to rescue us! He is the Chosen Ruler sent by the Creator himself!*’ He is bringing the Creator’s peace and harmony to the earth!”

³⁹ Some of the members of the political party of the Pharisees said to Jesus,

“Teacher, stop your apprentices from saying these words!”

⁴⁰ Answering, Jesus said,

“I say to you, if they were silent, then the stones would begin to shout the Creator’s truth!”

⁴¹ When Jesus came near to the great city of Jerusalem, he saw it and wept over it, ⁴² saying,

“If only you were aware of what brings true peace and harmony! But this is hidden from you as you chase after civilization’s lies. ⁴³ The days are coming when your enemies will encircle you, surround you, and constrict you on all sides. ⁴⁴ They will tear you and all those who trust in your walls to the ground. Not one stone will be left standing within you. All these things will happen because you did not listen to the Creator who has come into your midst to try and set you free!”

⁴⁵ Jesus then rode straight into the Jerusalem Temple—the political, economic, and religious center of their civilization—and completely shut it down. He threw everyone out who was selling things, ⁴⁶ saying,

“It is written in the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, *‘The Creator’s house will be a house of prayer for listening to his words,’* but you have made it into what the seventh chapter of Jeremiah foretold, *‘a hideout and dwelling place of terrorists!’*”

⁴⁷ Jesus then took over and occupied the Temple by daily filling it with his teachings. Furious with all this, the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Biblical scholars, and the rich and powerful began seeking to kill and destroy Jesus. ⁴⁸ But they were not sure how they could pull it off without causing a riot, for crowds of people were clinging to Jesus and eagerly listening to his words.

Jesus Occupies the Temple | Luke 20:1—21:38

^{20.1} One day, while Jesus was teaching and declaring the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule in

the Jerusalem Temple, the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Biblical scholars, and the patriarchs of the rich and powerful families, stood over him. ² They said to Jesus,

“What gives you the right to shut down our temple and sacrificial system?! By whose authority are you teaching and doing these things?”

³ Jesus answered them,

“I will first ask you a question that you must answer. ⁴ Did John the Baptist’s baptism of preparation come from the Creator himself or was it of human origin?”

⁵ They discussed it among themselves, saying,

“If we say, ‘From the Creator,’ then he will say, ‘Then why did you not trust and obey John the Baptist’s message?’ ⁶ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ then the people will throw stones at us, for they are convinced that John the Baptist was a true prophet from the Creator.”

⁷ Liking neither option, they claimed to be ignorant about its origin. ⁸ Therefore, Jesus replied to them,

“Then neither will I answer your question about the source of my authority.”

⁹ Following this, Jesus began to teach the people, saying,

“The Creator planted a beautiful orchard and instructed some humans to garden and care for it on his behalf. ¹⁰ When it was time, he sent a prophet to these gardeners instructing them to hand over the fruit of the orchard. But refusing, they persecuted and rejected the prophet. ¹¹ So the Creator sent another prophet, but they mistreated him as well, while keeping the Creator’s fruit for themselves. ¹² The Creator sent a third prophet, but they injured him and threw him out. ¹³ Finally, the Creator and Lord of the orchard said,

‘What will I do? I will send my child to them, in the hopes that they will respect and listen to him!’

¹⁴ But as soon as the gardeners saw him, they said to themselves,

‘This is the heir! Let us kill him so we can keep the orchard for ourselves!’

¹⁵ So they threw him out of the orchard and killed him. What then do you think the Creator and Lord of the orchard will do to these disobedient gardeners? ¹⁶ Will he come and destroy these gardeners and give the orchard to others?”

Listening, they said,

“Never!”

¹⁷ Staring them down, Jesus said,

“Why do you continue to ignore the Scriptures?! It is written in the one-hundred-eighteenth Psalm,

‘The cornerstone, which the people rejected, was chosen by the Creator as the foundation of his new temple.’

¹⁸ The Creator is building his new world around the one you are rejecting! Just as the prophet Daniel foretold, all peoples and nations that encounter the Creator’s cornerstone will be toppled and torn down. The Creator’s new people and temple will then be built up from the ashes!”

¹⁹ Because they knew that Jesus was speaking against them, the Biblical scholars and the leaders of the temple-caretakers wanted to immediately arrest Jesus, but they feared the crowds who were enthralled with him.

²⁰ So keeping close to him, the authorities sent spies to try and trick Jesus into committing treason with his words. They were hoping to report him and turn him over to the Roman governor. ²¹ These spies asked Jesus,

“Teacher, we know that you refuse to judge things according to human standards and instead always speak and teach the hard truth of the Creator’s Way. ²² So be honest with us, should we pay the tribute-tax to the Roman emperor, which is demanded as a sign of our allegiance to him, or should we not?”

²³ Jesus saw their attempt to trap him. If he taught them to pay the tax then the crowds who hated the Roman Empire would turn against him and the Israelite authorities would have their opportunity. But if he taught them not to pay the tax then the Roman authorities could arrest him for treason. So Jesus said to them,

²⁴ “I don’t carry any money, so please show me a coin. Whose graven image—which is forbidden by the Law of Moses—is on it? And what does the inscription say?”

They said,

“It has the emperor’s face on it and it states that he is the Child of the Creator.”

²⁵ Jesus said to them,

“Well then, give back to the emperor his idolatrous and worthless things. And give back to the Creator everything that is good on the earth.”

²⁶ They were stunned into silence and marveled at his answer because they were not able to publicly trap him.

²⁷ Some members of the political party of the Sadducees, then stepped up to try and humiliate Jesus publicly. They thought his belief in a bodily resurrection made no sense and so they said to Jesus,

²⁸ “Teacher, the Law of Moses states in the twenty-fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, *‘If the brother of a man dies and leaves a childless wife, then the man must save his brother’s legacy by taking her as his wife and having children with her on behalf of his brother.’*

²⁹ There were seven brothers in this one family. The first brother took a wife and when he died she was childless. ³⁰ The second married her and she was still childless when he died. ³¹ All of the seven brothers took her as wife and all of them died with her still childless. ³² Finally, the woman also died. ³³ Therefore, at the so-called ‘resurrection of the dead,’ to which of these brothers will the woman belong?! For all seven legally had this same woman as their wife. The very notion of resurrection makes no sense!”

³⁴ Jesus said to them,

“Those who are focused on this age spend their lives and energies trying to defy

death through civilization by building a legacy of wealth, power, and offspring for themselves.³⁵ But those focused on the Creator and his new age of the resurrection do not play these same games.³⁶ They know that death has no power over them—they will rise again to new life for they are children of the Creator.³⁷ Even Moses, in the third chapter of Exodus, which is in your beloved Law, revealed that the dead rise to new life as he says,

‘I am the Lord and Creator of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’

³⁸ He is not the Creator of the dead, but of the living, for all things are alive and are living through him! His faithful creatures are still alive in him and they will rise again to new bodily life!”

³⁹ Responding, some of the Biblical scholars said,

“Wow, teacher, that is beautifully said!”

⁴⁰ After this, the authorities no longer dared to ask Jesus any more questions.

⁴¹ Jesus then said to those gathered in the Temple,

“How can your teachers claim that the Creator’s Messiah and Chosen Ruler will come in the image, likeness, and pattern of David?⁴² For David himself says in the one-hundred-tenth Psalm,

‘The Creator said to my Lord, “You are my right-hand man⁴³ and I will put all your enemies under your feet.”’

⁴⁴ See, David knows that the Chosen Ruler is his Lord! Therefore, the Chosen Ruler cannot come in the image, likeness, and pattern of David! He is above David and much greater than David!”

⁴⁵ While all the people were listening, Jesus turned to his apprentices and said,

⁴⁶ Be aware of who is influencing you! Stay away from those Biblical scholars and teachers who walk around in expensive clothes and want formal titles, power, and prestige in the culture!⁴⁷ Their prayers are just for show and they are getting rich off of widows and little old ladies! The judgment of the Creator against these false teachers will be greater than all others!”

^{21.1} As he was saying this, Jesus saw many wealthy people putting large sums of money into the Temple treasury.² But then he saw a needy widow put in two coins of the smallest value.³ Jesus said,

“Truthfully I say to you, this poor widow has put in much more than all of these rich people!⁴ The rich people gave out of their excess and kept a lot back for themselves. But this widow put in literally everything she had. She is an example of true giving and true trust in the Creator. But condemned are these Temple leaders, for instead of supporting widows and orphans like her, they are getting rich by robbing her of everything she has!”

⁵ Some people began marveling at the splendor of the Jerusalem Temple and its beautiful stonework. Responding to them, Jesus said,

⁶ “This great structure of human technology and achievement that you are impressed

by is going to come crashing down! The days of the Creator's judgment are coming and not a stone will be left standing! All such human endeavors of civilization will be torn down and completely dismantled!"

⁷ They asked Jesus,

"Teacher, when will this happen and what will be the signs leading up to it all?"

⁸ Jesus said,

"Be attentive, so that you are not led astray from the narrow path of faithfulness! Many will falsely claim connection to me, saying that they speak for me and have brought the Creator's Rule upon the earth. Do not follow after these false teachers. ⁹ When you hear of wars and revolutions breaking out, do not be terrified. They are one of the first signs that the Creator is doing his necessary work of keeping civilization from getting too strong."

¹⁰ Then Jesus began saying to them,

"Nations and empires will turn against each other—destroying themselves as they fight to rule and be in charge of the earth. ¹¹ The structures of civilization will start to collapse as food shortages and diseases run rampant. The nations will live in the grip of fear as the signs of their demise will be all around them.

¹² But, before all of this finally unfolds, the nations will hunt you down, putting you on trial before their rulers and authorities. They will throw you into prison because you are obeying my subversive teachings. ¹³ It will then be your turn to give witness to the Creator's Rule as you become his martyrs in word and deed. ¹⁴ Do not plan what to say ahead of time, ¹⁵ for I will give you words of truth which will baffle and puzzle your opponents. ¹⁶ It will be your very own parents, brothers, relatives, and friends that will hand you over to the nations. Some of you will even be executed and put to death. ¹⁷ Everyone in civilization will disown you and want nothing to do with you because of your obedience to my teachings. ¹⁸ But have no fear—not a single hair from your head will be permanently destroyed. ¹⁹ By enduring in trust, even in the face of death, you will obtain resurrection life.

²⁰ So when you see Jerusalem or any great city surrounded by armies, then know that the time of its collapse and rewilding is near. ²¹ If you are in the city or its region, then drop everything and flee into the mountains—do not go back for anything! ²² For the Creator's destructive judgment will come upon every civilization, just as it was foretold in the Scriptures. ²³ It will be a tragedy to be pregnant or nursing in those days! For the consequences of rebelling against the Creator will finally be coming upon humanity. ²⁴ Those who stay in the city will be killed or taken captive. Jerusalem and all great cities will be trampled as the clash of empires continues on through this age.

²⁵ The powers and authorities will show signs of this collapse and the nations will be under the grip of anxiety as chaos begins to overtake them. ²⁶ The life of humanity will grow dim as it finally realizes the impending great collapse of civilization and the overthrow of its authority. ²⁷ It will be in that time that the

nations will see the Human One and his community rescued and lifted out of this chaos by the Creator, just as the prophet Daniel foretold.

²⁸ So when you see all this beginning to happen, be confident and stand tall for the Creator is coming to rescue you from slavery to civilization and its empires!”

²⁹ Jesus then taught them, saying,

“Pay attention to and learn from the trees! ³⁰ When you observe that they have already put on their leaves, then you know that summer is right around the corner. ³¹ Likewise, when you carefully observe that all I have said is happening, then you will know that the Creator’s Rule is near! ³² Truly all these things will happen in this very generation. ³³ However, my words about this pattern of the Creator’s Rule will never change, it will repeat itself in every generation.

³⁴ So stay attentive and be self-aware! Do not let your hearts get distracted by the pleasures and responsibilities of life or else you will be caught off-guard when that day comes. ³⁵ It will come like a trap upon all creatures across the entire earth. ³⁶ So stay attentive and awake in every season, begging to the Creator for your daily bread and for strength to endure! Ask for the strength to flee and come out of civilization so that you can stand faithfully as part of the Human One’s community.”

³⁷ Jesus continued teaching everyday in the Jerusalem Temple, but at night he would escape the city and camp on the Mount of Olives—which was the center of the prophet Zechariah’s hope for the Creator’s return to his people. ³⁸ Every morning, all the people of Jerusalem were getting up early to come listen to Jesus teach in the Temple.

Jesus Leads His Exodus | Luke 22:1-53

^{22.1} The Festival of Unyeasted Bread, which is called Passover, was near. This was the time the people remembered their readiness to leave everything behind to follow the Creator out of slavery to civilization. ² The leaders of the temple-caretakers and the Biblical scholars were trying to figure out how to kill Jesus without upsetting the crowds. ³ Frustrated by Jesus’s refusal to lead a violent revolution, Judah Daggeman, who was one of Jesus’s inner circle, began to be filled with the satanic desire-to-be-in-control. ⁴ So Judah Daggeman approached the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the police captains with the goal of betraying Jesus to them in the hope that this would force Jesus to begin the revolution. ⁵ These authorities rejoiced and eagerly gave Judah a very large sum of money for doing this. ⁶ With his heart seduced by this money and wealth, Judah turned his back on Jesus and declared his loyalty to the Temple authorities. He then began searching for an opportunity to give Jesus over to them when the crowds weren’t present.

⁷ When sundown came on Thursday, the Passover day began and the time to sacrifice the Passover lamb approached. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John Zebedee, saying,

“Go, prepare the Passover meal for us so we may eat it together.”

⁹ They said to him,

“Where do you want us to prepare it?”

¹⁰ Jesus said to them,

“I have planned everything ahead of time for this day. So when you enter the city, a person carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him into the city and into the house he enters. ¹¹ Then you must tell the owner,

‘The teacher would like you to show us the guest room where he can eat the Passover with his apprentices.’

¹² This man will show you a large, upstairs room. There you will prepare the meal for us.”

¹³ So going into the city, they found it exactly as Jesus had said and they began preparing the Passover meal. ¹⁴ When the hour for the meal of remembrance came, Jesus sat down with his representatives that were the foundation of his new community. ¹⁵ Jesus said to them,

“I planned everything so that I could eat this Passover remembrance with you before the authorities get their hands on me. ¹⁶ For I say to you, I will not eat it again till it is fulfilled by the arrival of the Creator’s Rule.”

¹⁷ Taking the first of four Passover cups of wine, which symbolized the Creator’s people as set apart from civilization, Jesus gave thanks and said,

“Take this cup and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I say to you, I will not drink wine again until the Creator’s Rule has come upon the earth.”

¹⁹ Taking the Passover bread, which symbolized the struggle and difficult journey to freedom, Jesus gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying,

“This is my body which is being given over to suffering in order to set you free. Feed on me as the bread of life. Then go do the same for others in my memory—laying down your lives to set them free.”

²⁰ Likewise, after dinner, Jesus took the last Passover cup of wine, which symbolized the Creator’s rescue of his people from slavery to false lords, and said,

“My blood, which I am pouring out to set you free, is bonding you in a new relationship with the Creator centered around my life and teachings. ²¹ Pay attention to how I love and give myself for you! I am even eating with one who will betray me. ²² The Human One and his community will be betrayed, but those who betray them will be condemned.”

²³ Startled, the apprentices began trying to figure who it was that was going to betray Jesus to the authorities. ²⁴ This led to a competition among them, about which of them was the greatest and best apprentice. ²⁵ Frustrated, Jesus said to them,

“The rulers of the nations are all about climbing social ladders and competing for power and authority. And they even think they are doing everybody a favor when they are ruling and in charge! ²⁶ But you in my community must never be like the rulers of the nations! Rather, the greatest among you must empty his ego and whoever is your leader must live like a servant. ²⁷ For who do you think is truly the greatest in the Creator’s eyes? Is it the one who is selfishly lying down or the one who is serving others? It is not the one lying down! Look at how I am living in your

midst as a humble servant!

²⁸ Listen, you are the ones who have faithfully remained with me during all the struggles of my ministry. ²⁹ I am bonding myself to you, just as my Father did with me. ³⁰ You will eat and drink at my table in the Creator's Rule—you will even sit as the leaders and judges of the Creator's faithful people.

³¹ Simon Peter, you must pay special attention! The satanic desire-to-be-in-control wants to test you and see how faithful you truly are. ³² I begged to my Father on your behalf, so that your trust will not completely fail. When you get back up from your failure and turn back to following me, you must help your brothers stand firm on the path of faithfulness once again."

³³ Peter said to him,

"Lord, I am ready to go with you wherever this leads, even if that means prison and death!"

³⁴ Jesus replied to him,

"I say to you, Peter, before the rooster cries out this very day you will reject all association with me three times."

³⁵ Then Jesus said to his apprentices,

"When I sent you out to completely rely on the Father, with no money, pack, or sandals, did you ever lack anything that you truly needed?"

They said,

"We lacked nothing. Everything we needed was provided for us."

³⁶ Jesus said to them,

"Never forget that. But now, if you have any money or a pack, bring it with you. And whoever does not have a sword, go sell your coat and buy one. ³⁷ For I say to you, it is time for your faith in the Creator to be tested and it is also necessary for the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah to be completed in me,

'He was found among those who do not obey the Creator or rely on him.'

For that which was written about me is coming to its completion."

³⁸ They said,

"Lord, look! We already have two swords."

Shaking his head, Jesus said to them,

"That is plenty, it only takes one sword to stop relying on the Creator."

³⁹ Leaving the city, Jesus and his apprentices went, according to his nightly custom, to the Mount of Olives. ⁴⁰ When they got there, Jesus said to his apprentices,

"Humble yourselves in prayer to the Father, so that you have the strength to stand firm in your time of testing."

⁴¹ Jesus went about a stone's throw away from them and submissively fell to his knees in prayer, ⁴² saying,

"Father, I beg you to take this path of suffering, rejection, and death away from me if it is your desire! Nevertheless, I want you to fulfill your desires, not mine."

⁴³ The Creator put his hand upon Jesus to strengthen him. ⁴⁴ But, still being in great agony

and filled with terror about the path ahead, Jesus began praying more fervently. His sweat became like thick drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ Finishing up his time of prayer, Jesus went back to his apprentices and found them sleeping—their sorrow over the whole situation had overwhelmed them. ⁴⁶ Jesus said to them,

“Why are you sleeping?! Get up and pray, so you have the strength to stand firm in the hour that is coming!”

⁴⁷ While Jesus was still speaking to them, Judah Daggeman, one of the twelve representatives, showed up with a crowd. Judah went up to Jesus and embraced him. ⁴⁸ Jesus said to him,

“Judah, why are you betraying me while pretending to be my friend?”

⁴⁹ Suddenly realizing what was happening, those with Jesus yelled out,

“Lord, we will fight for you!”

⁵⁰ One of them swung his sword, intending to deliver a fatal blow. But instead he cut off the right ear of one of those who was there to arrest Jesus. ⁵¹ Responding, Jesus said to his apprentices,

“After all of our time together, how could you dare commit such violence?!”

Jesus embraced his enemy’s head and healed him. ⁵² Then turning to those who came out to arrest him—the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Temple police officers, and the patriarchs of the powerful and wealthy families—Jesus said,

“Have you really come out here with swords and weapons as though you were arresting a violent terrorist? ⁵³ I was with you everyday in the Temple and you never had the courage to arrest me! But go ahead and arrest me, this is your brief hour of thinking that you have won.”

VI. The Way of the Creator's Rule | Luke 22:54—24:53

Jesus on Trial | Luke 22:54—23:25

⁵⁴ They arrested Jesus and dragged him into the house of the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers. From a distance, Peter followed the crowd to the house. ⁵⁵ But after they kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat together, Peter wandered in and began to sit among them so he could see the trial. ⁵⁶ One of the servants began staring at Peter as he sat in the light. Finally she said,

“This one was with Jesus!”

⁵⁷ Peter denied it, saying,

“Woman, I do not even know him!”

⁵⁸ After a little while, another servant saw Peter and declared,

“You are one of his followers!”

But Peter responded,

“Man, I am definitely not!”

⁵⁹ After Peter stood apart from them for about an hour, another servant began firmly insisting to the group,

“Seriously, this man was also with Jesus! Look and listen! He is also from Galilee!”

⁶⁰ Aggravated and scared, Peter said,

“Man, I have no idea what you are talking about!”

Immediately, while Peter was still speaking, a rooster cried out. ⁶¹ Turning his head, the Lord Jesus looked Peter in the eye and Peter was reminded of the word Jesus had said to him,

“Before the rooster cries out this very day, you will reject all association with me three times.”

⁶² Leaving the courtyard, Peter began intensely weeping. ⁶³ Then the men holding Jesus captive began mocking him and whipping him. ⁶⁴ Blindfolding him they began saying,

“Tell us, prophet! Who is the one hitting you?!”

⁶⁵ They ridiculed and mocked Jesus with many other words.

⁶⁶ After sunrise on the Passover, the patriarchs of the wealthy and powerful families, the leaders of the temple-caretakers, and the Biblical scholars gathered together. They brought Jesus before their Sanhedrin Council, which was the most powerful governing body in Israel. ⁶⁷ They said,

“Tell us if you are in fact the Messiah and Chosen Ruler!”

Jesus said to them,

“If I answer you, you won't trust me. ⁶⁸ And if I ask you, you won't answer me. ⁶⁹ But know this, from now on the Human One and his community will be rescued by the Creator and will have his full power and support!”

⁷⁰ They all said,

“So you are the Child of the Creator!”

But Jesus replied,

“That’s what you are saying.”

⁷¹ Then they said to each other,

“Why do we still need witnesses?! We have heard it from his own mouth!”

^{23.1} Immediately agreeing, the entire assembly dragged Jesus to Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. ² They began to accuse Jesus, saying,

“We found this one disobeying the laws of our nation and culture, treasonously teaching the people not to pay taxes to the Roman emperor, and then saying that he himself and not the Roman emperor is the rightful Ruler and Lord!”

³ Seeing that Jesus was a weak and poor man, the Roman governor started laughing as he asked Jesus,

“So you are the Chosen Ruler that those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple have been waiting for? The one whose rule over the whole earth will supposedly never end?”

Answering him, Jesus said,

“You yourself just said it.”

⁴ Still amused, the Roman governor said to the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the crowds,

“I am finding nothing in this delusional man as a cause for punishment. He is a harmless little bug, just ignore him.”

⁵ But the Israelite authorities were persisting, saying,

“But he is stirring up the people to revolution! He is teaching against us and the Roman Empire throughout all your province—he started in Galilee and has brought his movement all the way down here!”

⁶ When the Roman governor heard this, he asked if Jesus was from Galilee. ⁷ Hearing that Jesus was a resident of Galilee, the governor sent him to stand trial before the ruler of that region, Herod Antipas, who was also in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast.

⁸ When Herod Antipas heard he was going to meet Jesus, he was extremely happy. Having heard many rumors about Jesus, he had been wanting to meet Jesus for a long time and was hoping to see him do a miracle. ⁹ Herod Antipas began his trial by extensively questioning Jesus, but Jesus refused to answer any question and was completely silent. ¹⁰ The leaders of the temple-caretakers and the Biblical scholars were standing by, fervently accusing Jesus of many things. ¹¹ Disgusted by Jesus and his silence, Herod Antipas mocked Jesus and his teachings about poverty by dressing him up in fancy and expensive clothing. Then he sent him back to the Roman governor. ¹² Through their common disdain for Jesus and rejection of his teachings, Herod Antipas and Pilate, who had previously been enemies, became friends with each other on that day.

¹³ The Roman governor then called together the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Israelite rulers, and the people. ¹⁴ He said to them,

“You brought me this man, accusing him of treasonously turning the people away

from the Roman Empire. But look, I have judged him in your sight about these things and I have found nothing in this man as a cause for capital punishment.¹⁵ And neither did the ruler of Galilee, for he sent him back to us. Look! He is harmless, he even refuses to defend his cause or pick up a weapon! Nothing worthy of death and crucifixion has been done by him.¹⁶ Therefore, I will have him whipped for his teachings and way of life, but then I will release him.”

¹⁸ But altogether the crowd cried out,

“Take this pathetic Jesus away! Release for us Barabbas!”

¹⁹ Barabbas, meaning “Child of the Father,” was also claiming to be the Chosen Ruler and had been thrown in prison because he had led a violent revolution in the city that had resulted in many deaths.²⁰ But Pilate again told the crowd that he wanted to release Jesus instead.²¹ But the crowd wanted nothing to do with Jesus if he wasn’t going to raise an army, so they began shouting,

“Crucify! Crucify him!”

²² The third time the Roman governor said to them,

“What harm has he done?! I found nothing in my trial that makes him worthy of death! Therefore, I will have him beaten, then I will release him!”

²³ But the crowd refused to back down and pressed forward, demanding all the more that Jesus be crucified.²⁴ Terrified by the fervor and energy of the crowd on this Passover day, when they celebrated their freedom from slavery to human empires, the Roman governor gave in to their demands.²⁵ So the Roman governor released the violent revolutionary from prison and ordered Jesus to be killed by crucifixion.

Jesus Is Killed | Luke 23:26-56

²⁶ The soldiers took Jesus away to be crucified. They grabbed a random man coming in from working in the fields, Simon from Cyrene in northern Africa, and they made him carry Jesus’s cross.²⁷ A great crowd of people began following this procession, including many women who were weeping over Jesus’s fate.²⁸ Turning to the women, Jesus said,

“Daughters of civilization, do not weep for me! Instead weep for yourselves and for your children!²⁹ Because look! The days are arriving in which people will say,

‘Privileged are the infertile women who have never given birth and nursed a child! For they do not have to watch their children suffer and die!’

³⁰ People will beg for the mountains to fall on them and for the hills to cover them from the arriving chaos and turmoil.³¹ Look at how terrible things are this very day! Can you imagine the utter horror of what will happen when civilization comes crashing down upon humanity?!”

³² Along with Jesus, there were two other enemies-of-the-state who were being led out of the city to their executions.³³ When they all came to the hill called Skull, they crucified Jesus and the two terrorists—one on Jesus’s right and one on his left.³⁴ Jesus began saying repeatedly for all to hear,

“Father, forgive these people and set them free from their mindless patterns and

values! For they do not realize what they are doing.”

Jesus had been stripped completely naked and so the soldiers threw dice to divide among themselves his clothes, which were his last earthly possessions. ³⁵ The crowds stood by watching while the rulers and authorities began publicly ridiculing Jesus, saying,

“This man claimed to rescue others, but now look at him! He should rescue himself if he is really the Creator’s Messiah and Chosen Ruler! Or better yet, let the Creator rescue him!”

³⁶ The soldiers were trying to mock Jesus as they gave him cheap wine to drink, but in the process they were unknowingly marking the arrival of the Creator’s Rule. ³⁷ The soldiers were saying,

“If you are the Chosen Ruler of the whole earth, then command your armies to rescue you!”

³⁸ There was an inscription over Jesus’s head which declared his crime against Rome,

“This is the Chosen Ruler of the whole earth.”

³⁹ One of the terrorists, who was hanging beside him, began ridiculing Jesus as well, saying,

“Aren’t you supposed to be the Messiah and Chosen Ruler?! Rescue yourself and us as well!”

⁴⁰ Rebuking this man, the other terrorist said,

“Do you not fear the Creator?! We are facing the same exact judgment! ⁴¹ We certainly deserve this, but have you been listening to and watching this man?! His words and actions of profound trust in the Creator say it all!”

⁴² Then he said to Jesus,

“Jesus, remember me when you finally rule and are victorious through the Creator’s hand.”

⁴³ Jesus said to him,

“Truly I say to you, today the Creator’s Rule has arrived and you are with me! We will live once again in the Creator’s renewed garden!”

⁴⁴ At noon of the Passover day, April 3, 33 AD, darkness came upon the whole land till three in the afternoon, marking the overthrow of civilization. ⁴⁵ The curtain of the inner-sanctuary of the Temple was split down the middle, marking the destruction of all human attempts to keep the Creator contained. ⁴⁶ Jesus then cried out with a loud voice, saying,

“Father, into your hands I entrust my life and Spirit!”

After saying this, Jesus breathed out and died. ⁴⁷ Watching all that had been happening, the Roman military officer overseeing the executions began praising the Creator, saying,

“Wow, this was certainly a man of true justice.”

⁴⁸ The crowds which had come together for this spectacle and had watched all that had happened, went away heart-broken and grieving. ⁴⁹ All those that knew Jesus, along with the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood by far away, watching all these

things.

⁵⁰ On the Sanhedrin Council, which had condemned Jesus to death, there was a good and just man, named Joseph. ⁵¹ Joseph, who was from Arimathea, had not supported the Council's actions against Jesus and was still hoping the Creator's Rule would arrive upon the earth. ⁵² Going to Roman Governor Pilate, Joseph asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Getting permission, he took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in a burial cloth, and put him into an unoccupied grave that was cut into a stone hillside. ⁵⁴ In addition to being the Passover, it was also the day of preparation for the Sabbath, meaning the sacred day of rest would begin at sundown. ⁵⁵ Following behind Joseph, the women from Galilee saw the grave and how Jesus's body was hastily buried. ⁵⁶ Returning to the city, they prepared burial spices and perfumed oils for Jesus's body. But, in order to obey the law, they did nothing on the next day, which was the Sabbath.

Jesus Is Raised From the Dead | Luke 24:1-53

^{24.1} On the first day of the new week and the new creation, at deep daybreak on April 5, 33 AD, the women brought the prepared burial spices to the grave of Jesus. ² There they were surprised to find the giant stone rolled away from the entrance to the grave. ³ Entering in, they were stunned not to find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While the women were getting nowhere trying to figure out what had happened, two men in radiant clothes stood over them. ⁵ Gripped with fear, the women lowered their faces toward the ground. The men said to them,

“Why are you seeking life in the midst of death and the living among the dead?! You have been blinded by civilization's expectations! ⁶ Jesus is not here! He was raised from the dead! Remember his words and what he taught you! ⁷ He told you it is necessary for the Human One and his community to be handed over to the authorities, to be crucified, and to be raised from the dead on the third day. This is the beginning of the Creator's restoration of his people and all creation!”

⁸ Then they remembered Jesus's words. ⁹ Returning from the grave, the women reported all this to the eleven remaining representatives and to all the rest of Jesus's apprentices. ¹⁰ Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary of Jacob, and those with them, were the women who began reporting all this to the representatives. ¹¹ But the men did not trust the report, because it seemed like nonsense and women were not considered viable witnesses in their society. ¹² Wanting to check things out for himself, Peter immediately ran to the grave. All he could find were the linen cloths for wrapping the body of Jesus. So he headed back by himself, completely stunned at finding the grave empty.

¹³ On that same day, two of Jesus's apprentices were walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a village of revolutionary renown. ¹⁴ As they walked, they were discussing everything that had transpired around Jesus. ¹⁵ While they were seeking the truth together, Jesus himself came up to them and began to journey with them. ¹⁶ But their

eyes were blinded by their expectations and assumptions, so they did not recognize that it was Jesus. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them,

“What are you discussing while you journey together?”

They stopped walking and hung their heads with grief. ¹⁸ Answering, one of them named Cleopas said to Jesus,

“Are you the only person living near Jerusalem who does not know what has happened these past few days?!”

¹⁹ Jesus said to them,

“What has happened?”

They said to him,

“It all centered around Jesus from Nazareth. Hearing his words and seeing his actions, the people came to believe that he was a powerful prophet from the Creator.

²⁰ But then our very own temple-caretakers and leaders sentenced him to death and had him crucified. ²¹ We had been hoping that he was the chosen one who was going to release us from slavery. But now it is already the third day since his death.

²² Yet this very morning some of Jesus’s female apprentices went to his grave and they turned our lives upside down. ²³ When they got there his body was gone! They came to us claiming they had seen a vision of messengers from the Creator who were saying that Jesus was alive and raised from the dead! ²⁴ So some of those with us ran to the grave and found it just as the women had said. But they could not find Jesus anywhere.”

²⁵ Jesus said to them,

“Your poor minds have been led astray by civilization and so your hearts are resistant to trusting what the prophets have told you! ²⁶ It was necessary for the Messiah and Chosen Ruler to reveal the truth of the Creator’s character and the truth of humanity’s rebellion by being rejected and killed by the highest and most esteemed human authorities!”

²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and going through all the prophets, Jesus correctly interpreted all the Scriptures that had been misinterpreted for generation after generation. He was teaching them how all the Scriptures pointed to the truths he had revealed in his life and death. ²⁸ As they came near to their destination, Jesus insisted that he needed to travel on further. ²⁹ But the men begged him to stop and stay with them, saying,

“Stranger, we beg you to remain with us! Our home is yours—we will provide food, lodging, and everything that you need. Look, it is getting close to sunset and the day is almost gone.”

So Jesus agreed and entered their home. ³⁰ When they sat down for dinner, Jesus took the bread and honored it for its sacrifice. Then he broke it and began sharing it with them. ³¹ It was in this moment, as they shared their lives, food, and home with a stranger, that their eyes were opened. They finally recognized that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was present with them. Then as soon as they saw him, he disappeared and was gone. ³² They said to each other,

“We should have known it was Jesus who was speaking to us as we journeyed on the road! As the Scriptures were opened up to us our hearts were burning and trying to tell us that he was with us!”

³³ Excited, they immediately got up and, even though it was night, returned the seven miles to Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, they found the eleven representatives and the other apprentices gathered with them. ³⁴ The representatives told them,

“The Lord Jesus was truly raised from the dead! Simon Peter saw him with his own eyes!”

³⁵ Then the two apprentices from Emmaus began explaining their journey and how Jesus was revealed to them as they shared their bread with a stranger. ³⁶ While they were speaking about Jesus and his resurrection, Jesus suddenly stood in the middle of them. Jesus said to them,

“May you be filled with the Creator’s peace and harmony!”

³⁷ Terrified and frightened, the apprentices assumed they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ But Jesus said to them,

“Why are you scared and doubting the reality of my resurrection? ³⁹ Look at the scars on my hands and feet! I am still myself! Touch me and experience the truth of the new creation! A ghost does not have flesh and bone, as I still have!”

⁴⁰ While saying this, Jesus showed them the scars on his hands and feet. ⁴¹ Then, while they were still in disbelief because of their simultaneous joy and shock, Jesus said to them,

“Do you have anything I can eat?”

⁴² So they gave him a piece of cooked fish. ⁴³ Jesus took it and ate it in front of them, further showing them that his body was real and physically raised from the dead. ⁴⁴ Jesus then said to them,

“I will remind you again what I taught you. It is necessary for everything to be fulfilled that was written about me in the sacred Scriptures—the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵ Then Jesus opened their minds to truly understand the Scriptures for the first time. ⁴⁶ Jesus said to them,

“Therefore, the Scriptures proclaim that the Creator’s Messiah and Chosen Ruler will suffer for loving his enemies, but he will be raised from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ All nations, starting in Jerusalem, must be called to change their ways of thinking and turn away from civilization, so they can find complete freedom through the Creator’s Chosen Ruler.

⁴⁸ You are living testimonies of this new reality! You have witnessed the Creator’s Rule arrive on the earth! ⁴⁹ Look! I am sending the presence of my Father upon you so you can accomplish this great task. So wait in the city till you have been filled with the Creator’s power.”

⁵⁰ Jesus then led them to Bethany and, lifting up his hands, he gave them his blessing. ⁵¹ After he blessed them, he disappeared from their sight. ⁵² So the apprentices returned to

Jerusalem filled with great joy. ⁵³ While they were waiting on the Father to fulfill his promise, they worshiped, studied, and prayed in the Temple.

VII. The Spirit of Jesus Leads the Way | Acts 1:1—8:3

Waiting on the Father | Acts 1:1-26

^{1.1} Friends of the Creator and apprentices of Jesus,

The first part of this book contains everything that Jesus did and taught. ² Filled with the power of the Creator's Spirit, Jesus taught his chosen representatives through the words and example of his life. His life and teachings are the foundation of the Creator's new creation and all that follows.

³ After suffering and dying, Jesus was raised from the dead and he himself once again stood alive before his apprentices. Proving himself to be alive, Jesus met with them for forty days while continuing to teach them about the Creator's Rule. ⁴ During his final meeting with them Jesus said,

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait there for the presence of the Father to come upon you, just as I promised. ⁵ For John the Baptist baptized and prepared you with water, but very soon you will be baptized into the full reality of the Creator's Spirit—you will join and continue my story.”

⁶ Hearing this, the apprentices began asking Jesus,

“Lord, so is this the moment in which you will restore Israel and bring our nation under the Creator's Rule?”

⁷ Jesus said to them,

“It is not for you to know the times or seasons in which the Father will bring his Rule and new creation upon the earth. You must be ready in all times and places, for it will happen on many occasions and in every generation. ⁸ Just remember that you will receive power when the Creator's Spirit comes upon you and fills you. Your lives of faithful obedience will be living testimonies of the Creator's work. This will start in Jerusalem, then it will move out to the rest of Israel's regions, and finally to all corners of the earth.”

⁹ After saying these words and while they were watching, Jesus was lifted up into the clouds. This revealed that the Creator was lifting up the Human One to be the ruler of all creation—just as the prophet Daniel had foretold. ¹⁰ After Jesus was taken from his apprentices' sight into the Creator's invisible dimension, they continued gazing endlessly into heaven. Suddenly two men in radiant clothes were standing in front of them. ¹¹ They said,

“Why are you just standing there, staring into the sky?! Jesus has not abandoned you! He will soon be returning to dwell among you, just as he told you! He will be more powerful and more present than ever!”

¹² So Jesus's apprentices returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is within the allowable walking distance for a Sabbath.

¹³ There in Jerusalem they went into the large, upstairs room in the house where they were

staying. The eleven remaining representatives,¹⁴ the women, and the biological mother and brothers of Jesus, began gathering everyday for communal prayer.¹⁵ During one of those days of prayer, Peter stood up in the middle of them. This new community and family that Jesus had created now consisted of about one hundred twenty brothers. Peter said to them,

¹⁶ “My brothers, it is necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled. The Creator’s Spirit spoke through David, warning about our fallen brother Judah Daggeman, who gave Jesus over to be arrested.¹⁷ Judah Daggeman was one of us and was chosen to be one of the twelve representatives.¹⁸ But he abandoned the Creator’s Way by turning on Jesus in order to make money. Instead of letting go of wealth and property, he bought land for himself. This was his undoing, as these decisions corrupted his insides and ended up killing him.¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem has now learned of his horrible death and his land is now called, ‘Field of Blood.’²⁰ As it is written in the sixty-ninth Psalm,

‘Let his land become wild and let no one dwell in it,’
and in the one-hundred-ninth Psalm,

‘Let another take his position.’

²¹ Therefore, it is necessary to bring the number of representatives back to twelve, so we can display to everyone that the community of Jesus is the true Israel. We need to choose a man who has been with us the whole time we followed the Lord Jesus.²² This man needs to have been a witness from the time of John the Baptist’s baptism of preparation all the way through the time of Jesus’s resurrection.”

²³ The community selected two men who met the requirements—Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias.²⁴ Then the community prayed, saying,

“Lord, you know the hearts of all, so please choose the man you want²⁵ to fill this role and to be a representative in the place of Judah Daggeman.”

²⁶ Having prayed and given the decision into the Father’s hands, they threw dice. The dice selected Matthias and so he was appointed as the twelfth representative.

Jesus's Spirit Arrives | Acts 2:1-47

^{2.1} When the fiftieth day after Passover arrived, which was the Feast of Weeks that celebrated the giving of the Law of Moses and the firstfruits of the land, the apprentices of Jesus were all gathered together in one location.² Suddenly, a great and powerful wind from heaven, like the one that parted the Red Sea and saved Israel from the Egyptian Empire, filled the whole house—it was the return of Jesus through the Creator’s Spirit and Breath.³ All of Jesus’s apprentices were filled with this Spirit and their tongues were empowered to speak the refining fire of the Creator’s Word, just as Jesus had.⁴ Then the apprentices began to speak in other languages. This signified that the new community of Jesus was not constrained by the cultural, national, and social divides of civilization.⁵ Meanwhile, thousands of those devoted to the Temple and the royal line of David had come together from all over the world to gather in Jerusalem for the festival.⁶ At the sound

of the great wind, a crowd of people came together around the apprentices. They were startled when they heard the apprentices of Jesus speaking the languages of their homelands. ⁷ They were beside themselves with astonishment, saying,

“What is going on?! Aren’t all these people from Galilee? ⁸ How are we each hearing the languages of our homelands? ⁹⁻¹¹ We are from all parts of the Roman Empire and beyond—the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe—and yet somehow we are all hearing them preach about the Creator in our own native languages!”

¹² Everyone was thoroughly confused, saying to each other,

“What is causing this to happen?!”

¹³ Scoffing, others began saying,

“They are just drunk!”

¹⁴ The twelve representatives then stood together in front of these crowds who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple and the royal line of David. They stood there as a powerful image of the new twelve sons of Israel. Peter then lifted up his voice and said to them,

“All you who are gathered here in Jerusalem, pay attention! Carefully listen to my words and absorb what I am saying! ¹⁵ None of us here are drunk—it is only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ What you are seeing is the fulfillment of the second chapter of the prophet Joel,

¹⁷ ‘As the age of new creation arrives upon the earth, I, the Creator, will pour out my Spirit upon all creatures! Your sons and daughters will speak my truth, young people will see visions, and the elderly will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Especially during that time I will pour out my Spirit upon my faithful servants, both male and female, and they will speak my truth. ¹⁹ I will create wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below. ²⁰ Leading up to my great return there will be destruction along with bloodshed, fire, and pillars of smoke that will darken the sun and turn the moon red. The powers and authorities of civilization will be conquered and revealed for what they are. ²¹ But all creatures that faithfully cling to me will be rescued!’

²² Israelites, listen carefully to these words! You yourselves knew Jesus of Nazareth. The Creator brought him to your attention as powers, wonders, and signs happened through his hands in your very midst. ²³ The Creator allowed it to happen, but you executed and crucified this Jesus through the hands of the wicked Roman Empire. ²⁴ But death was not powerful enough to hold on to Jesus and the Creator raised him up! He brought him through the pain of transformation and into the life of new creation. ²⁵ Jesus made these words of David in the sixteenth Psalm come true,

‘I was determined to stay focused on the Creator in all things. Because he is by my side and has my back, nothing can take me down. ²⁶ His constant presence with me causes my heart to celebrate and my tongue to rejoice! My body lives with hope ²⁷ because you, my Creator, will not abandon my life in death and you will not allow the one who lives your faithful Way to

experience decay. ²⁸ *You have made known to me the Way of life and you will always watch over me.'*

²⁹ My fellow Israelites, it is appropriate to confidently say that David died and was buried—his grave is still among us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, David was not speaking of himself. He spoke as a prophet and trusted that the Creator would bring the Chosen Ruler from his family line. ³¹ He even predicted the resurrection of the Messiah and Chosen Ruler—that he would not be abandoned in death and that his body would not decay. ³² The Creator raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead! We are witnesses of this fact! ³³ Jesus has been taken to the Creator's side so that he might return among us through the promised presence of the Creator's Spirit. And now Jesus has poured out his Spirit on his community—this is what you are seeing in our lives and listening to in our words! ³⁴ David was not taken to the Creator's side in this way, for he himself says in the one-hundred-tenth Psalm,

'The Creator said to my Lord, "You are my right-hand man" ³⁵ and I will put all your enemies under your feet.'

³⁶ Therefore, let all Israel know with unquestioning certainty that the Creator has made this Jesus, that you crucified, Lord of all and his Messiah and Chosen Ruler over the whole earth!"

³⁷ Listening to these words, the people were convicted in their hearts. So they said to Peter and the representatives,

"Brothers, what must we do?"

³⁸ Peter said to them,

"Every one of you must change your hearts, minds, and decisions. Be baptized into Jesus's story—be forgiven and liberated from your old lives of disobedience and start following the Way of Jesus, who is the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth! Then you will be filled with the gift of the Creator's Spirit! ³⁹ The Creator's promise of new creation is for you, your children, and for all those the Creator calls to himself!"

⁴⁰ With many other words Peter continued to exhort them with this basic message,

"Be rescued from this corrupt culture and society in which you live!"

⁴¹ Those whose hearts were open to these words were baptized into the life and story of Jesus and about three thousand people joined the community of Jesus on that day.

⁴² The members of Jesus's community were constantly immersed in the teachings of Jesus, the sharing of a common life, the sharing of food and resources, and prayerful listening to the Father. ⁴³ Just like Jesus, the representatives were filled with the Creator's power and they did many wonders and signs. This caused fear to fill all those they encountered. ⁴⁴ All the apprentices of Jesus were devoted to the same purpose of seeking the Creator's Rule as they gave up all ownership and held all resources in common. ⁴⁵ They made a break with their old lives as they sold their property and possessions. Then the common resources were divided up among the whole community to take care of every need. ⁴⁶ The apprentices of Jesus lived joyful and simple everyday lives. They prayed in the Jerusalem

Temple while sharing food and life in their common houses. ⁴⁷ Everyday their praise for the Creator and their abundant generosity caused people to leave their old lives behind and be rescued into the Way of Jesus.

Liberation & Opposition | Acts 3:1—4:22

^{3.1} One day, Peter and John Zebedee went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, which was the hour that Jesus died—three in the afternoon. ² Everyday, a man, who had been disabled from birth, was carried to the eastern door of the Temple. He was not allowed inside because of his disability, so he would sit at the door and beg for money from those going into the Temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John Zebedee about to enter into the Temple, he began begging them for money. ⁴ Staring at him, Peter said, “Look at us!”

⁵ The man paused his begging, thinking he was going to receive some money. ⁶ Peter said, “I have no money, but I have something way better to give you. Through the power of the word and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth, be set free from your slavery! Get up and walk into a new life with the community of Jesus!”

⁷ Taking hold of his right hand, Peter lifted the man up and immediately he jumped up and was able to stand firm for the very first time. ⁸ Following Peter and John Zebedee, the man began walking, jumping, and praising the Creator as he entered the Temple for the very first time. ⁹ All the people saw the man walking and praising the Creator. ¹⁰ They recognized him as the beggar who would sit at the door to the Temple asking for money. They were astonished at the sight and were beside themselves trying to figure out what had happened. ¹¹ While the man was clinging to Peter and John Zebedee as his new family and community, all the people hurriedly gathered around them at the Porch of Solomon on the east side of the Temple. ¹² Seeing the gathering crowd, Peter spoke to the people, saying, “Israelites! Why are you marveling at this?! Why are you staring at us as though we were the ones who made him walk by our own power?!”

¹³ The Creator of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord of our ancestors, declared his servant Jesus to be triumphant over all. This is the same Jesus you rejected and denied before the Roman governor, who didn’t even want to kill him! ¹⁴ You rejected the Creator’s chosen one, who lived with true justice, and instead asked for a violent revolutionary to be released from prison. ¹⁵ You put to death the Creator’s example of true life and humanity—but the Creator raised him from the dead! Of this we are eyewitnesses. ¹⁶ By trusting in the word and teachings of Jesus, this man standing before you was healed and liberated from his afflictions. Trust in the Creator through the word of Jesus made this man whole in your very presence!

¹⁷ My fellow Israelites! I believe that you acted in ignorance as you followed your rulers and authorities. ¹⁸ But through this, what the Creator had foretold through the prophets—that his Messiah and Chosen Ruler would suffer—was fulfilled. ¹⁹ Therefore, change your hearts, minds, and decisions! Turn away from

your disobedience and listen to Jesus's teachings! ²⁰ If you do, then the Creator's favor will be upon you once again and his Messiah and Chosen Ruler, Jesus, will come upon you through his Spirit. ²¹ Jesus has fully entered the Creator's dimension and he is already beginning the restoration of all creation that was foretold by the prophets. ²² Moses said in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy,

'Your Lord, the Creator, will bring you a prophet greater than me from among your people. You must obediently listen to every single word he speaks to you. ²³ Everyone who does not listen to this prophet will be completely removed from the Creator's people.'

²⁴ All the faithful prophets, starting with Samuel, spoke of and announced these days. ²⁵ You are the children of these prophets and of the relationship that the Creator made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham in the twelfth chapter of Genesis,

'Through your children all the families of the earth will be blessed.'

²⁶ After raising his servant from the dead, the Creator first sent Jesus to you in the hope that you would be blessed by turning away from your disobedient ways!"

^{4.1} While Peter and John Zebedee were still speaking, the temple-caretakers, the police captain of the Temple, and the members of the political party of the Sadducees approached them. ² They were irritated because Peter and John Zebedee were teaching the people the Way of Jesus and were announcing that the resurrection of the dead had begun through Jesus's faithfulness to the Creator. ³ So they arrested them and held them in prison for the night. ⁴ Despite this, many who were listening began to trust the word of Jesus, causing Jesus's community to grow to about five thousand people.

⁵ The next morning, the Israelite rulers, the patriarchs of the most powerful families, and the Biblical scholars gathered together in Jerusalem. ⁶ They were also joined by the family of Annas, who was the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers. ⁷ Placing Peter and John Zebedee in the middle of the gathering, they began inquiring of them,

"By what power and authority did you heal this man?"

⁸ Then Peter, being filled with and led by the Creator's Spirit, said to them,

"Rulers and authorities of the people! ⁹ Is it really true that we were arrested last night and are now being judged for liberating a man from his bondage?! ¹⁰ Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the word and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth—the Messiah and Chosen Ruler that you crucified and that the Creator raised from the dead—this man is standing whole and healthy in your sight.

¹¹ This Jesus is the stone spoken of in the Scriptures that is rejected by his own people and yet will destroy all human empires and become the foundation of the new creation. ¹² Rescue from tyranny and death comes through no other than this Jesus and his life, word, and teachings."

¹³ The authorities marveled that Peter and John Zebedee were able to be so confident while being low-class, illiterate, and uneducated men—which was also another sign that they were Jesus's companions. ¹⁴ But seeing the man, who had been saved from his disability,

standing there with them, the authorities were in a bind.¹⁵ They ordered Peter and John Zebedee to leave the presence of the Sanhedrin Council so they could confer with each other.¹⁶ They said,

“What can we possibly do to these men?! All the people of Jerusalem have seen the liberation of this disabled man and so it is impossible for us to deny its reality.¹⁷ But we must keep this liberation from spreading further, so let us threaten these men with punishment and death if they ever publicly teach the Way of Jesus again.”

¹⁸ So they summoned Peter and John Zebedee and ordered them to never speak of or teach the Way of Jesus again.¹⁹ But Peter and John Zebedee replied to them,

“Do you really think it is right and good to listen to anyone other than the Creator himself?!²⁰ As for us, we will listen to the Creator! Therefore, we cannot stop speaking and teaching about the things we have seen and heard.”

²¹ But the authorities did not back down. They reiterated their threat of punishment and death, hoping it would control these men. Then they were forced to release Peter and John Zebedee because the crowds were thrilled and amazed about what had happened.²² The man who had been liberated and had his life completely changed through the Way of Jesus was not a young man—he was over forty years old.

Jesus's Spirit Comes Again | Acts 4:23—5:42

²³ After being released from prison, Peter and John Zebedee returned to the rest of Jesus’s apprentices. They reported to them all the warnings and threats that were given by the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the patriarchs of the powerful families.²⁴ After listening to the report, the whole community of Jesus prayed as one, saying,

“Lord, you have created and are continuing to create the heavens, earth, sea, and all creatures within them.²⁵ You are our Father, you provide and protect. Your Spirit spoke through the mouth of your servant David in the second Psalm,

‘Why do the nations ignore the Creator’s Way and why do the peoples of civilization focus on empty things?’²⁶ All the rulers and leaders of the earth are gathered together in rebellion against the Creator and his Messiah and Chosen Ruler.’

²⁷ The rulers of Rome and Israel, accompanied by the popular opinion of the people, gathered together in this city against the truth.²⁸ They gathered against your faithful servant, Jesus, whom you chose to obediently live and teach your Way.²⁹ Now Lord, as the rulers of the earth threaten the community of Jesus, give us boldness, courage, and confidence to always speak your word and live your Way.³⁰ We beg you to extend your hand and, through the Way of Jesus, bring the healings, signs, and wonders of your new creation.”

³¹ While they were humbly begging to their Father, the room they were in was shaken. They were all once again filled by the Creator’s Spirit and they began speaking the Creator’s word with courage, confidence, and boldness.³² The Creator’s Spirit then continued to unite the faithful community of Jesus in heart and life. Everyone who joined

them relinquished all ownership so that everything was held in common by the community of Jesus.³³ This radical life of trust and generosity was a powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and his defeat of fear and death.³⁴ Every follower of Jesus was liberated from the slaveries of debt and ownership.³⁵ Land, houses, and possessions were sold and the money was placed at the feet of the representatives. It was then distributed to each according to need. Through their complete sharing, everyone in the community of Jesus received adequate daily bread.

³⁶ A temple-caretaker from Cyprus named Joseph, who the representatives called Barnabas (meaning “child of exhortation”), joined the community of Jesus during this time.³⁷ Making a complete break with his old life, Barnabas sold his family’s land and placed the money at the feet of the representatives.^{5.1} There was also a couple named Ananias and Sapphira, who sold their property as they joined the community of Jesus.² Anxious about making a complete break with their old lives and worried about entrusting their futures to the Creator, Ananias and Sapphira held back some of the money for themselves.³ When the money was placed at Peter’s feet, he said,

“Ananias, why have you allowed the satanic desire-to-be-in-control to lead you astray into hypocrisy? You are misrepresenting Jesus and his Way by holding back money and possessions for yourself.⁴ After you made the decision to join this community, your property was no longer yours. Why would you dare do such a thing that mocks Jesus and his Father?”

⁵ While he was listening to the convicting truth of these words, Ananias dropped dead as a powerful sign of the spiritual death of hypocrisy and disobedience. Fear came upon all those who saw this.⁶ Some young men then took Ananias and buried him.⁷ After about three hours, Sapphira entered without knowing what had happened to her husband.⁸ Peter asked her,

“Is this how much money you received for the sale of the land?”

She responded,

“Yes, exactly that much.”

⁹ Peter said to her,

“Did you really think that you could deceive the Creator and get away with cheapening his call to let go of everything?! Look! The men who buried your husband are standing at the door and they will bury you as well.”

¹⁰ Immediately, she dropped dead. The young men entered, found her dead, and buried her next to her husband.¹¹ Great fear came upon the whole community of Jesus and upon all those who heard about this. Through this sign they saw the urgency and seriousness of uncompromised obedience to the word of Jesus.

¹² Ignoring the threats from the authorities, the twelve representatives daily gathered on the Porch of Solomon to teach the people and bring the healing power of Jesus to those who trusted the Creator.¹³ However, others in the community were nervous about joining them in the Temple.¹⁴ The crowds continued to be amazed by the representatives. Everyday

more men and women left their old lives behind to trustingly join the community of Jesus. ¹⁵ Those who were sick from the conditions of civilization were placed on cots throughout this area in front of the Temple. They hoped that Peter would stop and have compassion on them. ¹⁶ This great multitude came together from all the cities surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the outcast and broken to the doors of the Temple. The representatives of Jesus welcomed and took care of all of them without exception. ¹⁷ The Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers and all the members of the political party of the Sadducees became angry and furious. They couldn't stand the growing popularity of the representatives, their refusal to be controlled by threats, and the gathering of impure and unclean people just outside the Temple gates. ¹⁸ So these authorities arrested all twelve representatives and threw them in prison. ¹⁹ But during the night, a messenger from the Lord Jesus opened the prison doors and said to them,

²⁰ "Go! Stand in the Temple and teach all the people Jesus's Way of life!"

²¹ The representatives immediately obeyed and entered the Jerusalem Temple before daybreak in order to begin teaching the Way of Jesus.

When morning came, the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers called together the Sanhedrin Council and ordered the prisoners to be brought to them for trial. ²² The servants of the temple-caretakers did not find the twelve representatives in prison. ²³ So they returned, saying,

"We found the prison fully locked and the guards attentively standing watch. But when we opened the prison doors there was no one inside!"

²⁴ When the police captain of the Temple and the leaders of the temple-caretakers heard this, they were completely confused and in disbelief. ²⁵ Then a messenger showed up, reporting to them,

"The men you arrested and threw in prison are standing in the Temple, teaching the people about Jesus!"

²⁶ Fearing backlash and violence from the people, the police captain and his men retrieved the representatives without force. ²⁷ They brought the representatives to the Sanhedrin Council. There the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers spoke to them, ²⁸ saying,

"We ordered you not to teach the Way of Jesus and yet you are still filling Jerusalem with his teachings while accusing us of killing him!"

²⁹ Answering, Peter and the representatives said,

"It is necessary to obey the Creator, instead of human authorities! ³⁰ You gave Jesus over to be crucified, but then the Creator, who our ancestors worshiped, raised Jesus from the dead. ³¹ Because of this, Jesus is now the example of what it means to be truly human. He is rescuing the creation by changing our hearts and minds and setting us free from all debts and tyrannies. ³² We ourselves are living witnesses of this and, on top of it all, the Creator is filling all those who obey him with his very Spirit!"

³³ These words infuriated and enraged the authorities, causing them to want all twelve representatives immediately killed. ³⁴ But before they could kill them, a very influential scholar and member of the political party of the Pharisees named Gamaliel stood up. He ordered the representatives to be taken outside. ³⁵ Then Gamaliel said to the Sanhedrin,

“Men! Israelites! Do not do something to these men that you might regret! Carefully think this through!

³⁶ Remember Theudas? He claimed to be the Chosen Ruler and about four hundred men committed themselves to him. But once he was arrested and killed, then all his followers disbanded and his movement was gone. ³⁷ And do you remember Judah of Galilee during the second registration of 6 AD? He started a revolution against the taxes and forced military service of the Roman Empire. But once he was killed, then all of his followers scattered and his revolution was no more.

³⁸ Learn from this pattern and just ignore these followers of Jesus! If their movement is just another human driven movement, then it will disappear on its own.

³⁹ But in the off chance that it is from the Creator himself, then all your efforts will be impotent anyway because you will be fighting against the Creator.”

The Sanhedrin Council was persuaded by Gamaliel’s argument and decided not to kill the twelve representatives. ⁴⁰ Instead they had them flogged, leaving permanent scars on their backs that marked them as criminals. Then they set them free while commanding them to stop teaching the Way of Jesus. ⁴¹ The twelve representatives, having been beaten half to death, left the Sanhedrin Council while openly rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer for the cause of Jesus. ⁴² Everyday they continued teaching the Way of Jesus in the Temple and throughout Jerusalem.

Following the Way | Acts 6:1—8:3

^{6.1} In the fall of 34 AD, as the community of Jesus continued to grow, the Greek-speaking members complained to the Hebrew-speaking members that their widows were being overlooked during the daily distribution of resources. ² The twelve representatives called together the whole community of apprentices and said,

“Now that the community has grown so large, we are not capable of being responsible for both the distribution of resources and the teaching of the Way of Jesus. ³ Therefore, brothers, look for seven men among you who faithfully and obediently walk in the Way of Jesus and the Creator’s Spirit. We will flexibly shift things around and appoint them to take care of the distribution of the communal resources. ⁴ Then we will be able to commit our energies to prayer and the preaching and teaching of the word of Jesus.”

⁵ This idea and solution was pleasing to the whole community. So they chose Stephen (who was filled with the Spirit of Jesus and lived with profound trust in the Creator), Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (who was a convert from Syrian Antioch) to fill the role of distributing the communal resources—a significant

portion of these men were Greek-speakers themselves. ⁶ The twelve representatives gathered around these seven men and placed them into this role through prayer. ⁷ After this change in the community's organization, the Way of Jesus continued to spread and many more in Jerusalem left everything behind to join the community of Jesus. This included a good number of temple-caretakers, which began to threaten the structure and order of life in Jerusalem to its very core.

⁸ Stephen, demonstrating the generosity of Jesus in his life, began to be a vehicle through which the Creator's power was arriving upon the earth in miraculous ways among the people. ⁹ Many unfaithful Israelites, from all over the Roman Empire, began to oppose Stephen and tried to shut down his work. ¹⁰ But they were not strong enough to withstand the power of the Creator's Spirit which was guiding Stephen in word and deed. ¹¹ So they gathered together some witnesses who said,

“We have heard Stephen attack the Law of Moses and therefore the Creator himself!”

¹² They called together the people, the patriarchs of the most powerful families, and the Biblical scholars. Then they arrested Stephen and brought him to trial before the Sanhedrin Council. ¹³ Various witnesses came forward, saying,

“This man refuses to stop attacking the Temple and the Law of Moses! ¹⁴ We have heard him claiming that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy our sacred Temple and change the way of life which Moses handed down to us!”

¹⁵ Staring at Stephen, all those on the Sanhedrin Council saw his face and suddenly realized they might be staring at a messenger from the Creator. ^{7:1} The Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers said to Stephen,

“Are these accusations true?!”

² Stephen answered,

“Fellow Israelites, I beg you to listen and pay close attention!

The Creator of all things was seen by our ancestor Abraham, while he was dwelling deep in the heart of human civilization. ³ The Creator said to him in the twelfth chapter of Genesis,

‘Drop everything and leave this land and your family to follow me into the wilderness and wherever I will lead you! It is in the wilderness and not in civilization that you will find me!’

⁴ So, after Abraham left the Babylonian Empire, the Creator eventually brought him into this land, into the one in which you are now living. ⁵ The Creator did not give this land to Abraham to own, nor did he make him a powerful ruler over it. Instead the Creator simply promised that he and his offspring, even though he was childless, would live in this wild land. ⁶ The Creator then warned that Abraham's offspring would go astray from the path of faithfulness, become outcasts and exiles on someone else's land, and be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. ⁷ The Creator said in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis,

‘I will bring my judgment upon the empire that enslaves them and then I will

bring them out of their slavery to civilization so they can pledge their complete allegiance to me in this land.'

⁸ The sign of the bond and relationship between the Creator and Abraham was circumcision—a symbol of new creation and the submission of one's very core to the Creator's will. Therefore, when Abraham had his son Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day. Then Isaac had Jacob and Jacob fathered the twelve patriarchs of our nation.

⁹ One of these twelve sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brothers. But the Creator did not abandon Joseph. ¹⁰ He rescued him from all his oppressions. Joseph eventually found favor in the eyes of the ruler of the Egyptian Empire, who exalted Joseph as a ruler over Egypt. ¹¹ A great famine then came upon all of Egypt and the land of Israel—leaving our ancestors without food. ¹² Hearing that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob's trust in the Creator buckled and he sent his sons to get provision from the Egyptian Empire. ¹³ During one of their visits, Joseph recognized his brothers which caused the ruler of the Egyptian Empire to suddenly understand Joseph's origin. ¹⁴ Joseph then asked his father Jacob and all seventy-five of the living family members to come to Egypt so he could provide for them. ¹⁵ Jacob gave in to this temptation and left the land that the Creator had given them. They moved down to Egypt, where he and his sons all died. ¹⁶ Because they knew moving to Egypt was unfaithful and disobedient, they had their bones relocated to the land of Abraham after they died.

¹⁷ As the centuries went by, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt and the time of the Creator's promised deliverance approached. ¹⁸ A ruler arose in Egypt that did not know Joseph. ¹⁹ This ruler increased the oppression and exploitation of our people to the point of genocide—he began to destroy the people by killing their male infants. ²⁰ During that time, Moses was born and the Creator had mercy on him. Moses was nurtured by his family for three months. ²¹ But after he was thrown out to die, he was taken in by the daughter of the Egyptian ruler and she raised him as her own child. ²² Moses was taught all the wisdom of Egypt and excelled in their way of life. ²³ But as Moses was approaching the age of forty, he became aware of his people and wanted to look out for them. ²⁴ One day Moses saw an Israelite being mistreated and so he stepped in and followed the wisdom of Egypt by killing the Egyptian slave-driver. ²⁵ He assumed his Israelite brothers would see that the Creator was using him in this way to begin setting them free from slavery—but they did not see it this way. ²⁶ On the next day, Moses saw a couple of Israelites fighting with each other and he got between them, saying in the second chapter of Exodus,

'Men! You are brothers! Why are you fighting with each other?!'

²⁷ But one of them pushed Moses away, saying,

'Who made you a leader and judge over us?!' ²⁸ Do you want to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?!'

²⁹ Hearing this, Moses fled from Egypt and settled in the wilderness, where he had

two sons.³⁰ After forty years of being cleansed of Egypt's way of life, the Creator came to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. There Moses saw a bush on fire that was not being destroyed.³¹ While Moses was marveling at the sight, the voice of the Creator spoke to him, as it is recorded in the third chapter of Exodus,

³² 'I am the Creator and Lord of your ancestors, the Lord of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'

Trembling with great fear, Moses could not bring himself to look at the burning bush.³³ The Creator said to him,

'Take the sandals off your feet, for the ground of the wilderness is sacred and holy!³⁴ I have seen the oppression and destruction of my people in Egypt and I have listened to their struggles. So I have come down to rescue them from slavery. Now follow me, for I am sending you into Egypt.'

³⁵ So Moses, who had already been rejected by his people, was sent by the Creator to lead the people out of slavery to civilization and into freedom.³⁶ Moses brought them out of slavery in Egypt, through the waters of the Red Sea, and into the wilderness for forty years. The Creator's miraculous power was with Moses at every step.³⁷ This Moses said to the children of Israel in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy,

'The Creator will bring a prophet like me from among your brothers that you must listen to above all else.'

³⁸ Moses was also the one who encountered the Creator in the wilderness on the top of Mount Sinai. There in the wilderness he received the Creator's living words that he shared with you.³⁹ But our ancestors refused to listen and pushed away from the Creator in order to pursue the ways of Egyptian civilization.⁴⁰ They said to Aaron in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus,

'Make for us some gods like the Egyptians, so they can lead us, protect us, and provide for us! For Moses brought us out of Egypt, but now we don't know what has happened to him!'

⁴¹ So they made a golden calf in those days and sacrificed animals to this human-made god. They began celebrating the works and technologies of their hands.⁴² The Creator turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of their own hands, just as the fifth chapter of the prophet Amos says,

'Israel, you were not worshiping me as you butchered and sacrificed countless animals for forty years in the wilderness!⁴³ The tent you made, thinking it was for me, was for the worship of false gods of human design! As a result of your continued disobedience you will be relocated and exiled in Babylon!'

⁴⁴ This tent was with our ancestors in the wilderness—for Moses constructed it thinking he was listening to the Creator.⁴⁵ Our ancestors fiercely clung to this tent and Joshua, son of Nun, brought it into this land. The Creator overlooked this and expelled the nations from this land till the time of David.⁴⁶ The Creator was also

generous toward David. But David used that generosity to make himself rich and powerful, even building himself a luxurious palace.⁴⁷ And then his son Solomon built what he thought was a temple for the Creator.⁴⁸ But the Creator does not dwell in things made by human hands—neither tents nor temples! As the sixty-sixth chapter of the prophet Isaiah clearly says,

⁴⁹ ‘Heaven is my throne! The earth is the footstool for my feet! How can you possibly build a house for me? How can I be contained in a building or a box? ⁵⁰ It is my hand that has made all creation!’

⁵¹ You Temple authorities are defiant against the Creator and you aren’t even part of his true people for your hearts and ears are closed to him! You are constantly rejecting the work of the Creator’s Spirit to trust in the work of human hands, just like your ancestors!⁵² Which of the prophets, who spoke the true word of the Creator, did your ancestors not hunt down and persecute? Your ancestors killed those who foretold the arrival of the one who would reveal true justice to us. And now you have done even worse by betraying and killing Jesus, who was the one they foretold!⁵³ You received the Law of Moses from the Creator, but you did not faithfully guard its content or obey it!”

⁵⁴ Hearing these words, the authorities were uncontrollably enraged and furious with Stephen.⁵⁵ But, being completely filled with the Creator’s Spirit, Stephen saw the truth in that moment—that the Creator, with Jesus by his side, had returned to rule his creation.⁵⁶ Stephen said,

“Look! I am seeing the Creator’s truth! The Human One and his community are being persecuted by the empires of civilization, but the Creator is rescuing them and they will rule on the Creator’s behalf!”

⁵⁷ Horrified by these words against them, they covered their ears and shouted as they charged at Stephen.⁵⁸ They dragged him out of the city and began throwing stones at him. Those who threw the stones laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.⁵⁹ While the stones were pummeling Stephen, he cried out, saying,

“Lord Jesus, take me into your hands!”

⁶⁰ Having been knocked to his knees, Stephen then shouted with a great voice,

“Lord! Do not hold this sin against them!”

After forgiving his enemies, just like Jesus had, Stephen fell down and died.^{8.1-3} The followers of Jesus were greatly grieved over Stephen’s death and they took care of his body.

That same day, Saul, who oversaw and approved of Stephen’s killing, began a great persecution against the community of Jesus in Jerusalem. He began going into the community’s houses and arresting all the men and women he could find. Because the community of Jesus refused to fight back against Saul, they were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. However, the twelve representatives managed to stay hidden in Jerusalem to continue their witness there.

VIII. The Spirit Spreads the Way | Acts 8:4—15:35

To the Unlikely in Israel | Acts 8:4—9:43

⁴ The apprentices of Jesus who had been driven out of Jerusalem declared the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule everywhere they went.

⁵ Philip, who was one of the seven men designated to distribute the resources of the community, entered the city of Samaria, which rejected the Temple in Jerusalem. There Philip began proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and Chosen Ruler. ⁶ When they saw the miraculous signs of new creation surrounding Philip’s work, the crowds began attentively listening to his preaching on the life and teachings of Jesus. ⁷ Many were being liberated from the spiritual forces of civilization and many were being rescued from their physical and social paralysis and bondage. ⁸ This caused great joy to spread throughout the city. ⁹ A man named Simon had previously enthralled Samaria through his powerful acts of magic, while claiming to be a special gift from the Creator. ¹⁰ All the people, from the poor to the rich, were fascinated by him, saying,

“This man, who is called the Great One, possesses the very power of the Creator!”

¹¹ Because his magic had been captivating the crowds for quite awhile, Simon was very popular among the people of the city. ¹² But when Philip declared the Gospel—the message of the Creator’s Rule through Jesus, the Messiah and Chosen Ruler—many people began being baptized into a new life of radical trust in the Creator. ¹³ During this time, even Simon was baptized and he followed Philip around in amazement at the miracles and powers being done through him.

¹⁴ When the representatives in Jerusalem heard that many in Samaria had embraced the word of the Creator, they sent Peter and John Zebedee to them. ¹⁵ They went there in order to beg the Creator to fill these new apprentices with his Spirit and to form them into a new community. ¹⁶ Having only been baptized with water and not with the Creator’s Spirit, the apprentices in Samaria were still holding on to their possessions and living individualistic lives. ¹⁷ So Peter and John Zebedee laid their hands upon these followers of Jesus and formed them into a radical new community filled with the Creator’s Spirit. ¹⁸ Watching this happen and seeing the Creator’s Spirit come upon those who gave their possessions to the community, Simon brought some money to them, ¹⁹ saying,

“I want to buy this power and authority as well, so I can give the Creator’s Spirit to those I touch.”

²⁰ Peter said to him,

“You and your money will be destroyed, because you think the Creator’s gifts can be bought with money! ²¹ There is no place for you in the Creator’s community, for your heart, mind, and life are not focused on the Way of Jesus. ²² Therefore, you need to leave your old ways behind and beg the Creator to liberate your heart and mind. ²³ For it is clear that you are still a slave to civilization’s poisonous ways of

thinking and living!”

²⁴ Responding, Simon said,

“Please beg to the Creator on my behalf, so that I will be spared this fate!”

²⁵ After spending some more time there teaching the Way of Jesus and being examples of faithfulness, Peter and John Zebedee returned to Jerusalem. On the way there, they declared the Gospel throughout the villages of the region of Samaria.

²⁶ Meanwhile, a messenger from the Creator spoke to Philip, saying,

“Get up! At midday you need to be on the road that heads through the wilderness from Jerusalem to Africa.”

²⁷ Philip obeyed and on that road he saw a castrated man of very dark skin, who worked for the queen of Ethiopia and was in charge of her treasury. This man was a fringe Israelite who had been in Jerusalem to worship, but because he was castrated he was not allowed in the Temple. ²⁸ He was now heading back to Africa in his chariot while reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Creator’s Spirit said to Philip,

“Go join this man on his chariot.”

³⁰ So Philip ran over to him and heard him reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked him,

“Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The Ethiopian said,

“How can I properly understand unless someone guides and teaches me?”

So he begged Philip to come sit with him in the chariot. ³² He was reading from the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah,

“Like a sheep brought to the butcher and like a lamb being shaved, he was silent and did not open his mouth to defend himself. ³³ Because of his poverty and low status in the eyes of men, he was denied justice. What can be said about a culture that would kill a man like him?”

³⁴ The castrated man said to Philip,

“Please tell me, who is the prophet talking about? Himself or someone else?”

³⁵ Beginning with this text, Philip declared the Gospel and taught the Way of Jesus to the man. ³⁶ During this time of learning, their chariot came by some water and the Ethiopian man said,

“Look, water! Is there any reason I cannot be baptized and join this new Way of life?”

³⁸ When Philip did not resist, the Ethiopian ordered the chariot to stop. Then they both entered the water and Philip baptized him, marking his break with his old life and his entrance into the new life and story of walking with Jesus. ³⁹ After he baptized the Ethiopian man, the Creator’s Spirit called Philip to another task. So the Ethiopian man parted ways with him and continued his journey, rejoicing in the new Way of life he was bringing back to Africa. ⁴⁰ Philip was then led to the Mediterranean Sea and declared the Gospel of Jesus to all the cities on the coast till he came to the Roman capital of the region,

Caesarea.

^{9,1} Meanwhile, Saul, who was still threatening, arresting, and killing the apprentices of the Lord Jesus, went to the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers. ² Saul asked him to write letters to the synagogues in the province of Syria, especially to those in the city of Damascus. Saul wanted permission to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem any men or women who were found following the Way of Jesus. ³ Receiving these letters, Saul journeyed to Damascus in the spring of 35 AD. As he approached the city, a light from heaven suddenly flashed all around him. ⁴ Falling to the ground, Saul heard a voice saying to him,

“Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting and hunting me down?”

⁵ Saul said,

“Who are you, Lord?!”

He replied,

“I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting and hunting down! I am alive and present in my followers and community! ⁶ Get up! Go into the city and listen to the commands you are given!”

⁷ The men traveling with Saul were frozen in fear—they heard the voice, but saw no one. ⁸ When Saul got up off the ground, his eyes were open, but he couldn’t see anything. So Saul was led by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days Saul shared in the death of Jesus and experienced a radical break from his old life—he was completely blind and he did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰ Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus appeared in a vision to one of his apprentices in Damascus named Ananias. Jesus said to him,

“Ananias.”

Ananias responded,

“I am here and at your service, Lord!”

¹¹ Then the Lord Jesus said to him,

“Get up! Go to the house of Judah on Straight street. There you will find Saul from Tarsus, spending time in prayer. ¹² I have revealed to him that a man named Ananias is coming to welcome him into my community and open his eyes to my truth.”

¹³ Ananias answered,

“But Lord, I have heard from many people that he has caused great pain and suffering among your community in Jerusalem! ¹⁴ On top of that, he has come here with the authority of the temple-caretakers to arrest and imprison all those who obey your Way of life!”

¹⁵ The Lord Jesus said to him,

“Go! I love my enemies and I want them to turn back to me. Therefore, I have chosen this man to carry my Way and teachings to the nations, to the rulers of the earth, and to the children of Israel. ¹⁶ He will learn very quickly how my Way and teachings bring suffering and rejection from civilization!”

¹⁷ So Ananias obediently went to the house to embrace Saul and welcome him into the community of Jesus. Ananias said,

“Brother Saul, you are now part of the family and community of Jesus! The Lord Jesus, who confronted you on the road, sent me to open your eyes to his truth and fill you with his presence through the Creator’s Spirit!”

¹⁸ Immediately, something like scabs fell from Saul’s eyes and he could see the Creator’s truth for the first time. He got up and was baptized into the community and story of the Way of Jesus. ¹⁹ With the community of apprentices in Damascus, he started feeding on the bread of life—the word and teachings of Jesus—and through it he was strengthened and nourished.

²⁰ Energized in this new life, Saul immediately began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus, saying,

“Jesus is the Child of the Creator we have been waiting for!”

²¹ All who heard him preaching were beside themselves, saying,

“Isn’t this the man who was killing the apprentices of Jesus in Jerusalem?! The man who came here to our city so he could arrest Jesus’s followers and take them back to the leaders of the temple-caretakers?!”

²² Saul was empowered by the Creator’s Spirit, but his bold preaching angered those who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple. Everything Saul said and taught ended with this conclusion,

“This Jesus is the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth!”

²³ After a long period of time, those who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple were so fed up that they wanted to kill Saul. ²⁴ But while they were closely watching the gates of the city and waiting to arrest and kill Saul, their schemes and plots were discovered. ²⁵ Learning of the threat, the apprentices of Jesus took Saul and lowered him down the city wall in a basket. ²⁶ So in the fall of 37 AD, Saul returned south in the hope that the apprentices of Jesus in Jerusalem would welcome him. But they were afraid of Saul and did not trust that he was a genuine apprentice of Jesus. ²⁷ Barnabas stood up for Saul and brought him before the twelve representatives. There Barnabas explained to them that Saul had encountered the resurrected Lord Jesus and then had preached the Way of Jesus in Damascus so boldly that they wanted him dead. ²⁸ Trusting Barnabas’s testimony, the representatives welcomed Saul and he joined them in boldly teaching and living the Way of the Lord Jesus. ²⁹ Saul began by engaging with those who lived in the ways of Greek culture, but they rejected his message and wanted to kill him. ³⁰ When the community realized this, they got Saul out of town and took him into the Roman capital of the region, Caesarea. Then they sent him on a boat back to his hometown of Tarsus toward the end of 37 AD. ³¹ Following the conversion of their greatest enemy, Saul, the community of Jesus experienced a time of great peace and spiritual growth. By living in fear of the Lord and in obedience to the Creator’s Spirit, the community continued to multiply and spread.

³² While Peter was traveling around preaching the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule, he eventually visited the apprentices living in Lydda, a town about thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem. ³³ In that town there was a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for

eight years. ³⁴ Peter said to him,

“Aeneas! Jesus, the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth, is healing and liberating you! Get up and stand firm in your new life!”

Aeneas immediately obeyed and stood up. ³⁵ Seeing this man’s life transformed, a great many in the region changed their lives and turned in obedience to the Lord Jesus. ³⁶ In the nearby town of Joppa, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, there was an apprentice of Jesus named Tabitha who obediently followed the teachings of Jesus by generously and sacrificially giving gifts to help the poor and needy. ³⁷ While Peter was in Lydda, Tabitha grew weak and died. Her body was washed and placed in the highest room of the house. ³⁸ When the apprentices in Joppa heard that Peter was about seven miles away in Lydda, they sent two men to summon him, saying,

“Please, drop everything you are doing and immediately come to us!”

³⁹ Peter immediately stood up and went with them. When they got to the house they went upstairs. All the widows that Tabitha had cared for were gathered there and they began showing Peter all the clothes she had made for them. ⁴⁰ Peter had them all leave the room and then he kneeled and prayed to the Father. After a time, he turned to her body and said,

“Tabitha, get up.”

She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. ⁴¹ Reaching out his hand, Peter helped her stand up. Then he called for the apprentices and widows. When they entered the room, they saw Tabitha standing there, raised from the dead. ⁴² News of Peter raising the dead like Jesus spread throughout all Joppa and many left everything behind to live by trust in the Lord Jesus. ⁴³ Peter then stayed for many days in Joppa with Simon, who had an unclean profession of making leather from animal hides.

The Spirit Comes to the Nations | Acts 10:1—11:18

^{10.1} In the Roman capital of the region, Caesarea, there was a Roman military officer named Cornelius, who was part of a company of soldiers from Italy. ² He was a respectable man and his whole house feared the Creator. They regularly gave gifts of compassion to the poor and they were humbly begging to the Creator for provision and protection through everything they did. ³ One day, at about three in the afternoon, the hour that Jesus died, Cornelius saw a clear vision of a messenger from the Creator coming to him and saying,

“Cornelius.”

⁴ Staring at him in fear, Cornelius said,

“What is it, Lord?”

He said to him,

“Your prayers and your generosity toward the poor have been heard, seen, and remembered by the Creator. ⁵ Send men to Joppa in order to summon a man named Simon Peter—listen to everything he teaches you. ⁶ He is staying as a guest of Simon, a leather-maker, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷ When the messenger had left, Cornelius summoned two members of his house and one of his loyal soldiers. ⁸ He explained everything to them and then sent them on a thirty-five

mile journey to Joppa.

⁹ On the next day, while these men were on the road and almost to Joppa, Peter went up on the roof at noon to pray. ¹⁰ Peter was hungry and wanted to eat, but, while the food was being prepared below, he suddenly had a vision. ¹¹ He saw the heavens opened and a great sheet was being lowered to the earth by its four corners. ¹² All the animals of the earth and the birds of the air were gathered on the sheet. ¹³ A voice spoke to Peter,

“Get up, Peter! Sacrifice these creatures and eat.”

¹⁴ But Peter said,

“No chance, Lord! I have always followed the Law of Moses and will never eat anything dirty and unclean!”

¹⁵ The voice then said to Peter,

“All of the Creator’s creation is good and pure, do not call it dirty and unclean!”

¹⁶ This happened three times and then the object was taken back up into the heavens. ¹⁷ While Peter was thoroughly confused about what this vision could mean, the men which had been sent by Cornelius, stood outside the house. ¹⁸ They began asking if Simon Peter was staying as a guest there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Creator’s Spirit said to him,

“Look! Three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Get up, head downstairs, and go with them. Do not judge them for being Romans and foreigners, for I sent them to you.”

²¹ So Peter went down to the men and said,

“Look! I am the one you are seeking. Why are you here?”

²² They answered,

“We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman military officer, who is known by those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple to fear the Creator and participate in works of justice. Cornelius was commanded by a messenger from the Creator to summon you to his house so he could listen to your teachings.”

²³ Peter then welcomed these foreign and unclean men into the house and gave them hospitality as his guests.

On the next day, Peter and some of the apprentices in Joppa began journeying with Cornelius’s three men. ²⁴ On the day after that, Peter entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had gathered his relatives and friends in anticipation of their arrival. ²⁵ When Peter entered the house, Cornelius fell down at Peter’s feet in worship. ²⁶ Peter helped Cornelius to his feet, saying,

“I am a human, just like you. No man, not even the Roman emperor, should be worshiped!”

²⁷ Peter saw that a great many people had been gathered together to meet him. ²⁸ Peter told them,

“You are likely aware that it is inappropriate for someone devoted to the Jerusalem Temple like myself to have fellowship with foreigners like yourselves. Yet just the other day the Creator revealed to me that nothing he created is dirty or unclean. ²⁹

Therefore, I obediently came to you when you called for me. But I am curious, what caused you to call for me?”

³⁰ Cornelius responded,

“Four days ago at this very hour, three in the afternoon, I had been praying in my house and suddenly a man stood before me in radiant clothing. ³¹ He told me,

‘Your prayers and your generosity toward the poor have been heard, seen, and remembered by the Creator. ³² Therefore, send for Simon Peter—listen to everything he teaches you. He is staying in Joppa as a guest in the house of Simon, the leather-maker, near the sea.’

³³ Therefore, I immediately sent for you and you did a wonderful thing by coming to me. Now then, we are all here in the sight of the Creator to listen to everything that has been taught to you by the true Lord—not the Roman emperor but the Creator himself.”

³⁴ Peter said,

“I am beginning to absorb the truth that the Creator does not care about the superficial appearance of things, like the background, skin color, or nationality of a person. ³⁵ Instead, the Creator hospitably welcomes every single person who fears him and lives a life of justice.

³⁶ The Creator sent his word of truth to the children of Israel in the person of Jesus. Jesus declared the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule that is bringing peace and harmony to the earth. This Jesus, and not the Roman emperor, is the Chosen Ruler of the earth—he alone is Lord over all! ³⁷ You certainly heard about and even saw what happened throughout all our province, after John the Baptist began proclaiming a baptism of preparation and cleansing. ³⁸ The Creator filled Jesus of Nazareth with his Spirit and power. Because the Creator was with him, Jesus traveled around healing and liberating all those who were enslaved by the satanic desire-to-be-in-control. ³⁹ We are eyewitnesses of everything he did in the land of Israel and in Jerusalem. Angered by what he was doing and teaching, those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple, along with the Roman authorities, executed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. ⁴⁰ But the Creator got the final word by raising Jesus from the dead on the third day. ⁴¹ The resurrected Jesus appeared, not to all the people, but to his apprentices who had been chosen by the Creator. Jesus appeared to us and we ate and drank with him after he was raised from the dead. ⁴² Jesus instructed us to proclaim with our words and lives that he is the one chosen by the Creator to judge the living and the dead and to bring healing to this broken earth. ⁴³ All the true prophets of the Creator proclaim this truth. All who live by radical trust in the teachings of Jesus will be free from the prisons and slavery of civilization!”

⁴⁴ While Peter was speaking, the Creator’s Spirit filled all those who were receptively listening to the word of Jesus. ⁴⁵ The circumcised apprentices who had come with Peter were stunned and completely caught off-guard as they witnessed the gift of the Creator’s Spirit filling these uncircumcised, Roman foreigners. ⁴⁶ They heard these foreigners

proclaiming the truth of the Creator in many different languages. Then Peter said,

⁴⁷ “How can we not baptize them with water into our community?! They have clearly received the Creator’s Spirit just as we have!”

⁴⁸ So Peter had them baptized into the Way of Jesus while they pledged their allegiance to Jesus as the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth. They requested Peter to stay with them for awhile and to teach them everything he could about Jesus.

^{11.1} The representatives and members of the community of Jesus throughout the province heard that these Roman foreigners had also received the word of the Creator. ² So when Peter returned to Jerusalem, many circumcised Israelites began judging him, ³ saying,

“You broke our laws! You shared the table with men who are not circumcised!”

⁴ Peter began carefully explaining what had happened, saying,

⁵ “While I was praying in Joppa, I saw a vision of a great sheet coming down to me from the heavens. ⁶ As I stared at it, I saw all the animals of the earth and the birds of heaven gathered upon it. ⁷ Then I heard a voice saying to me,

‘Get up, Peter! Sacrifice these creatures and eat.’

⁸ I said,

‘No chance, Lord! I have always followed the Law of Moses and will never eat anything dirty and unclean!’

⁹ The voice spoke to me again, answering,

‘All of the Creator’s creation is good and pure, do not call it dirty and unclean!’

¹⁰ This happened three times and then the sheet went away. ¹¹ Then immediately after this, three men were standing at the door of the house, having been sent from Caesarea to find me. ¹² The Creator’s Spirit told me to meet with them without judging them for being Romans and foreigners. These six fellow community members, standing with me here, came along and we entered into a house in Caesarea. ¹³ There we met Cornelius, a Roman military officer, who told us of how he saw a messenger from the Creator standing in his house and saying,

‘Send some men to Joppa in order to summon a man named Simon Peter. ¹⁴ This Peter will proclaim a message to you that will liberate and save you as well as your whole household.’

¹⁵ When I taught them about Jesus, the Creator’s Spirit filled them, just like it had with us in the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered the word of the Lord Jesus, as he used to teach us,

‘John the Baptist baptized with water, but you will be baptized and immersed in the Creator’s Spirit.’

¹⁷ If, after they trusted and pledged their allegiance to the Lord Jesus as the Chosen Ruler of the earth, the Creator gave them the exact same gift that he also gave us, then who are we to try and stop what he is doing?”

¹⁸ When they heard these things, they backed down and began declaring the greatness of the Creator, saying,

“Wow! The Creator has also given Jesus’s radical change of life to Romans and foreigners!”

The Lord’s Hand Brings Justice | Acts 11:19—12:24

¹⁹ Meanwhile, many of the apprentices, who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death, headed west to the island of Cyprus or north into one of the wealthiest and largest cities in the Roman Empire, Syrian Antioch. In this city of around 500,000 people, they proclaimed the Way of Jesus to everyone who was devoted to the Jerusalem Temple. ²⁰ However, some men from Cyprus and northern Africa expanded this ministry in Syrian Antioch by also teaching those of Greek culture the Way and Gospel of the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The hand of the Creator was with them and a good number of these Greeks turned to the Lord Jesus and began living by radical trust in the Creator. ²² The news about these conversions came to the community in Jerusalem. So they sent Barnabas, who had left his life of wealth and power behind, to aid the preaching of the Gospel in wealthy Syrian Antioch. ²³ When he got there and saw the generous work of the Creator, Barnabas rejoiced and began teaching the apprentices how to remain steadfast to the Lord Jesus in the midst of such a wealthy city. ²⁴ Because Barnabas was filled with the Creator’s Spirit and so consistent in his life of obedience to the Way of Jesus, a decent sized group was added to Jesus’s community. ²⁵ Barnabas then headed over to Tarsus to find Saul. ²⁶ After finding him in 43 AD, Barnabas brought Saul back to Syrian Antioch to help him teach about Jesus. There they gathered together with the community for a whole year, preaching to the crowds and training this first group of apprentices in Syrian Antioch.

²⁷ In the spring of 44 AD, a group of prophets from Jerusalem came to Syrian Antioch. ²⁸ One of them named Agabus foretold, through the power of the Creator’s Spirit, that a great famine was about to fall upon all civilization. This famine took place from 45-48 AD because of great flooding on the Nile River. ²⁹ The apprentices in Syrian Antioch did not react in fear by turning to the Roman Empire for help or storing up resources for themselves. Instead, they decided to live by radical trust in the Creator by sharing their resources with the poor community of Jesus in Israel. ³⁰ They sent these gifts to the leaders of that community through the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

^{12.1} During that same season, Herod Agrippa, who was the ruler of the region of Israel and also the grandson of Herod the Great, arrested some members of the community of Jesus. ² He had Jacob Zebedee, who was the brother of John, beheaded. ³ Seeing that this execution was pleasing to those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple, Herod Agrippa turned around and arrested Peter during the Passover festival. He hoped to destroy the community of Jesus by killing off its key leaders. ⁴ Herod Agrippa wanted to publicly execute Peter after the Passover, but he wanted to be absolutely certain that Peter could not escape in the meantime. Therefore, he placed Peter in prison under the watch of sixteen guards. ⁵ While Peter was being held under guard, the community of Jesus was intensely praying on his

behalf to the Creator. ⁶ The night before the planned execution, Peter was trustfully sleeping. He was physically chained to two guards while the locked prison door was being watched by the fourteen other guards. ⁷ Suddenly the prison cell filled with light and a messenger from the Creator was standing in the room. The messenger poked Peter's side and woke him up, saying,

“Quickly, get up!”

The chains fell off Peter's hands ⁸ and the messenger said to him,

“Put on your sandals!”

Peter did this. Then the messenger said to Peter,

“Grab your coat and follow me!”

⁹ Peter began following him without knowing what was happening—he thought he was dreaming. ¹⁰ After going past two sets of guards, they came to the iron gate and it opened by itself for them. As they started heading down a back alley, suddenly the messenger was gone. ¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said,

“Woah! The Lord Jesus sent his messenger to rescue me from being killed by Herod Agrippa and those who are devoted to the Jerusalem Temple!”

¹² Peter went to the community's homebase in Jerusalem, the house of Mary, the mother of the Gospel-writer John Mark. A large group of apprentices had gathered there to pray. ¹³ When Peter knocked at the door, a young woman named Rhoda came to see who it was. ¹⁴ As soon as she recognized Peter's voice, she excitedly forgot to open the door and ran back to the apprentices to tell them that Peter was at the door. ¹⁵ The apprentices said to her,

“No way! You are crazy!”

But Rhoda kept insisting that it was Peter. So they began saying,

“It must be a messenger from Peter.”

¹⁶ Meanwhile Peter continued to persistently knock on the door. When they finally opened the door they saw Peter and were beside themselves. ¹⁷ Peter silenced their startled chatter and described to them how the Creator rescued him from prison. Then he said,

“Report these things to Jacob the biological brother of Jesus and the rest of the community. Reassure them that the Creator is watching over us!”

Peter then left town. ¹⁸ When dawn came, the prison guards were greatly agitated as they discovered that Peter was gone. ¹⁹ After failing to find Peter in the city, Herod Agrippa judged the guards and instructed them to be killed for letting Peter escape.

Herod Agrippa then left Jerusalem and went to the Roman capital of the region, Caesarea. ²⁰ He went there to continue his political and economic battle with the great port cities of Tyre and Sidon. When they learned that Herod Agrippa had gotten control of the food supplies, the leaders of Tyre and Sidon began to beg for peace. ²¹ So in the summer of 44 AD, Herod Agrippa gathered them all together and sat upon his throne while wearing his kingly robes. He then began bragging to the assembly about all the great provision and protection he gave his people. ²² The crowd began chanting,

“This is not the voice of a man, this is the voice of a god!”

²³ Immediately, a messenger from the Creator caused Herod Agrippa to drop dead because he was lifting himself up. Herod Agrippa was torn down from his lofty wealth and power and became food for the worms. ²⁴ As a result of the Creator's intervention to rescue Peter and strike down this tyrannical ruler, the Way of Jesus continued to spread and the number of faithful apprentices grew.

Journey to Asia Minor | Acts 12:25—14:28

²⁵ After delivering their gifts to the community in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul returned to Syrian Antioch in 46 AD and took the Gospel-writer John Mark with them. ^{13.1} The community of Jesus in Syrian Antioch had a number of prophets and teachers—Barnabas, Simeon Black, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was raised with Herod Antipas, and Saul. ² While they were doing the work of the Lord Jesus and keeping their appetites in check by going without food, the Creator's Spirit said to them,

“Barnabas and Saul need to drop everything they are doing, for I am calling them to go on a mission for me.”

³ So, after more time of praying and going without food, the community set aside Barnabas and Saul and sent them out for a mission in 48 AD.

⁴ Being led by the Creator's Spirit, Barnabas and Saul headed to the coast and sailed to Barnabas's island home of Cyprus. ⁵ Starting on the east end of Cyprus and with the help of the Gospel-writer John Mark, they began announcing the word of the Creator in the synagogues of those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple. ⁶ From there they headed west across the island to Paphos. There they came across a man devoted to the Jerusalem Temple who called himself Child-of-Jesus. This man dabbled in magic arts and claimed to be a prophet and follower of Jesus even though he was not. ⁷ This Child-of-Jesus was an advisor for the intelligent Roman governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paul. The provincial governor was interested in listening to the word of the Creator and so he summoned Barnabas and Saul. ⁸ But the false prophet Child-of-Jesus, who also called himself Wiseman, began opposing Barnabas and Saul, by trying to keep the Roman governor from trusting their word about Jesus. ⁹ But Saul, who took on the name Paul in honor of this governor and his courage, was filled with the Creator's Spirit and stood firm against Wiseman. ¹⁰ Paul said to him,

“Your whole life is a lie! You are a child of the satanic desire-to-be-in-control! You are an enemy of true justice for you are constantly twisting and distorting the Way of the Lord Jesus. ¹¹ Look! The hand of the Lord is upon you to reveal the truth of what you are. You will be blind and unable to see for a season.”

Immediately, darkness fell upon Wiseman and he started stumbling around looking for someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² Watching this take place, the Roman governor turned away from his old life to live by radical trust in the Way and teaching of Jesus. He risked everything, even his very life, by proclaiming that Jesus and not the Roman emperor was

the true Lord.

¹³ Finishing their work in Cyprus, Barnabas and Paul headed north across the Mediterranean Sea to the province of Pamphylia. The Gospel-writer John Mark, however, decided to turn back to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ From Pamphylia, Barnabas and Paul entered the province of Galatia and the city of Pisidian Antioch. There they entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. ¹⁵ After readings from the Law of Moses and the prophets, the leaders of the gathering spoke to Barnabas and Paul, saying,

“Fellow Israelites! If one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, then please speak to us.”

¹⁶ So Paul stood up, raised his hand, and said,

“Israelites and those fearing the Creator! Listen and pay close attention!

¹⁷ The Creator chose our ancestors to be his people. And when they were foreigners in Egypt, he used his powerful arm to lift them out of their oppression and rescue them from slavery. ¹⁸ Then, for forty years in the wilderness, he was patiently providing for them and protecting them with his very presence. ¹⁹ After taking down the seven nations in Canaan, he gave them that land in which to dwell.

²⁰ He gave them judges to lead them for over four hundred and fifty years until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹ But then they asked for a human ruler. So for forty years the Creator reluctantly gave them Saul, a man from the tribe of Benjamin. ²² After removing Saul as ruler, the Creator chose a lowly shepherd named David to replace him, saying in the thirteenth chapter of First Samuel,

‘David, the youngest son of Jesse, is a humble shepherd who reflects my character and heart. I have chosen him to listen to me and act according to all of my desires.’

²³ Then according to his faithful promise, the Creator brought Israel a rescuer from David’s family line—his name is Jesus. ²⁴ John the Baptist proclaimed a baptism into a new way of thinking in order to prepare all the people of Israel to listen to the Way of Jesus. ²⁵ While John the Baptist was faithfully fulfilling his task, he was saying,

‘Who do you think I am? I am not the one to rescue the creation from tyranny and death. But look! He is coming after me and I am not even worthy to untie his sandals!’

²⁶ My fellow children of Abraham and those among you who are fearing the Creator! The message of salvation for all creation was given and brought to us! ²⁷ But those in Jerusalem and their rulers did not understand the Way of Jesus and so they unintentionally fulfilled the words of our prophets by condemning Jesus to death. ²⁸ Even though the Roman governor could not find one legal reason to kill Jesus, the Israelite authorities still begged the governor to crucify him. ²⁹ Then, after all these things written about Jesus were fulfilled, he was taken down from the cross and buried. ³⁰ But the Creator intervened and raised Jesus from the dead. ³¹ Jesus then appeared for many days to those who had left everything behind to follow him.

These apprentices of Jesus are now his living witnesses to the people.

³² Therefore, we are now declaring to you the Gospel of the Creator's Rule, which he had promised to our ancestors! ³³ The Creator has brought his Rule upon the earth and upon us by raising Jesus from the dead! As it is written in the second Psalm,

'You are my child, today I have given birth to you and become your Father.'

³⁴ The Creator raised Jesus from the dead, rescuing him from decay, and therefore he said in the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah,

'For you, I will faithfully fulfill all the promises I made to David.'

³⁵ And it also says in the sixteenth Psalm,

'You will not allow the one who lives in your faithful Way to experience decay.'

³⁶ After serving the Creator's purpose in his generation, David was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. ³⁷ But Jesus was radically different than David—the Creator raised Jesus from the dead and he did not experience decay.

³⁸ Therefore, my fellow Israelites, know this! Because of the Creator's work through Jesus, freedom from all debts and all slavery is being announced to you! You were not able to be changed into people of true justice through the Law of Moses. ³⁹ But, through this Jesus, all those who are living by radical trust in the Creator are being changed into people of true justice! ⁴⁰ Therefore, watch out and pay attention! So what was spoken in the first chapter of the prophet Habakkuk does not come upon you,

⁴¹ 'Those of you who arrogantly look down on and oppress others, beware! You will be amazed and then you will disappear forever. I, the Creator, am going to do something before your eyes, but you will never change your ways and trust in me, even if someone leads you by the hand!''

⁴² When the gathering was finished, they asked Paul and Barnabas to speak to them about these matters after the Sabbath day was over. ⁴³ Many of them left the teachings of the synagogue in order to follow the teachings of Paul and Barnabas about living in the Creator's generosity.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath day, almost the whole city gathered to listen to the word and teachings of the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁵ Seeing the crowds, those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple were filled with jealousy and began attacking Paul and the things he was teaching. ⁴⁶ Confidently, Paul and Barnabas responded,

"It was necessary to speak the word of the Creator to you Israelites first. But since you are pushing it away and are unwilling to embrace the life of new creation, we must now turn our attention to the other nations of the earth! ⁴⁷ For the Lord himself commanded us in the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah,

'I have created you to be a light to all the nations of the earth! You exist in order to help bring freedom and rescue to all corners of the earth!''

⁴⁸ Listening to these words, those from the other nations began rejoicing and praising the

word of the Lord Jesus. All those who embraced the life of new creation, began living by radical trust in the Creator.⁴⁹ This caused the word of the Lord Jesus to begin spreading through all the region of Galatia.⁵⁰ Those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple then incited the wealthy women and the most powerful people in Pisidian Antioch to turn against Paul and Barnabas. They hunted them down and threw them out of the city.⁵¹ Paul and Barnabas followed Jesus's command and shook the dust off their feet as a warning against them. Then they headed to the Galatian city of Iconium.⁵² In the face of this persecution, all the apprentices of Jesus in that region were filled with joy and the Creator's Spirit.

^{14.1} In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spoke in the synagogue where those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple gathered. A large crowd of them, as well as some people from Greece, then started living by trust in the Way of Jesus.² But those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple stood up against Paul and Barnabas. They did great harm to many people by convincing them to turn against the apprentices of Jesus.³ But Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in the city for a significant amount of time, confidently teaching the Way of Jesus while the Creator did miraculous things through their hands.⁴ The word of Jesus divided the loyalty of the city—some were with those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple and some were with Jesus's representatives.⁵ Eventually some of the leaders of those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple were so frustrated that they stirred up a crowd and began throwing stones at Paul and Barnabas.⁶ So Paul and Barnabas fled south and east into the area of Lystra and Derbe.

⁷ In the region of Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas began declaring the Gospel of the Creator's Rule.⁸ In Lystra, there was a paralyzed man, who had been disabled from birth and had never walked.⁹ After the paralyzed man listened to the teachings of Jesus, Paul stared at him and saw the trust that was blossoming in his heart.¹⁰ So Paul said to him in a loud voice,

“Get up and stand on your feet!”

The paralyzed man immediately jumped up and began walking around.¹¹ Seeing what Paul had done, the crowds started crying out in their own language, saying,

“The gods have taken on human form and have come down to dwell among us!”

¹² They began calling Barnabas, “Zeus,” and then Paul, “Hermes,” because he was the main speaker.¹³ The temple-caretaker of Zeus, who was outside the city with the crowds, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates in order to make sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas.¹⁴ When they heard about this, Barnabas and Paul tore their clothes in protest and rushed into the crowd,¹⁵ shouting,

“Why are you doing this?! We are merely humans like you! We have been declaring the Gospel of the Creator's Rule so you will turn away from these useless practices to the living Creator—he made heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them!¹⁶ In times past, the Creator gave all the nations over to their own ways.¹⁷ Yet he was always patiently appealing to you by giving you rain and fruitful seasons, thereby filling your lives with food and well-being.”

¹⁸ After saying these things, they were barely able to keep the crowds from sacrificing to them. ¹⁹ Shortly after this, some of those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple arrived from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium and turned the crowds against Jesus. They pummeled Paul with stones and dragged him out of the city, supposing they had successfully killed him. ²⁰ But the apprentices all surrounded Paul and he miraculously stood up and returned to the city.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas headed east to the city of Derbe. ²¹ There they declared the Gospel of the Creator's Rule and trained a decent number of apprentices. Then they went back through the very cities in Galatia that had rejected them and almost killed them.

²² In those cities they strengthened the apprentices of Jesus and encouraged them to stand firm in faithfulness to Jesus, saying,

“If we faithfully follow the Creator's Rule then we will face trouble, rejection, persecution, and oppression just like our Lord Jesus did. These are gifts that help us to let go of ourselves so we may cling to the Creator alone.”

²³ Then, after a time of prayer and no food, they chose leaders for each new community and entrusted them into the hands of the Creator.

²⁴ Following this, they returned to the province of Pamphylia ²⁵ and taught the Way of Jesus to the people there. ²⁶ Then they returned to Syrian Antioch in 49 AD, where they had been appointed for this mission and journey. ²⁷ There they gathered with the community of Jesus and told them everything the Creator did on their trip. They especially recounted how he brought many people from the nations to a life of radical trust in the Way of Jesus. ²⁸ They remained with the apprentices of Jesus in Syrian Antioch for about a year.

Decisions About the Nations | Acts 15:1-35

^{15.1} Some Israelites came to Syrian Antioch and began teaching the apprentices of Jesus, saying,

“If you are not circumcised according to the Law of Moses, then you are not part of the Creator's people and are not able to share in his salvation!”

² Paul and Barnabas passionately fought against this message and tried to figure out who these men were and where they had come from. Then Paul, Barnabas, and some others from their community in Syrian Antioch were summoned to Jerusalem in order to bring this debate before the representatives and elders of Jesus's community. ³ So they headed south through Phoenicia and Samaria. On the journey, they brought great joy to all the apprentices of Jesus they encountered by explaining how people from the nations were changing their ways of thinking and living by radical trust in the Creator.

⁴ They arrived in Jerusalem in the spring of 50 AD and they were welcomed by the community of Jesus, including the representatives and elders. They shared everything that the Creator had been doing in Syrian Antioch and on their previous mission journey. ⁵

Some from the political party of the Pharisees, who were following Jesus, stood up and said,

“It is absolutely necessary to circumcise any converts from the nations and direct them to obey the Law of Moses!”

⁶ So the representatives and elders gathered together in order to sort through this argument.

⁷ After the group spent a good amount of time investigating the issue, Peter stood up and said to the leaders of Jesus’s community,

“Brothers! You are most certainly aware that awhile back the Creator chose some Romans to listen to the word of the Gospel through my mouth. These Romans left their old lives behind to live by trust in the Way of Jesus. ⁸ The Creator, who knows the hearts of all, revealed this to us by giving them the very same Spirit of Jesus that he gave to us. ⁹ By purifying their hearts and lives through trust in Jesus, he revealed to us that there is no difference between us and them.

¹⁰ Therefore, why are you now challenging the Creator by putting a bond of slavery upon the necks of Jesus’s apprentices, which neither our ancestors nor we ourselves have been strong enough to carry? ¹¹ Even we ourselves are trusting that we are rescued through the generosity and Way of the Lord Jesus and not through the Law of Moses!”

¹² The whole gathering was silenced by these words and then they began listening to Barnabas and Paul explain all the miraculous work that the Creator had done among the nations through their mission work. ¹³ After Barnabas and Paul were finished speaking, Jacob the brother of Jesus spoke to the assembly, saying,

“Brothers, listen carefully. ¹⁴ Simon Peter has explained to us how the Creator first started gathering the nations into the community of Jesus. ¹⁵ The words of the prophet Amos agree with this, as it is written in the ninth chapter,

¹⁶ ‘After all this I will return to you and rebuild the fallen house of David. I will rebuild the ruins and lift her up from the ashes. ¹⁷ Then I will call the rest of humanity from all the nations and they will begin to seek me. I, the Lord and Creator of all, am already beginning this work ¹⁸ that will spread throughout this age.’

¹⁹ Therefore, I judge that we do not burden those from the nations who are turning to the Lord Jesus by making them adopt the culture of our people. ²⁰ However, we will write them a letter, instructing them not to defile themselves with Roman culture. They must keep away from these cultural practices of the Roman Empire—trusting in human technology, using others for sexual pleasure and social gain, and eating meat from the empire’s abusive meat industry. ²¹ For keeping free from the seductive and destructive ways of the nations was always the heart of Moses’s message, which has been proclaimed everywhere among our people for generations.”

²² Then the community of Jesus, under the lead of the representatives and elders, chose Judah Barsabbas and Silas to go with Paul and Barnabas to Syrian Antioch. ²³ They were

to deliver this letter with their own hands,

“Greetings from the representatives, elders, and community of Jesus to the faithful brothers throughout the Roman Empire. ²⁴ We heard that some of us came to you and upset your hearts and lives with a message and teaching which Jesus did not give and we did not authorize. ²⁵ We collectively decided to send you a couple men along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul. ²⁶ These men have given their lives on behalf of the name of our Lord Jesus, who is the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of all. ²⁷ Therefore, we sent Judah Barsabbas and Silas to teach you and report to you concerning these things. ²⁸ The Creator’s Spirit made it clear to us that you must only be burdened with what is absolutely necessary. ²⁹ Therefore, you must keep away from these cultural practices of the Roman Empire—trusting in human technology, using others for sexual pleasure and social gain, and eating meat from the empire’s abusive meat industry. If you carefully keep yourselves away from these things you will do well. Farewell!”

³⁰ So in the summer of 50 AD, the four men headed to Syrian Antioch and shared the letter with the followers of Jesus there. ³¹ After hearing it, the community rejoiced at the decision. ³² Judah Barsabbas and Silas, who were prophets, challenged and encouraged the brothers so they might faithfully stand firm in the Way of Jesus. ³³⁻³⁴ After a season, the community in Syrian Antioch sent Judah Barsabbas and Silas back to Jerusalem. ³⁵ Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed in Syrian Antioch in order to continue teaching the Gospel and word of the Lord Jesus.

IX. The Spirit Confronts Civilization | Acts 15:36—22:22

Journey to Greece | Acts 15:36—17:14

³⁶ After a number of days in Syrian Antioch, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back to all the communities of Jesus that we helped form on our missionary journey to see how the brothers are holding up.”

³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take the Gospel-writer John Mark with them. ³⁸ But Paul did not want to, because John Mark had left them before they got to Galatia and had not been there when they helped form the communities there. ³⁹ This disagreement was so great that Barnabas and Paul decided to separate from each other. So Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed to the island of Cyprus. ⁴⁰ In the fall of 50 AD, Paul took Silas with him and headed out after being given the Lord’s blessing by the brothers in Syrian Antioch. ⁴¹ Paul and Silas began heading north and then west into Asia Minor through Paul’s homeland. Along the way they were helping the communities of Jesus stand firm in their faithfulness. ^{16.1} When they arrived in the Galatian cities of Derbe and Lystra, they found a young apprentice named Timothy. Timothy’s mom was an Israelite follower of Jesus, while his dad was Greek. ² The apprentices in Galatia marveled at the faith of Timothy. ³ Seeing this, Paul took Timothy under his wing to further train him in the Way of Jesus. But because all the Israelites knew the heritage of Timothy’s mom, Paul followed Israelite tradition and circumcised Timothy. ⁴ In all the cities they traveled through, Paul and Silas shared the representatives’ command about staying unpolluted by Roman culture. ⁵ All the communities of Jesus they visited were growing both in their faithfulness to Jesus and in size.

⁶ Finding closed doors to the word of Jesus in the western part of Asia Minor, the Creator’s Spirit drove Paul, Silas, and Timothy north from Galatia. ⁷ But in the north, the doors also closed to their message and so the Spirit of Jesus pushed them onward. ⁸ They headed west to the city of Troas, on the far northwestern coast of Asia Minor. ⁹ While they were there, Paul had a dream one night of a man from the northeastern part of Greece saying to him,

“Come to the province of Macedonia to help us!”

¹⁰ On the next day, I—your narrator—joined Paul’s group and we immediately began figuring out how to get to the province of Macedonia. We were convinced that the Creator was calling us to declare the Gospel of Jesus to them. ¹¹ So we left Troas for the island of Samothrace and then sailed northwest to the city of Neapolis. ¹² From there we went to the city of Philippi, which was a Roman colony and the heart of Roman culture in that part of the province of Macedonia. We began staying there for some time. ¹³ On the Sabbath, we went outside the city and went down to the river, where we thought we could find a gathering place for prayer. Finding what we were looking for, we sat down and began speaking to the women who had gathered. ¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, who was fearing the Creator and was a wealthy dealer of luxurious purple cloth, began listening to the Way of Jesus. The Lord opened her heart to this message from Paul. ¹⁵ So she and her household

were baptized into Jesus's story and they radically transformed their lives. Lydia then urged the apprentices, saying,

“If you determine that I am now living by trust in the Lord Jesus, come stay at my house—we are now family and all my things are your things!”

She convinced us and we accepted her hospitality.

¹⁶ One day as we were leaving the city to gather at the river for prayer, we encountered a young slave-girl who had the power to see the truth of people's lives. Her owners were running a business and were getting very rich by using and exploiting this power of hers. ¹⁷ She began following us around and shouting,

“These people are servants of the Lord of all creation! They are announcing to you a way of liberation!”

¹⁸ She did this for many days. Finally irritated, Paul turned around and said to the spiritual power controlling her,

“I command you in the name of Jesus, the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth, to leave this girl alone!”

And in that moment the girl was set free. ¹⁹ When her owners saw their way of making money disappear, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers of the city. ²⁰ The police officers were brought in and they said,

“These people devoted to the Jerusalem Temple are disturbing our city! ²¹ They are living and teaching a way of life that goes against and undermines the most basic values of being a Roman!”

²² The crowd was furious. So the police officers, ripped off Paul's and Silas's clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³ After severely beating them, they threw Paul and Silas into prison, directing the prison-guards to watch them very closely. ²⁴ Receiving these orders, the prison-guards put them under the tightest possible guard and locked up their ankles in a block of wood. ²⁵ At midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs to the Creator while the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly, a great earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. Immediately, all the prison doors were opened and all the restraints came undone. ²⁷ Waking up and seeing the prison doors wide open, the prison-guard drew his sword. He was going to kill himself rather than be executed by the Roman Empire for letting all the prisoners escape. ²⁸ But Paul shouted to him, saying,

“Do not kill yourself! We are all still here!”

²⁹ Calling for a lantern, the prison-guard rushed in and fell before Paul and Silas, trembling. ³⁰ Bringing them out of their prison cell and to his home, the prison-guard asked the prisoners,

“What must I do to be liberated and saved from my meaningless life as a Roman prison-guard?”

³¹ They said,

“Live by faith in Jesus as the true Lord and then you and your household will experience true freedom and liberation!”

³² So Paul and Silas taught him the Way of the Lord Jesus, along with all those in his household. ³³ The prison-guard responded by washing their wounds. Then the prison-guard and all his family were baptized into a new life of obedience to Jesus as the only Lord. ³⁴ Following this, they entered the house and the prison-guard prepared a meal for them while rejoicing in his newfound trust in the Creator. ³⁵ When it became day, the police captains sent some officers to the prison, saying,

“Release those men.”

³⁶ The prison-guard reported these words to Paul and Silas who were now back in their prison cell. He said,

“The police captains have decided to release you! Get out of here while you can!”

³⁷ Paul responded,

“So they whipped and beat Roman citizens without a fair trial, then threw us in prison, and now they are wanting to secretly get rid of us?! No way! We are staying in prison until they humble themselves and come here to personally let us out!”

³⁸ The police officers reported all this to the police captains, who became terrified of the possibility of being severely punished for mistreating Roman citizens. ³⁹ So the police captains personally went to Paul and Silas and begged them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ Paul and Silas honored their request and, after seeing Lydia and the other apprentices, they left Philippi while I remained behind.

^{17.1} Heading west, Paul and Silas came to the city of Thessalonica, where they found a synagogue. ² According to his pattern, Paul gathered with the Israelites in the synagogue. Over the course of three Sabbaths he taught them from the Scriptures. ³ He was trying to persuade them, saying,

“It was necessary for the Chosen Ruler of the earth to suffer and then be raised from the dead,”

and,

“This Jesus I am teaching you about is the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth!”

⁴ Some Israelites and a large number of Creator-fearing Greeks, including some high status women, were persuaded by this and began following the Way of Jesus. ⁵ Becoming jealous of these conversions, a group of those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple hired some evil men to incite a mob and turn the city against Jesus. They went to the house of Jason where Paul and Silas were staying, hoping to drag them to the authorities. ⁶ When they didn’t find them, they dragged Jason and some of the other apprentices to the city-leaders, crying out,

“The followers of Jesus, who are revolting against civilization itself, are now in our city! ⁷ This Jason welcomed them and housed them in his home! They are disobeying all the Roman emperor’s commands and are saying that this Jesus is the only true ruler!”

⁸ This news deeply agitated and disturbed the crowd and the city leaders. ⁹ So they heavily fined Jason and the other apprentices before releasing them. ¹⁰ That night, Paul and Silas snuck out of the city and headed to Berea.

When Paul and Silas got to Berea they went to the Israelite synagogue.¹¹ These Israelites in Berea were much more receptive than those in Thessalonica. They passionately listened to the word of Jesus and spent time every day studying the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true.¹² Many of them, along with a considerable number of Greek women and men of high class, radically changed their lives in order to live by trust in the Way of Jesus.¹³ When the unfaithful Israelites from Thessalonica heard that the Way of Jesus was being taught in Berea, they traveled there and started turning the crowds against Paul.¹⁴ Paul was forced to escape town on a boat, while Silas and Timothy were able to stay behind.

Athens & Corinth | Acts 17:15—18:22

¹⁵ The boat brought Paul to Athens, which was the center of philosophical, economic, and political innovation in the Roman Empire. Paul then sent a message back to Silas and Timothy, requesting them to join him in southern Greece.¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them to join him, the Creator’s Spirit caused him to become irritated at how Athens was centered on arrogantly trusting in human intelligence, wisdom, and technology.¹⁷ In response, Paul began spending everyday in the synagogue addressing those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple and then anyone who would listen in the public gathering places.¹⁸ Paul came across some Epicurean philosophers, who believed that the divine was completely separate from the material world. He also encountered some Stoic philosophers, who believed that the divine is one and the same as the material world. These philosophers gathered to listen to and talk with Paul. In response to hearing Paul’s declaration of the Creator’s Rule through Jesus and the resurrection of the dead, some of them said,

“What on earth is this guy teaching?!”

And others said,

“Like Socrates, whom we killed, he is announcing outside ideas that challenge everything we hold dear!”

¹⁹ So they arrested Paul and brought him before the Mars Hill Council, which was in charge of overseeing trials of capital punishment, saying,

“We have the right to know this new way of life you are teaching!²⁰ You are a guest in our city and are trying to persuade us with your ideas, so tell us exactly what you are saying!”

²¹ All the residents and visitors of Athens would spend their free-time discussing the latest ideas of politics and economics.²² So standing in the middle of the Mars Hill Council, Paul said,

“Men of Athens! I see that you have great respect for all worldviews, ideologies, and spiritual forces.²³ While observing your city and your sacred things, I even found a place where it is written,

‘To the unknown god.’

Therefore, I am not announcing new things to you, I am simply revealing what you already revere unknowingly!

²⁴ The one who created the earth and everything in it is the true Lord. He alone owns all heaven and earth and therefore does not dwell in things made by human hands. ²⁵ He needs nothing from humans and cannot be controlled by them. He generously gives life, breath, and provision to all creatures. ²⁶ From one man he made all the peoples of the earth. He has overseen and ordered their movements and boundaries through all time. ²⁷ The Creator desires for humanity to seek after him and live under his Rule, to even touch and find him in the creation. Indeed, the Creator is not far away from each one of us. ²⁸ For through him we receive all life, movement, and being, as even your own philosopher, Aratus, has said,

‘We are born and exist through him.’

²⁹ Therefore, because we have received our very existence from the Creator, we must see that he is not contained in human technologies and innovations. ³⁰ The Creator has been patiently overlooking our ignorance as we worship our own intelligence and the work of our hands. But now he is directing all humanity in all places to transform and turn away from this way of life. ³¹ The Creator is going to judge civilization with true justice according to the standard of Jesus of Nazareth. The Creator confirmed that this man, Jesus, shows us the true way of trusting in him by raising Jesus from the dead!”

³² After hearing Paul speak about the dead being raised to new life, most of them began ridiculing him. But some of them said,

“We are interested in hearing more from you, even about this supposed resurrection of the dead.”

³³ Then, just like Jesus had done in Nazareth, Paul was able to walk right through this gathered group without being harmed. ³⁴ Dionysius of the Mars Hills Council, a woman named Damaris, and a few others joined Paul and began living by trust in the Creator.

^{18.1} After this trial, Paul left Athens and headed west to Corinth, one of the wealthiest cities in the Roman Empire that was also known for its decadent and immoral lifestyle. ² Arriving in the city in 51 AD, Paul found a husband and wife who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple—Aquila and Priscilla. They had recently come from Rome after Emperor Claudius ordered all those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple to leave the city in 50 AD after a disturbance arose over claims that Jesus was the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth. ³ Because all three of them had the same profession as tentmakers, Paul began working and staying with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath, Paul addressed the people in the synagogue, trying to persuade both Israelites and Greeks to follow the Way of Jesus. ⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from the province of Macedonia, Paul was reenergized. The word of Jesus drove Paul to even more intensely proclaim to those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple that Jesus was the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth. ⁶ When they persistently opposed and spoke against him, Paul obeyed Jesus’s teachings by shaking the dust off his clothes and saying to them,

“You are responsible for your own destruction! I have adequately warned you and my hands are clean! I am done with you and I will now spend my time preaching to

non-Israelites!”

⁷ Paul then began staying with a Roman man named Titius Justus, who revered the Creator and whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, began trusting the Lord Jesus along with all of his household. This news caused many other people in Corinth to live by trust and be baptized into the Way of Jesus. ⁹ One night the Lord Jesus came to Paul in a dream and said,

“Do not fear! Speak the truth and do not be silent. ¹⁰ I am with you and nothing will harm you in this city because of my people here.”

¹¹ So Paul stayed in Corinth for one year and six months, teaching the Creator’s word.

¹² While Gallio was the Roman governor of southern Greece, those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple collectively opposed Paul and dragged him before the governor, ¹³ saying,

“This man is persuading people to follow the Creator without obeying the law!”

¹⁴ Before Paul could respond, Gallio said to them,

“If this was about some sort of injustice against Roman law, then I would care and listen to you. ¹⁵ But if this whole thing is about your law and traditions, then take care of this yourselves. I do not want to waste my time judging such things!”

¹⁶ Then Gallio drove them out of his court. ¹⁷ But they grabbed Sosthenes, who was the new leader of the synagogue, and started beating him up in the governor’s sight because of his sympathy to the Way of Jesus. But Gallio just walked away and ignored them all.

¹⁸ After staying a significant time longer with the community of Jesus in Corinth, Paul finally said goodbye in 53 AD and got into a boat with Priscilla and Aquila. Preparing to return to Jerusalem, Paul cut his hair in order to ritually cleanse himself of his time among the nations and to give thanks for the Creator’s protection during his mission work. ¹⁹ The boat stopped in Ephesus on the western coast of Asia Minor, where Priscilla and Aquila stayed behind to do the work of the Lord Jesus. During this stop, Paul went into the synagogue to address those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple. ²⁰ They asked Paul to stay for a long while, but he refused ²¹ and said goodbye, saying,

“I will come back here in the future, if the Creator allows it.”

So Paul returned to the boat and left Ephesus. ²² After the boat docked in Caesarea, he traveled to Jerusalem. After embracing the community of Jesus in Jerusalem, he returned to Syrian Antioch where his journey had begun.

Ephesus | Acts 18:23—20:1

²³ After spending some time in Syrian Antioch, Paul returned to the province of Galatia to help support the growth and journey of the apprentices and communities of Jesus there. ²⁴ Meanwhile, an eloquent and Scripturally trained Israelite named Apollos came to Ephesus, a wealthy and famed city of 250,000 people. Apollos was devoted to the Jerusalem Temple but had been born in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. ²⁵ After hearing about the Way of the

Lord Jesus, Apollos began zealously teaching about Jesus in Ephesus while only being aware of John the Baptist's baptism of preparation—he was not aware that the Creator's Rule had arrived and that his Spirit had been poured out. ²⁶ After listening to him confidently teaching in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and corrected his misunderstanding of the Creator's Way. ²⁷ Because he was wanting to go to Greece, the brothers then sent Apollos there along with a letter of recommendation. Arriving in Corinth, Apollos gathered with many who had trustingly embraced the Creator's generosity by leaving everything behind to follow the Way of Jesus. ²⁸ Apollos also began intensely correcting those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple by showing everyone through the Scriptures that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth.

^{19.1} In 54 AD, while Apollos was teaching in Corinth, Paul traveled from central Asia Minor to its western coast in order to visit the apprentices in Ephesus. ² Paul said to them,

“Were you filled with the Creator's Spirit after you started trusting in Jesus?”

They said to Paul,

“No. What is the Creator's Spirit?”

³ Paul responded,

“Then what baptism did you receive?”

They answered,

“John the Baptist's baptism.”

⁴ Paul replied,

“John the Baptist's baptism was about changing one's way of thinking in order to be prepared for what was coming—the arrival of the Creator's Rule through trust in Jesus.”

⁵ After listening to how the Creator's Rule had already arrived and was present on the earth, they were baptized into the story and Way of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul physically embraced and welcomed them into the community of this new reality, the Creator's Spirit filled them. Then they began speaking the truth of the Creator without any cultural or language constraints. ⁷ Just as Jesus had begun his new community with twelve representatives, there were twelve men that were the start of this new community in Ephesus. ⁸ Entering into the synagogue, Paul then began confidently speaking to the Israelites for three months about the Rule of the Creator. ⁹ But many of them had hardened hearts so they started publicly attacking and ridiculing the Way of Jesus. So Paul left them to their own devices and was ironically welcomed for daily teaching in the School of the Tyrant. ¹⁰ For two years Paul taught the apprentices in this public venue which drew in people from all over the western region of Asia Minor. Through this, basically all the people of the region were eventually exposed to the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

¹¹ During this time, the Creator began doing miraculous things through the hands of Paul.

¹² Paul's fame became so great that anything which even touched him was brought to those who were in need of liberation. They hoped that they would experience the Creator's

power through Paul and be rescued from their physical, cultural, and spiritual bondage.¹³ Some traveling exorcists who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple saw Paul's power. These men tried to take this power for themselves by speaking the name of the Lord Jesus over those in spiritual bondage. They were saying,

“I take control of you through Jesus, the one Paul is proclaiming!”

¹⁴ These exorcists were the seven sons of Sceva, who was one of the Roman-appointed leaders of the temple-caretakers.¹⁵ A man who was controlled by the spiritual forces of civilization responded to these seven brothers,

“I know Jesus and I am aware of Paul, but who are you?!”

¹⁶ Then this possessed man attacked and overpowered all seven of them—beating them, stripping them naked, and exposing them as powerless frauds.¹⁷ This incident became known to everyone living in Ephesus, spreading fear and respect for the power and name of the Lord Jesus.¹⁸ Many also started trustingly leaving their old lives behind to declare loyalty to Jesus.¹⁹ One group that had been pursuing the empty path of civilization brought their treasured books worth over one-hundred-fifty years' pay and publicly burned them for all to see.²⁰ In ways like this, the word of the Lord Jesus was growing and spreading throughout the region surrounding Ephesus.²¹ Pleased with this growth, Paul was instructed by the Creator's Spirit to travel back through Greece and then finally into Jerusalem. He began saying,

“After I have been to Jerusalem, it is necessary for me to go to Rome.”

²² But after sending two of his coworkers, Timothy and Erastus, into Greece, Paul spent a little more time in Ephesus.

²³ During Paul's final stretch of time in Ephesus, a great disturbance and riot over the Way of Jesus occurred.²⁴ It all started with a successful businessman named Demetrius. Demetrius fueled the economy of the whole region by employing a great number of people to make silver dwelling places for Artemis, who was the goddess of fertility, abundance, and provision.²⁵ Demetrius gathered all those involved in this lucrative business and said,

“Men! You are well aware that all of our wealth and success in life is because of our business!²⁶ See what is happening and listen to what is being said! Ephesus and almost all of our Roman province have been influenced by this Paul, who is pulling people out of our culture and teaching them,

“The gods and powers of human civilization and technology are nothing!”

²⁷ If the people start believing this, then the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose all of its power and influence! Her greatness, wealth, and power, which is revered throughout all civilization, is being attacked and torn down by the Way of Jesus!”

²⁸ Hearing that their livelihoods and the economy itself was being threatened by Jesus, these businessmen and workers became agitated and began shouting,

“Artemis of the Ephesians is great!”

²⁹ This stirred up the whole city and thousands of them charged into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, who were outsiders traveling with Paul.³⁰ Paul wanted

to confront the crowd in the theater, but the other apprentices of Jesus would not allow him.³¹ Even some of the leaders of the province were begging Paul not to give himself over to the angry crowd in the theater.³² Those in the theater then began shouting and arguing with one another, because they were confused and agitated at the rumors they were hearing.³³ Some in the crowd concluded the trouble was centered around Alexander, who was being put forward to defend those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple. Alexander began motioning for the crowd to quiet down so he could explain how most Israelites wanted nothing to do with Jesus.³⁴ But when the crowd recognized that he was an Israelite and not one of their own, they shouted in unison for about two hours,

“Artemis of the Ephesians is great!”

³⁵ The city’s spokesman showed up and, after quieting the angry crowd, he said,

“Men of Ephesus! All of humanity and civilization know that the city of Ephesus is the dwelling place of the great Artemis and the sacred gifts of Zeus, who is the greatest of the gods!³⁶ Because of these facts it is necessary for you to calm down before you do something embarrassing that you will regret.³⁷ These men you are upset at have not been robbing our temples nor are they slandering our god.³⁸ If Demetrius and his business partners and workers have a complaint against someone, then they need to go through the proper channels.³⁹ If you are seeking some sort of justice, then you must go through the legal community and the Roman governors.⁴⁰ We need to stop this, for we are in danger of getting in trouble for rioting today and we have no legal reason for assembling like this!”

⁴¹ After saying these things, he ordered everyone to return to their homes.^{20.1} When the riot was over, Paul gathered with the apprentices of Jesus to speak with them. Then he embraced them and departed for northern Greece in 57 AD.

Journey to Jerusalem | Acts 20:2—21:16

² Paul went through northern Greece encouraging the communities of Jesus to stand firm in their faithfulness to the Lord.³ Then he headed to southern Greece for three months. When he was about to return to Syrian Antioch, the Israelites devoted to the Jerusalem Temple started plotting to kill him. Discovering the plot, Paul changed course and went back to Philippi in northern Greece where I, the author, rejoined him.⁴ Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus from western Asia Minor, and Timothy had traveled with Paul to Philippi.⁵ This group of seven men continued on alone to Troas where they waited for the rest of us to join them.⁶ After Paul celebrated the festival of Unyeasted Bread and the Passover in 58 AD in Philippi, the rest of us traveled with him for five days to Troas where we reunited with the other group and then stayed for seven days.

⁷ As the new week began at sundown on Saturday, we gathered to share a meal and break bread in remembrance of Jesus’s resurrection. Paul was teaching the apprentices in Troas one last time, since he was going to leave the next day.⁸ Paul kept teaching all night since

there were adequate lamps in the highest room where we had gathered.⁹ But at midnight, a young man named Eutychus, meaning “fortunate,” was sitting in the window and Paul’s teachings about Jesus caused him to start falling into a deep sleep. After the words put Eutychus to sleep, he fell down from the third story and died.¹⁰ Paul ran down and embraced Eutychus, saying,

“Do not be disturbed! There is still life in him!”

¹¹ So they went back upstairs, shared bread together, and Paul kept teaching them about Jesus until dawn.¹² They were all deeply encouraged because the teachings of Jesus had killed Eutychus but then had brought him back to new life.

¹³ At dawn we headed to the boat and sailed a small distance south to Assos. There we waited to pick up Paul, for he had gone ahead on foot in order to be alone in prayer.¹⁴ When Paul joined us in Assos, we picked him up and headed south to Mitylene.¹⁵ On the next day we sailed south to Chios and then the day after we headed southeast to Samos and Miletus.¹⁶ Paul decided to sail past Ephesus on the western coast of Asia Minor, so as not to be delayed there. He was trying to get to Jerusalem, if he was able, for the festival of Pentecost in 58 AD, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the pouring out of the Creator’s Spirit.

¹⁷ So from Miletus, Paul summoned the elders from Jesus’s community in Ephesus.¹⁸ When they came to him, Paul said to them,

“From the first day that I came into your land, you yourselves have observed how I lived during that whole time with you.¹⁹ I was a poor and lowly servant for the Lord Jesus. My life was filled with tears as the Israelites, who are devoted to the Jerusalem Temple, constantly plotted against me.²⁰ I held back nothing as I trained you in the Way of Jesus in your homes and in public places.²¹ I was a living witness to the Creator’s new Way of thinking and living by trust in our Lord Jesus. I was a witness to all people, regardless of nationality or culture!

²² Now look! The Creator’s Spirit compels me to go to Jerusalem. I do not know exactly what lies ahead of me there.²³ I only know that the Creator’s Spirit is warning me that I will find imprisonment and suffering in the city.²⁴ I have let go of my dreams and plans for my life and now my only purpose is to faithfully complete the course and service that the Lord Jesus has called me to—to be a living witness to the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule and his abundant generosity for his creation.

²⁵ Now look! I poured out my life teaching you about the Creator’s Rule, but you will not see my face again.²⁶ Therefore, know that I have no blood on my hands,²⁷ for I did not hold back in any way from boldly teaching you the full, hard truth of the Creator.²⁸ So be attentive to yourselves and to Jesus’s community around you. The Creator’s Spirit has placed you as caretakers and shepherds of his community in Ephesus. He will watch over you and is keeping you safe through your bond with Jesus.²⁹ I sense that opportunistic and greedy wolves will come in among you after I leave, trying to destroy your community.³⁰ Men will stand up from among you, teaching distorted truths in order to get the apprentices to follow them.³¹ Therefore, stay awake! Every day and night, remember what I taught you

for three years as I shed my tears for you.

³² Now I am placing and entrusting you into the Father's hands and to his generous teachings, which are able to transform you, build you up, and give you the fullness of his inheritance. ³³ You saw how I lived and how I wanted nothing—no money or clothes. ³⁴ You yourselves know that my own hands worked to support my needs and those with me. ³⁵ I showed you the full truth of the Way of Jesus! It is necessary to work and support those who are in need. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus himself, 'It is more privileged to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ After saying this, Paul kneeled with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ With tears in their eyes, they all hugged and embraced Paul. ³⁸ They were especially distressed that they would never see him again. Following their goodbyes, they sent Paul back to the boat.

^{21.1} After leaving them, we headed south to Cos. Then on the next day we headed southeast to Rhodes and then east to Patara. ² After finding a boat heading to Tyre, we boarded it and sailed southeast. ³ After the island of Cyprus appeared on the left, we headed east to Tyre, which was the destination for the ship's cargo. ⁴ After finding the apprentices of Jesus there, we stayed with them in Tyre for seven days. During that week the apprentices were led by the Creator's Spirit to test Paul's faith, saying,

"Do not go into Jerusalem!"

⁵ When the week ended, we sent everyone with women and children ahead of us to the beach where we kneeled and prayed together. ⁶ After embracing and hugging each other, we got into the boat and the apprentices returned to Tyre. ⁷ The boat took us south to Ptolemais where we embraced the brothers and stayed with them one day. ⁸ The next day we headed south to Caesarea where we stayed in the house of Philip, who was a teacher of the Gospel and had been set aside as one of the seven with Stephen. ⁹ Philip had four daughters who were prophets and spoke the truth of the Creator. ¹⁰ While we were staying in Caesarea for many days, the prophet Agabus, who had foretold the famine in 44 AD, arrived from Jerusalem. ¹¹ He came to us, found Paul's belt, and then used it tie up his own feet and hands. Then he said,

"The Creator's Spirit is saying this, 'This belt belongs to the man who will be tied up like this in Jerusalem and will be given over to the judgment of the nations.'"

¹² When we heard this, we all began begging Paul to change his mind and not go to Jerusalem. ¹³ Paul responded,

"What are you doing?! Why are you weeping, breaking my heart, and trying to change the Lord's path for me?! Not only am I ready to be chained and imprisoned, I am ready to die in Jerusalem on behalf of the Way of the Lord Jesus!"

¹⁴ Since Paul would not be persuaded by us, we stopped our begging and said,

"Let the Lord's will be done!"

¹⁵ After our days in Caesarea, we packed up and headed south to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ Some of the apprentices from Caesarea also came with us and took us to stay as guests in the house of Mnason from Cyprus, who had been an apprentice of Jesus from the beginning.

¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem at the end of spring in 58 AD, the brothers welcomed us with great joy. ¹⁸ That day Paul was with us as we met with Jacob the brother of Jesus and all the elders of the community of Jesus in Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Paul hugged and embraced them all and then began explaining everything the Creator had done among the nations through his hands. ²⁰ After listening to his report, they began praising the work of the Creator and said to Paul,

“Brother, you can see that there are now thousands and thousands who are living by faith in the Way of Jesus while also being fiercely devoted to the Temple and to following all the commands of Moses’s Law. ²¹ But all of Jerusalem has been told that you teach all Israelites to stop following Moses and not to circumcise their children or walk according to the cultural customs of our people. ²² What then will the people of this city do when they hear that you have come here to Jerusalem?

²³ Therefore, we have a plan you need to follow. We have four men among us that are completing a time of dedicated prayer. ²⁴ Take these men and go through ritual cleansing with them, paying for their offerings and making sure they also shave their heads. Then, hopefully everyone will see for themselves that there is nothing to the rumors they have heard. They will see that you are following and guarding the Law of Moses, just as they are. ²⁵ Don’t forget, however, that we fully support you, for we ourselves wrote the letter to the trusting apprentices from the nations, ordering them to only keep away from these cultural practices of the Roman Empire—trusting in human technology, using others for sexual pleasure and social gain, and eating meat from the empire’s abusive meat industry.”

²⁶ So that very day, Paul submissively took the four men with him and began the ritual cleansing process. He did this in the hope of maintaining the delicate peace between the apprentices of Jesus and the rest of the Israelites in Jerusalem.

When the seven days of cleansing were completed, Paul entered into the Temple to present the offerings on behalf of himself and the four other men. ²⁷ Just as Paul was about to complete the process, some unfaithful Israelites from the region around Ephesus saw him and began stirring up the crowd against him. They grabbed Paul ²⁸ and shouted,

“Men! Israelites! Help us! This man is the one attacking our people, the Law of Moses, and this sacred Temple! Everywhere he goes throughout the Roman Empire he teaches against the core of our identity! He has even brought unclean Greeks into the Temple and has thereby defiled this divine place!”

²⁹ They said this because they had previously seen a Greek man from Ephesus with Paul in the city and they just assumed that Paul had brought him into the Temple. ³⁰ This message stirred the city into a frenzy and all the people began rushing together. The unfaithful Israelites grabbed Paul and dragged him outside of the Temple in order to keep it from being further defiled. Then the doors were slammed shut. ³¹ While they were doing this and were getting ready to kill Paul, news of this large riot quickly made its way to the

commanding officer of the local Roman soldiers.³² He immediately rallied his soldiers and military officers and charged toward the riot. When the crowd saw the commanding officer and his soldiers coming upon them, they immediately stopped beating Paul.³³ When the Roman commanding officer was within grasp, he grabbed Paul and instructed him to be bound with two chains. Then he began angrily asking who Paul was and what he had done.³⁴ The people in the crowd began shouting answers and arguing with each other over what exactly had happened. Unable to get a straight answer because of the angry crowd, the Roman commanding officer ordered Paul to be taken back to the Roman military compound.³⁵ When they got to the stairs, Paul had to be carried by the soldiers because the crowd was following them and forcefully grabbing at Paul.³⁶ The crowd wouldn't leave them alone and was shouting,

“Take him away!”

³⁷ Right as he was about to be taken into the Roman military compound, Paul said to the Roman commanding officer,

“May I to speak to you?”

Startled, the Roman commanding officer replied,

“You know Greek?!³⁸ I thought you were the revolutionary from Egypt, the one who refuses to have anything to do with Rome or the Greek language and recently led an uprising and has been hiding out with four thousand Daggersmen in the wilderness!”

³⁹ Paul said,

“I am an Israelite from the city of Tarsus. I am begging you, allow me to speak to the people.”

⁴⁰ Thinking Paul could calm down the anger of the crowd, the Roman commanding officer permitted him to speak.

So Paul stood on the stairs and motioned for the people to quiet down. After most of them became silent, Paul spoke to them in their own language of Hebrew, saying,

^{22.1} “Men! Israelites! Listen to what I have to say to you!”

² Hearing that he began speaking to them in their own treasured language of Hebrew, they began paying more attention. Paul then said to them,

³ “I am an Israelite who was born in Tarsus but was raised in this city with fierce devotion to the Temple. I was trained in the Law of Moses and in the teachings of our forefathers at the feet of Gamaliel. I am fiercely devoted to the Creator's love for our nation just like all of you!⁴ Because of this devotion I hunted down and even killed the followers of the Way of Jesus, throwing both men and women into prison.

⁵ The leader of the temple-caretakers and all the patriarchs of the rich and powerful families witnessed this about me. After receiving letters from them, I began a journey to Damascus in Syria in order to arrest the apprentices of Jesus and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.⁶ But when I got close to Damascus at about noon, a great light from heaven suddenly covered me.⁷ I fell to the ground and listened to a voice saying to me,

‘Saul! Saul! Why are you hunting me down?!’

⁸ I answered,

‘Who are you, Lord?!’

He said to me,

‘I am Jesus of Nazareth. I am present within my followers and you are hunting me down!’

⁹ Those with me saw the light, but they could not understand the voice that was speaking to me. ¹⁰ Then I said,

‘What should I do, Lord?!’

The Lord Jesus said to me,

‘Get up and go into Damascus! There you will be told everything you need to do.’

¹¹ Because the great light from Jesus blinded me, I was led by the hand into Damascus by those who were traveling with me. ¹² A man named Ananias, who was well known by all the local Israelites for his devotion to the Law of Moses, ¹³ came to me and said,

‘Brother Saul! May your eyes be opened again!’

At that moment I was able to see once again. ¹⁴ Ananias then said to me,

‘The Creator, whom our forefathers worshiped, has hand-picked you to know his will, to see Jesus raised from the dead, and to listen to his voice. ¹⁵ On his behalf you will be a living witness to all humanity of what you have seen and heard from Jesus. ¹⁶ So what must you do now? Get up and be baptized into Jesus’s new Way of life! Wash away the disobedience of your old life and call upon his name!’

¹⁷ After returning to Jerusalem, I had a vision while I was praying ¹⁸ and saw Jesus saying to me,

‘Quickly leave Jerusalem because they will not listen to your words about me!’

¹⁹ I said,

‘But Lord, I would be a great witness to them. For they are well aware that I went into all the synagogues and arrested and whipped those who trust you. ²⁰ They know that when your servant Stephen poured out his blood in witness to your Way that I myself was overseeing his death. Through me they would see your radical work of transformation!’

²¹ But Jesus said to me,

‘Leave Jerusalem! I will send you as a witness of my truth to the nations!’”

²² The crowd was attentively listening to Paul until he said this and then they immediately started shouting,

“Remove this man from the earth! He is not fit to live!”

X. The Spirit Confronts the Empire | Acts 22:23—28:31

The Sanhedrin Council | Acts 22:23—23:32

²³ The people in the crowd began shouting, taking off their outer garments, and throwing dust into the air in preparation to kill Paul. ²⁴ Seeing the crowd even more angry, the Roman commanding officer shouted for Paul to be brought into the Roman military compound. Frustrated that Paul had not calmed the crowd and instead had escalated the situation, he told his soldiers to whip and torture Paul in order to get some answers to what was going on. ²⁵ After the soldiers had tied Paul up and stretched him out for his beating, Paul calmly said to the Roman military officer standing there,

“Is it lawful for you to whip a Roman citizen without a trial?”

²⁶ Horrified at hearing this, the Roman military officer ran to the commanding officer to report this, saying,

“What are you doing?! This man is a Roman citizen!”

²⁷ The commanding officer went to Paul and said,

“Speak to me! Are you a Roman citizen?!”

Paul answered,

“Yes.”

²⁸ The Roman commanding officer answered,

“No way! Do you have any idea how much money it cost me to acquire my citizenship?!”

Paul responded,

“I’m sure it cost a fortune, but I just happened to be born a Roman citizen.”

²⁹ Hearing this, the soldiers about to beat Paul immediately stepped away from him. The Roman commanding officer was terrified when he realized that he had arrested and almost whipped a Roman citizen without a trial.

³⁰ On the next day, the Roman commanding officer ordered the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the whole Sanhedrin Council to come together so that he could figure out why they were angry with Paul. After unchaining Paul, he brought him before the Council. ^{23.1} Staring intently at the Sanhedrin Council, Paul said,

“Men! Israelites! In the sight of all people and with a clean conscience I have been living as a citizen of only the Creator’s Rule!”

² Believing the Creator’s Rule was carried out by the Temple establishment and the Roman Empire that Paul was a threat to, the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers, Ananias, commanded Paul to be hit in the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him,

“The Creator is about to strike you, you hypocrite! You are sitting there judging me according to the Law of Moses, while also breaking the Law of Moses by ordering me to be hit!”

⁴ Those standing by said,

“How dare you attack the leader of the temple-caretakers!”

⁵ Paul responded,

“Brothers, do you really think I cannot see that he is the leader of the temple-caretakers? And you are very right, it has been written in the twenty-second chapter of Exodus, *‘Do not speak harmfully to the leader of your people!’* I most definitely did not speak against the true leader of our people—Jesus of Nazareth!”

⁶ Knowing that the Sanhedrin Council was made up of two opposing political parties, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, Paul suddenly raised a contentious issue to divide the Council against itself. He shouted,

“Men! Israelites! I am a member of the political party of the Pharisees and I am a child of Pharisees as well! I am on trial and am being judged for my hope in the present reality of the resurrection of the dead!”

⁷ After Paul said this, a great argument broke out among the Pharisees and Sadducees, causing the Council to fracture in half. ⁸ This happened because the political party of Sadducees say there is no resurrection of the dead, no interaction of the Creator with his earth, and no spiritual dimension, while the political party of the Pharisees trust in all of them. ⁹ As this great argument broke out, some of the Biblical scholars from the political party of the Pharisees stood up and began shouting,

“We find nothing harmful in this man! What if a spirit or messenger from the Creator spoke to him?!”

¹⁰ When the argument escalated even further, the Roman commanding officer feared that Paul would be torn apart by them. So he instructed his soldiers to grab Paul and bring him into the Roman military compound. ¹¹ That night the Lord Jesus stood over Paul and said,

“Have courage! Just as you have been a living witness to my Way in Jerusalem, you must also be a living witness for me in Rome.”

¹² When it became day, those who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple conspired together and pledged themselves not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty men who made this pledge. ¹⁴ They went to the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the patriarchs of the rich and powerful families, saying,

“We have vowed not to eat or drink until we kill Paul! ¹⁵ You and the Sanhedrin Council need to request the Roman commanding officer to bring Paul to you again for a trial. Then we will assassinate him on the road!”

¹⁶ After hearing about this planned ambush, the son of Paul’s sister went into the Roman military compound and reported it to Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the military officers and said,

“Please take this young man to the commanding officer, for he has something important to report.”

¹⁸ So the military officer took the young man to the commanding officer and said,

“Paul, the prisoner, called me and requested that this young man be brought to you in order to deliver you a message.”

¹⁹ So the Roman commanding officer took the young man aside and asked,

“What information do you have for me?”

²⁰ The young man said,

“Those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple have conspired together by requesting that Paul be brought to the Sanhedrin Council for a trial tomorrow. ²¹ But do not listen to them and fall into this trap! For more than forty of them have pledged not to eat or drink until they ambush and assassinate Paul on his way to the trial. They are simply waiting for you to agree to move Paul to this trial.”

²² After hearing this, the Roman commanding officer sent the young man home, saying to him,

“Tell no one anything of what you told me!”

²³ Then he called for two of his military officers and said,

“Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. ²⁴ Then get a horse for Paul to ride so we can take him to Governor Felix. ²⁵ Finally, write a letter saying this:

²⁶ ‘Greetings from commanding officer Claudius Lysias to mighty Governor Felix! ²⁷ This man I have delivered to you is a Roman citizen who was arrested by those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple and was about to be killed by them. ²⁸ Wanting to know why they were upset with him, I took him before their Sanhedrin Council. ²⁹ There I learned that the unrest was about their Law of Moses and that there was nothing this man had done against Roman law that was worthy of death or prison. ³⁰ As soon as I learned of the plot to ambush him, I sent him to you and told his enemies to speak to you about it.’”

³¹ Following their orders, the soldiers took Paul and brought him through the night to Antipatris, which was forty miles northwest of Jerusalem. ³² On the next day, the horsemen took Paul the remaining twenty-six miles north to Caesarea while the foot soldiers returned to the Roman military compound in Jerusalem.

The Roman Governors | Acts 23:33—25:12

³³ When they arrived in Caesarea they gave the letter from the Roman commanding officer to Governor Felix while bringing Paul before him. ³⁴ After reading the letter, the governor asked what Roman jurisdiction Paul was under and whether Paul was from southeastern Asia Minor. ³⁵ Then the governor replied,

“I will carefully listen to your case when those with complaints against you arrive.”

Then the governor ordered Paul to be held under guard in the palace of Marcus Agrippa, the great grandson of Herod the Great. ^{24.1} After five days, the Roman-appointed leader of the temple-caretakers, Ananias, arrived in Caesarea with some patriarchs of the rich and powerful Israelite families. He also brought a lawyer named Tertullus in order to present to the governor the case against Paul. ² When he was called forward to speak, Tertullus began to present the case against Paul, saying,

“Because of your wisdom and guidance, our nation has lived with peace and has had great prosperity. ³ All of our people in all places give great thanks for you, mighty Felix! ⁴ So as not to distract you from your important and great work, I only ask that

in your wisdom and fairness you listen to us briefly.

⁵ We found this man to be a plague, causing riots and uprisings throughout civilization, especially among the Israelites who are devoted to the Jerusalem Temple. He is a key leader of the group of those who follow Jesus of Nazareth. ⁶ He tried to pollute and corrupt our Temple and so we arrested him. ⁸ When you listen to him, you will certainly see for yourself why we are bringing him before you for judgment.”

⁹ All those with Tertullus began collectively affirming this to be true. ¹⁰ The governor then turned to Paul and nodded at him to speak. Paul said,

“I am going to explain myself knowing that you are well experienced with our people. ¹¹ You are more than capable of seeing for yourself that I went to worship in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago. ¹² While I was there I was not causing arguments or riots of any kind in the Temple, the synagogues, or anywhere in the city for that matter. ¹³ It is easy to prove that they are speaking lies against me.

¹⁴ So as I stand before you, I declare my loyalty and allegiance only to the Creator and Father of all. I do this according to the Way of Jesus by trusting in his fulfillment of everything that has been written in the Law of Moses and the prophets. ¹⁵ I live in the hope that the Creator is raising the dead, both the just and the unjust, and bringing new creation to the earth. This is in fact the very same thing that these men here are hoping and waiting for! ¹⁶ Because this judgment and resurrection has already started to happen, I am striving to always live with a clean conscience in the sight of the Creator and all people.

¹⁷ So after many years away from Jerusalem, I returned with gifts and offerings for the poor of my people. ¹⁸ During my visit I was ritually cleansed and they found me in the Temple with no gathered crowd or disturbance. ¹⁹ Therefore, you need to speak to the men from western Asia Minor who are putting forward these lies against me. ²⁰ Or you need to make these men gathered here speak before the Sanhedrin Council about what injustices they think I have done. ²¹ When I stood among them I shouted this one thing, ‘I am being judged by you because I am living in the reality that the resurrection of the dead has already begun!’”

²² Because he understood the Way of Jesus and how impossible it was to legally prosecute its claims of a new creation, Felix postponed the trial and sent them all away, saying,

“When the Roman commanding officer in Jerusalem, Lysias, arrives, then I will decide this case.”

²³ Then he ordered the Roman military officer to keep Paul under guard, while allowing his friends to take care of his needs. ²⁴ After some time passed, Governor Felix and his wife, Drusilla, who was an Israelite devoted to the Jerusalem Temple, summoned Paul in order to listen to his teachings about trusting in Jesus as the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth. ²⁵ While Paul was teaching them about the true justice of Jesus, a disciplined life of self-control, and the Creator’s coming judgment, Felix became terrified and said,

“I cannot listen to anymore of this, you must leave! Give me some time and then I

will call for you again.”

²⁶ Because Felix was hoping the followers of Jesus would eventually give him a great sum of money to release Paul, he kept Paul in prison while also trying to befriend him.

²⁷ But after two years, Felix was removed from office by the Roman Empire and replaced by Porcius Festus in 60 AD. Because Felix had angered the Israelites with his violence toward them, he did them one final favor by leaving Paul in prison. ^{25.1} Three days after being installed as governor, Festus traveled from Caesarea to Jerusalem. ² There Festus gathered with the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the city officials so they could present their case against Paul. ³ They told Festus they deserved a political favor and therefore he should bring Paul to Jerusalem. This would allow them to ambush him along the road and execute him for teaching and living the Way of Jesus. ⁴ Festus told them that Paul was still in prison in Caesarea and that he was going to shortly return there. ⁵ Then he said,

“Your authorities can come with me and there in Caesarea we can put Paul on trial once again to see what the issues are.”

⁶ After staying in Jerusalem about ten days, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day he had Paul brought in for a trial. ⁷ Many Israelites who were devoted to the Jerusalem Temple gathered for the trial and began stating their case against Paul. None of their accusations, however, allowed Festus to prosecute Paul according to Roman law. ⁸ Paul then said to the court,

“I have not rebelled against the Law of Moses, against the Temple, or against the Roman emperor.”

⁹ Unable to officially prosecute Paul and yet still wanting to do a political favor to the Israelites, Festus asked Paul,

“Are you willing to return to Jerusalem in order to stand trial before me for these things?”

¹⁰ Knowing that he would be ambushed on such a journey, Paul said,

“I am already standing before the judgment seat of the Roman Empire. I have committed no injustice against the Israelites who are devoted to the Jerusalem Temple, as you yourself can plainly see. ¹¹ If I have done something worthy of death, then execute me! But if there is no truth to these accusations, then no one is able to hand me over to them as a political favor! Therefore, I call upon the Roman emperor!”

¹² Then Festus, after speaking with his advisors, answered,

“Because you are a Roman citizen who has called upon the emperor, you will go stand trial before the emperor himself!”

The Ruler of Israel | Acts 25:13—26:32

¹³ A few days later in 60 AD, Marcus Agrippa came to Caesarea with his sister Bernice to see Governor Festus. In 50 AD, Marcus Agrippa had been appointed by Emperor Claudius

to rule the region, to appoint the leader of the temple-caretakers, and to control the Temple in Jerusalem on behalf of Rome. ¹⁴ During this long stay in Caesarea, Governor Festus frustratedly talked to Marcus Agrippa about Paul's case, saying,

“A man named Paul was left behind in prison by Felix. ¹⁵ When I was in Jerusalem, the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the patriarchs of the rich and powerful families asked me to hand this man over to them so they could kill him. ¹⁶ To this I answered,

‘Rome does not hand over a man as a political favor unless he has had a fair trial and judgment.’

¹⁷ Therefore, I immediately called for a trial the next day and instructed the man to be brought in for questioning. ¹⁸ His accusers stood before me and presented nothing that was worthy of Roman punishment. ¹⁹ All their complaints were about some debate about their religion and some man named Jesus, who had been killed, that Paul was claiming was back from the dead. ²⁰ Because the investigation was going nowhere helpful, I asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there. ²¹ But then Paul irrationally called upon the decision of the emperor himself. So I instructed him to be held in prison until I could send him to the emperor.”

²² Marcus Agrippa said to Festus,

“Let me listen to what the man has to say in order to see if I can help you.”

Festus responded,

“Excellent! You will listen to him tomorrow.”

²³ So the next day, Marcus Agrippa and Bernice entered the courtroom accompanied by the Roman commanding officers and the rich and powerful city officials. Festus then instructed for Paul to be brought in. ²⁴ Festus spoke to the assembly, saying,

“Ruler Marcus Agrippa and all those present with us, this is the man that all those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple are angry with, saying,

‘He must be put to death!’

²⁵ But after judging him I determined that he had done nothing worthy of death according to Roman law. But then he used his right as a Roman citizen and called upon the emperor. Therefore, I have no choice but to send him to Rome for trial. ²⁶ The problem is that I have nothing to write to the lord emperor about him, explaining why he deserves the emperor's time and energy. Therefore, I am bringing him before you all, especially before you, Ruler Marcus Agrippa, so you can judge him and help me find something substantial to present to the emperor. ²⁷ For it is political suicide if I send a man to the emperor for trial when there is no legal case against him!”

^{26.1} Then Marcus Agrippa turned to Paul and said,

“You are now permitted to speak about yourself and explain why you are here.”

Then Paul extended his hand and began explaining,

² “Ruler Marcus Agrippa, it is a privilege to have our paths cross and stand before you today to explain why those who are devoted to the Jerusalem Temple are angry

with me. ³ I am especially grateful because you know all the customs and debates of Israel. Therefore, I am begging you to listen to me with patience.

⁴ From my youth I was trained in Jerusalem and so all my people are familiar with my life and upbringing. ⁵ They saw it all firsthand and so they can testify that I lived as a strict and faithful member of the political party of the Pharisees. ⁶ And now I am being judged because I am living my life based upon the hope of the Creator's commitment to our ancestors. ⁷ Day and night, the twelve tribes of our people are giving their allegiance to the Creator as they wait for him to fulfill his promises. Marcus Agrippa, I am in trouble with those who are devoted to the Jerusalem Temple because of the hope of resurrection. ⁸ How am I being unfaithful by trusting that the Creator is raising the dead?

⁹ Listen, I myself previously thought it was necessary to oppose and fight against the teachings and Way of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ After receiving permission from the leaders of the temple-caretakers, I did this in Jerusalem by imprisoning and even overseeing the execution of many of Jesus's followers. ¹¹ I hunted them down in all the synagogues, punishing them and trying to force them to renounce Jesus. I was so obsessed with trying to destroy them that I even began hunting them down in non-Israelite cities!

¹² During this time, I was journeying to Damascus in Syria with the authority and permission of the leaders of the temple-caretakers to imprison the followers of Jesus. ¹³ Marcus Agrippa, when I was on that road at midday we were suddenly struck with a light from heaven, much brighter than the sun itself. ¹⁴ After we all fell to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew,

‘Saul! Saul! Why are you hunting me down?! Working against the Creator is pointless, you are only destroying yourself!’

¹⁵ I said,

‘Who are you, Lord?!’

The Lord said,

‘I am Jesus, the one who is alive and present in those you are hunting down. ¹⁶ Get up! Get on your feet! I am revealing myself to you in order to rip you out of your old life and transform you into a living witness of what you are seeing and all that you will see in the years ahead. ¹⁷ I am rescuing you from the self-destructive path of both your people and the nations of the earth. ¹⁸ I am sending you to open their blind eyes to my truth. I want them to turn away from the darkness of civilization and return to the light—away from the satanic desire-to-be-in-control and return to the Creator. If they turn to me and trust my teachings, then they will be liberated from their disobedience and will share in the full inheritance of the Father.’

¹⁹ Marcus Agrippa, this heavenly vision of Jesus changed my life forever. ²⁰ From then on, I began teaching all people to change their ways of thinking and turn to the Creator by faithfully obeying the words of Jesus.

²¹ Two years ago, on my last trip to Jerusalem I was arrested for the cause of Jesus when they found me in the Temple. Ever since then they have been trying to figure out a way to kill me. ²² But the Creator has saved me from this fate and now I stand as a living witness to all people, both rich and poor, both weak and powerful, as I proclaim exactly what the prophets and Moses foretold. ²³ Jesus, the Messiah and Chosen Ruler of the earth, suffered death at the hands of civilization's authorities, but then the Creator raised him from the dead in the middle of history! This marked the beginning of the Creator's new creation! Therefore, the present reality of the Creator's Rule and his new creation must be announced to all people throughout the whole earth!"

²⁴ When Paul said this, Governor Festus shouted in a great voice,

"Paul, you are insane! The Scriptures you read have made you crazy!"

²⁵ But Paul responded,

"I am not insane, Governor Festus. What I am saying is the serious and urgent truth.

²⁶ In fact, Marcus Agrippa is well aware of what I am saying. I don't believe that anything I am saying is new to him, for everything that happened with Jesus is publicly well-known. ²⁷ Marcus Agrippa, do you trust what the prophets say? I can sense that you trust their words."

²⁸ Marcus Agrippa said to Paul,

"Do you really think you can persuade me with this little speech to become an apprentice of Jesus?!"

²⁹ Paul replied,

"Whether it takes a little or a lot, I hope the Creator transforms all of you who are listening to me today, just as he did me! Except I wouldn't wish these chains on anyone!"

³⁰ Then Marcus Agrippa, Governor Festus, Bernice, and all those sitting with them, stood up. ³¹ After they left, they spoke with each other, saying,

"This man is doing nothing that Roman law says is worthy of death or prison."

³² Marcus Agrippa said to Festus,

"This man could have been released! Too bad he called upon the emperor, there is nothing we can do."

Journey to Rome | Acts 27:1—28:15

^{27.1} In August of 60 AD, I—the author—rejoined Paul and it was determined that it was time for us to sail to Rome in Italy. Paul and some other prisoners were put under the supervision of a Roman military officer named Julius, who was part of the emperor's own company of soldiers. ² We caught a ride on a boat that was heading back to Asia Minor and we were joined by Aristarchus from Thessalonica. ³ Our first stop was a little north on the coast in Sidon where Julius kindly and humanely allowed Paul to be taken care of by some friends. ⁴ From there, we sailed around the island of Cyprus on its east side because the winds were opposing our movements to the west. ⁵ After sailing through the deep sea

along the southern coast of Asia Minor, we arrived in Myra on the southwestern end of Asia Minor. ⁶ There the Roman military officer got us a ride on another boat that was sailing from Alexandria in Egypt to Italy. ⁷ With the winds fighting against us, we then slowly sailed west for many days before heading south to the island of Crete. ⁸ After slowly sailing west along Crete, we were forced to stop only part way along the southern side of the island.

⁹ After many days passed, the Day of Atonement in late September came and went, putting us in the heart of the dangerous and risky sailing season that lasted from mid September to mid November. ¹⁰ Seeing this, Paul spoke to the group, saying,

“Men, we must not proceed any further! If we go, then this trip will bring great humiliation and destruction to the boat, its cargo, and even our lives!”

¹¹ But they ignored Paul’s warning and the Roman military officer, confident in the power of technology and human innovation, convinced the captain of the boat to arrogantly proceed. ¹² The ship’s crew had determined that the current harbor was undesirable for waiting out the stormy season and so they wanted to get to a safer harbor on the far western end of the island of Crete. ¹³ While they were deciding how to proceed, a south wind began blowing that allowed us to begin carefully moving west along the coast of Crete. ¹⁴ But then suddenly the winds shifted and a great wind from the east came upon us. ¹⁵ The boat was caught in the wind and it was too strong to oppose, so we gave in and began being uncontrollably pushed west. ¹⁶ While heading past a small island just to the south of Crete, we were barely able to keep the small landing-boat from being ripped out to sea. ¹⁷ The landing-boat was secured to the ship with ropes and the crew began fixing its damage. Fearing that they would be driven into and destroyed in the sand bars off the coast of Africa, they started abandoning some of the precious and expensive cargo so the ship would sit more shallow in the sea. ¹⁸ The next day, the storm intensified and the crew began to abandon even more cargo, realizing that all the wealth and possessions in the world would do them no good. ¹⁹ On the third day, everyone got involved as all the cargo was thrown into the sea by hand. ²⁰ As the storm raged on for many days and we could not see the sun or stars, all hope of being saved was lost. ²¹ Many had stopped eating because of their anxiety and so Paul stood in the midst of them and said,

“Because you did not listen to my word from the Creator and instead trusted in the strength of human technology, we are enduring this humiliation and destruction. ²² But now I am urging you to turn your trust to the Creator. None of your lives will be lost, only the boat and all its wealth will be destroyed. ²³ For the Creator of all, to whom I pledge my full allegiance, sent a messenger to me last night, ²⁴ saying,

‘Do not fear, Paul! You will stand before the Roman emperor. Look! The Creator has generously chosen to save you and all those who are sailing with you.’

²⁵ Therefore, trust in the Creator, just as I am! His promise to me will be fulfilled! ²⁶ But know that we will be shipwrecked on some island, we will lose everything we

have, and this boat that you trust in will be completely destroyed.”

²⁷ During the middle of the fourteenth night, while the storm was pushing us west through the Adriatic Sea, the sailors began to think we were getting close to some land. ²⁸ So they dropped a line and found the depth to be twenty wingspans. A little while later they again dropped a line and found the depth to have gone down to fifteen wingspans. ²⁹ Fearing that the boat would run into some rocks in the dark, they threw out four anchors and began praying for day to come. ³⁰ Wanting to escape the ship, the sailors lowered the landing-boat to the sea, pretending like they were going to add more anchors to the front of the ship. ³¹ Paul said to the Roman military officer and to his soldiers,

“If these men do not stay on the ship, then you will not be saved!”

³² So the soldiers cut the cords of the landing-boat and our last safety-net fell away into the sea. ³³ As the night was coming to a close, Paul began encouraging everyone to share food together, saying,

“Today is the fourteenth day you have gone without food because of anxiety over what is happening. ³⁴ Therefore, I am encouraging you to share food with each other—for you will be saved! Not a hair from your heads will be destroyed!”

³⁵ After he said this, Paul took a loaf of bread, openly thanked the Creator for it, broke it into pieces, and began to eat. ³⁶ Being energized by his worry-free example, everyone else on the ship began to eat as well. ³⁷ In all, there were two hundred seventy-six people on the ship. ³⁸ After eating their fill, they emptied the ship of all its extra weight by throwing all the extra food into the sea. ³⁹ When it finally became day, they saw some unrecognizable land in the distance and began discussing whether they could get the ship onto the section with a beach. ⁴⁰ They decided to cut the ship free from the anchors while also letting the rudders run free. Then they put the top-sail up into the wind and pointed it toward the beach. ⁴¹ But the wind drove the ship into a sandbar where its front got stuck. The ship did not immediately tip over, but the force of the sea against the rear of the ship made it inevitable. ⁴² The Roman soldiers wanted to kill all their prisoners so that none of them could possibly escape. ⁴³ But the Roman military officer wanted to keep Paul alive and so he stopped them. Then he quickly instructed all those who could swim to jump out of the ship and swim to shore. ⁴⁴ Then he instructed everyone else to grab a piece of wood to float on. So all two hundred seventy-six people abandoned the boat, a symbol of civilization. By doing this, they all made it safely to shore.

^{28.1} Once we got to shore they figured out that we were on the island of Malta. ² The indigenous people of the island, whom the Romans considered to be uncivilized barbarians and savages, immediately welcomed us and offered us extraordinary hospitality. They took us to their shelters and built a fire to get us out of the cold and rain. ³ Paul helped gather wood and as he put the logs on the fire a venomous snake jumped out and bit his hand. ⁴ When the indigenous people saw the deadly snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another,

“This man must be a murderer! For he survived the sea, but justice will not allow

him to escape with his life!”

⁵ Paul then pulled the snake, representing the satanic desire-to-be-in-control, from his hand and threw it into the fire. ⁶ They all began watching Paul, expecting him to swell up and drop dead. But as the moments passed, nothing happened to him and he was unharmed, for he was under the protection of the Creator. This stunned the indigenous people and they began wondering if Paul was a god. ⁷ One of the landowners of the island, named Publius, welcomed us with open arms into his home for three days. ⁸ The man’s father was stuck in bed with a great fever and with diarrhea. Paul went to his bedside, prayed for him, placed his hands upon him, and healed him. ⁹ After this happened, all those on the island who were in need of healing came to Paul and received his care. ¹⁰ The indigenous people took care of us like their own for months and shared with us everything that we needed.

¹¹ After three months we found another ship which had passed the stormy season in Egypt. This ship was adorned with the symbol of the Gemini Twins of Zeus, who the Romans believed were the protectors of those who travel. ¹² We sailed north to the island of Sicily and stayed there for three days. ¹³ Leaving Sicily, we sailed north to the tip of Italy in one day. The next day we caught a wind from the south that carried us all the way to Puteoli, which was about one hundred and forty miles south of Rome. ¹⁴ We found some apprentices of Jesus in that city and stayed to teach them for seven days before heading to Rome. ¹⁵ The brothers in Rome heard about our presence and headed south for thirty-three miles on the Appian Way to meet us and escort us into the city. When Paul saw these apprentices of Jesus from Rome, he gave thanks to the Creator and was greatly encouraged.

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¹⁶ When we got to Rome in February of 61 AD, Paul was allowed to stay in his own place as long as a soldier was guarding him at all times. ¹⁷ After three days in the city, Paul called together the leaders of the Israelites who had returned to the city after having been banished in 50 AD. When they gathered together, Paul said to them,

“Men! Israelites! Even though I did nothing against our people and their traditions, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸ After I stood trial, the Romans wanted to set me free because they could find no legal reason to put me to death. ¹⁹ But while those devoted to the Jerusalem Temple were plotting against me, I called upon the emperor, even though I will say nothing bad about my people to him. ²⁰ Therefore, I called you together today so I could see you and speak to you myself and let you know that I am a prisoner of Rome because of our people’s hope in the resurrection of the dead.”

²¹ They replied to Paul,

“No one from Jerusalem has written us about you nor has any Israelite spoken anything bad about you. ²² Besides, we much prefer to hear everything straight from your own mouth, especially about the Way of Jesus, for it is being spoken against

everywhere.”

²³ Then they set aside a day to meet again with Paul.

On the appointed day they gathered from first light until evening. During that time Paul taught them many things, all of it revolving around the Creator’s Rule coming through Jesus as foretold by the Law of Moses and the prophets. ²⁴ Some began to be persuaded by his words, but many others were not. ²⁵ When they were leaving and were arguing among themselves, Paul said to them,

“The Creator’s Spirit was right, speaking through the sixth chapter of the prophet Isaiah to your ancestors, ²⁶ saying,

‘Go to the people and say, “You will try to listen, but you will not understand! You will see, but you will not perceive!”’ ²⁷ *The hearts of the people have become hardened—they listen with distracted ears or don’t listen at all. They will not see with their eyes, they will not listen with their ears, they will not understand with their hearts, and they will not turn back to my healing arms.’*

²⁸ Therefore, let it be known to you that the Creator’s rescue and liberation has been sent to the other nations of the earth and they will listen!”

³⁰ Paul remained under guard in Rome for two years while having to pay for his own place to live. But he was able to see all those who came to him. ³¹ So without hesitation and with all confidence, Paul was proclaiming and teaching in the heart of the Roman Empire that the Creator’s Rule had arrived and that Jesus was the Chosen Ruler and Lord of the whole earth.