

# The Way of Jesus

Catechism

Luke Kammrath

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# The Story of the Way





## The Father's Creation

### † Creation Versus Civilization †

In the beginning, the voice of the Creator speaks into the silence. The heavens, the sea, the earth, and all plants and animals come to life. Every creature is given its proper place and role. The Creator gives the plants for food to the animals. Every habitat and relationship is built on balanced giving and receiving. The Creator, who is our Father, breathes into the earth, who is our Mother, and humans are born of spirit and soil. Humans are created to serve and care for this beautiful and wild garden planet. Humans are called to relate to each other (politics) and everything else in creation (economics) with the Creator's own love and generosity. The Creator is pleased to live within and among his creation. The Creator joyfully provides, protects, and loves his whole creation. Heaven and earth are united as one and all creation is singing the glory of the Creator. But humans are not content to trust our heavenly Father for everything we need. Trusting in our own wisdom and smarts, humans desire to escape wilderness life. We want control. Humans want to provide for and protect ourselves. So humans start clearing land to create human-centered habitats. Farms, mines, and cities are built and food is stored up in large amounts. The Way of Civilization is born, but it comes at a great cost. Civilization is built on greedy consuming and unlimited growth that wipes out the Creator's creation. Humans endlessly take, own, and exploit land, animals, and people. This causes destruction and death to take hold of the earth. Heartbroken, the Creator rescues all animals and the family of the last faithful human. He does this by cleansing the earth of all Civilization through a great flood. But humans do not listen to this natural disaster and instead rebuild Civilization to escape dependence on the Creator. The Creator slows and limits Civilization's destruction by turning humans competitively against ourselves. Following this, one Civilization after another arises. Humans battle humans in an effort to rule, own, and control the creation. The whole creation is falling apart. It is waiting on the Creator to free it from the endless greed, violence, and progress of the Way of Civilization.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gen 1:1—11:9; Job 1:21; Ps 19:1-4, 96:1-13, 97:1-7, 139:1-15; Is 55:6-12; Jer 12:4-11; Hos 4:1-3; Joel 2:3; Hab 2:8-17; Sir 40:1; Rom 1:18-32, 8:19-22, 10:13-18

### † Promises to Provide †

To undo Civilization, the Creator makes a promise to a childless couple living in the heart of Civilization in 2100 BC. He calls seventy-five-year-old Abraham and his infertile wife, Sarah, to leave the Way of Civilization. The Creator declares that through them he will create a new people that will help rescue the creation from its slavery to Civilization. So Abraham and Sarah trustingly journey into a wilderness land where the Creator provides for and protects them. But a food shortage scares Abraham into relying on and acquiring great wealth from Egyptian Civilization. Then, after ten years of waiting for a child, Abraham impatiently tries to control the Creator's promise by having a child with his Egyptian servant. But the Creator rejects this human plan. After fifteen more years of waiting, the Creator finally provides a son named Isaac to Abraham's ninety-year-old wife, Sarah. Having learned some hard lessons, Abraham is now loyal to the Creator even above his own family. Abraham trusts the Creator's ability to provide, protect, and bring life from death. There is now hope for a new kind of people who will serve the creation and trust in the Creator's care. Isaac follows in this faithful path as he trusts in the Creator instead of relying on Civilization during a food shortage. But Isaac's first son, Esau, wanders from this path. Esau cares more about food security than the Creator's promise to Abraham. Jacob, the younger son, takes Esau's place, has twelve sons, and has his name changed to Israel, meaning "wrestles with God." Israel's older sons are jealous of their younger brother Joseph. Joseph is Israel's favorite son who arrogantly claims he will rule over his family. So the brothers sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt. But Joseph is able to work himself into power. Eventually Israel's family moves to Egypt to escape a food shortage and receive provision and protection from Joseph. Their worry over food and the future leads them to trust Civilization's large storehouses of food. As Israel's twelve sons grow into twelve tribes, they comfortably settle in Egypt under Civilization's promise of safety and security.<sup>2</sup>

### † Into the Wilderness †

Trusting the Way of Civilization to provide and protect turns the people of Israel into slaves for hundreds of years. Having never forgotten them, the wild and uncontrollable Creator steps in to help. Out in the wilderness, the Creator calls eighty-year-old Moses to lead the twelve tribes of Israel out of slavery in Civilization. In response, the Egyptian Emperor distracts the people from listening to the Creator by keeping them endlessly busy and productive. But in 1450 BC, Egypt's continued abuse of the creation backfires. Ten destructive plagues and natural disasters from the Creator fall upon their Civilization. These plagues "pass over" the people of Israel and allow Moses to lead them out of Civilization after 430 years of slavery to its Way. But the Egyptian Emperor chases down the people. Stuck between the Egyptian army and an uncrossable sea, the people of Israel are angry and scared. Moses

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<sup>2</sup> Gen 11:29—13:2, 15:1-7, 16:1—17:22, 21:1-7, 22:1-18, 25:19—26:5, 28:10-22, 32:22-32, 35:22-26, 37:1-36, 41:39—42:3, 45:4-28, 47:11-31, 50:12-26

assures them that the Creator will fight for them. They need to stop worrying and patiently trust in the Creator to provide and protect. Suddenly, a great wind miraculously spreads apart the sea. The people enter the safety of the wilderness, leaving Civilization behind. But once they are in the wilderness, the people struggle with being free. They want to return to Civilization's comforts. The Creator patiently cleanses them of Civilization's Way for forty years. During this time they painfully learn how to rely on the Creator alone as ruler. They learn how to trust him for their daily needs one day at a time. Yet out of fear, the people refuse to listen directly to the Creator. So Moses becomes the interpreter of the Creator's law, which is meant to limit the people's violence and greed. Moses teaches them to practice sacrifice—letting go and giving back the best to the Creator and his creation. They also learn to practice Sabbath—stopping the busy pursuits of Civilization's Way to be in harmony with people, animals, and land. There is now hope that the creation will be healed through these people who are being trained in the wilderness ways of self-restraint, love, and freedom.<sup>3</sup>

### † Return to Civilization †

As the twelve tribes of Israel leave the wilderness, their daily trust and reliance on the Creator disappears. Their addiction to the Way of Civilization returns. Instead of listening directly to the Creator, the people listen to the voices of Moses and his followers. Moses had tried to contain the Creator in a tent and had twisted the Creator's commands. These voices lead the people into continual violence with their neighbors. Eventually they demand a human ruler who will take them into battle. To teach them a lesson, the Creator allows them to choose a human as their ruler. The Creator knows this will only lead them further into slavery to the Way of Civilization. In 1010 BC, the Creator chooses their second ruler, a humble and lowly shepherd named David. He does this to show the people that even the ideal person will fail when taking power. The real problem is not the leader, but the Way of Civilization that takes control of the human heart. As expected, the power and wealth of Civilization change David's good heart and he becomes a greedy and violent man. David feels guilty for his own fancy palace and makes plans to build a temple. He does this to expand his power over the twelve tribes and to contain the Creator's presence in Jerusalem. Because of David's violent ways, the Creator refuses to let David build a temple for him. However, the Creator still generously promises to bring his true ruler, the Christ, from David's family. Undeterred, David tries to make the temple project and the promise of the Creator a reality through his son, Solomon. Representing the height of Civilization's Way and wisdom, Solomon kills his opponents to get into power. He then disobeys the Creator by storing up wealth, creating an army, and

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<sup>3</sup> Ex 1:1—3:17, 5:1—6:13, 11:1—12:13, 12:29-41, 13:17—17:7, 19:1—20:21, 23:9—24:18; Lev 19:9-18, 25:1-55; Dt 6:4-9, 8:1-20, 12:6-7, 15:1-11



enslaving his people. He also takes hundreds of wives, puts the people under the power of Egyptian Civilization, and builds food storehouses and a temple. This increase of wealth and power causes many of the people to believe that the Way of Civilization will finally protect them and provide them with everything they want.<sup>4</sup>

### † Collapse & New Hope †

Immediately after Solomon's death in 931 BC, Civilization's illusion of success and progress begins to collapse. Solomon's abuse of his people drives his kingdom to an ugly divorce. The northern ten tribes of Israel split away from the southern two tribes. Each group declares their own human ruler. During this time, the voices of the creation and the prophets call the people to leave the madness of Civilization behind. They urge the people to follow the Creator alone as ruler. If they do not, then destruction will come. The land will vomit out their poisonous presence. But the people and rulers harden their hearts and try to silence these voices. They stubbornly hold on to debts, keep their slaves, refuse to let the land and animals rest, and continue looking to the Way of Civilization to provide and protect. After a couple hundred years in 722 BC, the Assyrian Empire marches through the land of Israel. This empire destroys and enslaves the northern kingdom and puts the southern kingdom on the edge of death. A hundred years later, the Egyptian Empire conquers the weakened southern kingdom before the Babylonian Empire finishes the job in 586 BC. The Jerusalem temple and the royal line of David are destroyed. Many of the people are captured and hauled off to Babylon. With the land vomiting them out and with their dreams of Civilization destroyed, the children of Abraham wonder if the Creator has totally abandoned them. However, the prophets declare that the destruction of their lives in Civilization is a good thing. There is now hope of a new wilderness life led by the promised ruler from David's family. This Christ will be the true voice and Son of the Creator. He will put the Creator's pure law and Spirit into their hearts. He will show them how to trust the Creator to provide and protect. Through the Christ they will learn how to live in harmony with the Creator, who will renew all creation into a beautiful garden.<sup>5</sup>

### † 490 Years of Exile †

After 49 years in captivity and exile, the people of Israel are allowed to return to the land of their ancestors. The Creator's messenger, Gabriel, declares that if the people restore Jerusalem they will suffer 490 more years of exile until the Christ finally sets them free. Not learning from their mistakes or listening to the prophets, the people of Israel return to the Way of Civilization.

<sup>4</sup> Num 20:7-12; Dt 1:26-40, 13:1-5, 17:14-17, 20:16-18; Josh 4:19—7:26, 11:10-12; Judg 2:1-23; 1 Sam 8:1-22, 13:13-14, 16:1-13; 2 Sam 7:1-17; 1 Kgs 2:19—3:15, 4:26, 5:13-18, 6:1—7:8, 9:10-22, 10:14—11:3; 1 Chr 22:1-10; Jer 5:23-31, 14:13-16, 23:9-40; Ezek 22:23-31

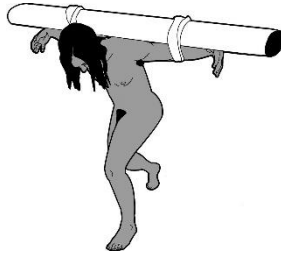
<sup>5</sup> Lev 18:24-28, 20:22-24, 26:27-43; Dt 18:15-22; 1 Kgs 12:1-33; 2 Kgs 17:6-23, 18:9-13, 25:1-21; Is 6:8-13, 9:2-7, 11:1-10, 31:1-9, 58:1-12, 61:1-11, 65:17-25; Jer 3:12-14, 15:1-9, 17:5-10, 31:27-34, 34:8-17, 52:4-16; Ezek 36:22—37:14; Dan 7:1-27; Amos 5:4-15; Mic 3:9-12; Zech 9:9-17

## The Story of the Way

They rebuild the temple in Jerusalem in 516 BC. Then they fully restore the city in 458 BC. As the people try to rebuild their previous wealth and power, the Way of Civilization continues to destroy them. Four different empires take turns conquering and ruling over the people of Israel. In 167 BC, the ruler of the Greek Empire outlaws Israel's way of life and forces Greek culture upon them. Many of the people fearlessly refuse to adopt the Greek way of life. They willingly die while trusting in the Creator's power to raise the dead. But then, Judah Maccabeus, who they hope is the Christ, leads a violent revolt. They are able to cleanse the temple and make an alliance with the Roman Empire. They regain some independence in 142 BC under the rule of Judah's brother, Simon. But the violent Way of Civilization only gives birth to more violence. In 63 BC their alliance backfires and Israel is conquered by the Roman Empire. Addicted to the Way of Civilization, the twelve tribes of Israel lose track of their identity as a wilderness people. Most of them stubbornly refuse to listen to the Creator speaking through the voices of his prophets and the rest of his creation. The people of Israel become diverse in their beliefs and practices. They constantly debate about who they are and what their God has called them to be. They even question whether their heavenly Father will ever return to lead and rule them again. They wonder if he will ever send his chosen Son and Christ to rescue them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ezra 1:1-11, 6:1-18, 7:11-26, 9:5-9; Neh 2:17-20; Dan 9:20-27; 1 Macc 3:1—4:61, 8:17-32, 13:41-42, 14:35-49; 2 Macc 5:11—8:7



## The Son's Way

### † The Way Is Born †

In 4 BC, the Creator sends his messenger, Gabriel, to an old priest. He declares that this priest's infertile wife will give birth to a son named John. John will prepare the way for the Creator's return. The rich and powerful priest doubts this message and then is silenced by the Creator. Six months later, the Creator sends Gabriel to an unmarried teenage girl named Mary. He declares that Mary will give birth to a son named Jesus. Jesus will be the Christ from David's line they have waited on for 490 years. Poor and lowly Mary trusts the Creator, even though she will be a lifelong outcast for having a child while being unmarried. Mary rejoices because the Creator is coming to earth to set things right. He is tearing down the rich and powerful of Civilization and lifting up the poor and lowly. In the spring of 3 BC, John is born. Due to attacks against his family, John grows up in the wilderness. In the fall of 3 BC, Jesus is born into poverty, shame, and rejection. He is welcomed only by animals and those outside of Civilization. As Jesus grows up, he has a deep love for the prophets. He also frustrates his family by treating the Creator as his only Father, provider, and protector. Years later, in 26 AD out in the wilderness of Israel, a voice speaks into the silence. John begins declaring that the Creator is returning and the Christ is coming. People need to change their way of thinking and be Baptized into a new life of love and generosity. In 29 AD, Jesus receives this Baptism. He hears the voice of our heavenly Father name him as his chosen Son. Jesus will be the renewal of the faithful line of humanity. He will reject the Way of Civilization and faithfully wander with the Creator in the wilderness. Trusting this word, Jesus becomes filled with the Creator's Spirit and disappears into the wilderness.<sup>7</sup>

### † The Way of Freedom †

For forty days in the wilderness, Jesus is cleansed of the poisonous and addictive Way of Civilization. He lets go of following selfish desires, grabbing power and wealth, and trying to control the Creator. Jesus then begins

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:1—3:38

declaring that the Creator's Rule is arriving. The Creator alone is in charge. The whole creation is being called to live in the continual generosity and freedom of the Creator's Sabbath. Slaves must never be taken. Debts must never be held. The land must never be owned. A new wilderness Way of life is freeing all creatures from the control of Civilization. This message, however, gets Jesus thrown out of his hometown and almost killed. But Jesus refuses to back down. He begins freeing people from the spiritual, physical, and social forces of Civilization that control the mind and body. Jesus reveals that all people are enslaved by the Way of Civilization and the desire for control. Freedom is only found by leaving everything behind and becoming Jesus's disciple—a lifelong student and apprentice who follows Jesus's example. Jesus calls the crowds to break free from Civilization and follow him on the Way of the Creator's Rule. As he does all this, Jesus breaks Civilization's laws so he can obey the Creator's laws. This causes Civilization's authorities to want Jesus dead. Jesus responds to their rejection by calling twelve men to be the new sons of Israel. Jesus is creating a new people for the Creator—the Body of Christ. It is for all who obey the Creator's word. Jesus then teaches his disciples how to be this wilderness community while living in the middle of Civilization. They must make a break with the spiritual core of Civilization's Way. They must embrace the wilderness Way of loving their enemies. When listened to, this word from Jesus has so much power that it can heal every sickness of Civilization and raise the dead. The problem is that the Way of Civilization has a powerful grip on people, even on a prophet like John. It blinds them and closes off their hearts to Jesus's word and the Creator's Rule.<sup>8</sup>

### † The Way of Trust †

As Jesus spreads the Creator's Rule, he reveals that freedom only comes through faithful obedience to the Creator's word. This trust more easily takes root in those who are already poor, weak, and empty. The rich, powerful, and busy must first undergo spiritual and social death. The responsibilities and worries of life must be cleared out to make room for the Creator's word. As Jesus takes his disciples into foreign lands, they begin to see that fear and its desire for control is the great enemy of trust. When Jesus saves a man from the grip of Roman Civilization, fear causes the people to reject Jesus and throw him out of their land. Fear is the foundation of Civilization and it prevents healing and peace. So Jesus helps his disciples conquer this fear by emptying them of all their resources. He challenges them to rely on the Creator for everything they need. As part of this, they must freely share everything they have. Through free receiving and giving they are spreading the Creator's Rule. They are trusting the Creator to provide and protect instead of trusting in Civilization's systems. Jesus then escapes into the wilderness to pray to his Father and discern his path. He begins teaching his disciples that they must say no to their desire for control over their lives. They must be ready every day to die for the Creator's Rule. Above all, they must follow Jesus and learn from

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 4:1—7:35

him. Jesus is going to lead them on the Way of being truly human. Together they will confront Civilization's authorities, be rejected, and killed. They will do this while trusting that the Father will raise them from the dead. Jesus's disciples are overwhelmed and confused by this. During a time of prayer, the heavenly Father speaks directly to the disciples. He declares that they must listen to Jesus above all others, even above Moses and the prophets. But, because of their addiction to the Way of Civilization, Jesus's disciples are still unable to hear or see the truth. They continue to worry about their lives, grab at power and greatness, and be distracted with busyness over family and work. But Jesus is not discouraged. He expands his mission to all creation while looking for the right time to confront Civilization.<sup>9</sup>

### † The Way of Life †

During his expanded mission, Jesus teaches his disciples how to have eternal life in the present moment. Eternal life means humbly obeying the Creator with one's entire self. It means loving even the most difficult within the Creator's creation. This life of love must be shaped by attentive listening to Jesus and bold praying to the heavenly Father. Jesus's disciples must be free of all hypocrisy while letting go of any secret or hidden life. They must not be controlled by worry over safety and security. They must generously give to those in need. Civilization's Way is wide and it leads to destruction. But the Way of eternal life is narrow and only a few people walk it faithfully. The narrow path requires the daily work of stripping oneself of ego, power, and wealth. It means rejecting the busyness of life, the influence of family, and all ownership. The Creator will rescue those who humble themselves in this way. But he will tear down those who lift themselves up. The Creator wants all those lost in the Way of Civilization to be rescued into eternal life. With open arms he welcomes even the most broken and addicted to return to him. They need to walk away from Civilization's Way of trusting in money and possessions. They need to turn to the wilderness Way of submissive and humble trust in the Creator. Jesus warns his disciples that Civilization's systems are a dead end and will be destroyed. So they must leave behind Civilization's Way everyday of their lives. It will take continuous prayer and humble child-like living to do this. Letting go of all things, joining the community of Jesus, and trusting in the Creator to daily provide and protect is the only way to be truly alive.<sup>10</sup>

### † The Way Defies Civilization †

Ready to confront Civilization, Jesus goes to Jerusalem. On the way there, Jesus continues freeing both rich and poor. He calls everyone in Civilization to follow him. He warns them about the serious danger and risk of disobeying those in power. Boldly leading the Way, Jesus then peacefully rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, in a mock military parade. After weeping over the city, Jesus shuts down Israel's temple—the political, economic, and

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 7:36—10:24

<sup>10</sup> Luke 10:25—18:30

religious center of their Civilization. He then foretells the destruction coming upon all Civilization. The authorities are shocked and angry. They want to kill Jesus, but there are too many people gathered all around him. So they begin questioning Jesus, trying to get him in trouble with the Roman Empire. But Jesus silences them with his answers and fills the temple with his teachings. He condemns the Way of Civilization and its attempts to control the world. Disgusted, Jesus leaves the temple for the final time. He gathers with his disciples on a mountain outside the city. He prepares them for Civilization's destruction and the rebirth coming upon the earth. Knowing this time is quickly approaching, Jesus returns to the city. There, with his disciples, he celebrates and redefines the Passover Feast. Jesus is the true bread of life and the only Way to freedom. He is leading his disciples out of slavery to the Way of Civilization so they can walk his servant Way. Instead of sacrificing others, Jesus is giving his life to rescue them from Civilization. His self-sacrifice is freeing them to be the Creator's wilderness people. Jesus is transforming his disciples into the Body of Christ—as a community they will be his physical presence on earth and they will continue his healing and freeing work.<sup>11</sup>

### † The Way of the Creator's Rule †

Anticipating the arrival of the Creator's Rule, Jesus prepares himself by spending the night in prayer. His disciples, however, fall asleep. Suddenly, one of his disciples shows up to give him to the authorities. Jesus is grabbed and arrested. Jesus stands firm and trusts the Father's path for his life. However, his unprepared disciples give in to fear and control by fighting, fleeing, and denying any connection to him. Jesus is dragged off to be put on trial for attacking Civilization's Way. He is condemned by Civilization's authorities. The crowds turn against him in favor of supporting a violent revolutionary. Convicted as an enemy of Civilization, Jesus is given over to death. He is nailed to a cross on April 3, 33 AD, in what looks like a victory for Civilization. But Jesus refuses to change his course. He continues to abandon the power of Civilization's Way. He forgives his enemies, offers himself as a sacrifice, and puts his entire life into his Father's hands. As he loses everything and dies, Jesus continues to trust and rely on his Father. Through this, the Creator's Rule arrives in its fullness. Jesus has defeated the power of Civilization by sacrificing himself out of love for his enemies. He has exposed Civilization's violent and controlling Way as rebellion against the Creator. He has shattered the bonds holding the creation in slavery to Civilization. Heaven and earth have begun to once again come together as one. The Creator has returned to dwell within his creation. Unaware of all this, Jesus's followers hastily bury him in a cave. On the third day, a group of disciples go to Jesus's grave to give him a proper burial. They are stunned to find that Jesus is missing. Two young men at the grave tell the disciples to remember Jesus's own words and teachings. They assure the disciples that Jesus has been raised from the dead. That same day, two of Jesus's disciples meet a stranger on the road. This stranger speaks

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 18:31—22:38

of how Jesus is the fulfillment of the hope preached by the prophets. They welcome this stranger into their home and share a meal with him. It is then that they realize the resurrected Jesus is the one present with them. They run back to Jerusalem and gather with the other disciples of Jesus. While they are talking about Jesus being raised from the dead, he suddenly appears among them. By sharing food and studying the writings of the prophets with him, their eyes are opened. They see that the Creator's Rule has indeed come to earth through Jesus, who is the Christ. They also see that Jesus alone unlocks the truth of the prophets. The Creator will not be defeated by the Way of Civilization. Through Jesus he has begun to rescue, renew, and resurrect his wilderness creation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 22:39—24:53



## The Holy Spirit's New Creation

### † The Spirit Creates the Body of Christ †

After appearing to his disciples for forty days after his resurrection, Jesus is taken fully into the Creator's unseen, heavenly dimension. He is enthroned as the one and only Lord of all creation. Jesus promises that he will return soon. Ten days later, at the Pentecost festival in 33 AD, the disciples gather in the crowded city of Jerusalem. Suddenly, the house they are gathered in is shaken by a great wind. This wind is Jesus returning to them through his Spirit. Jesus's Spirit fills the bodies of his disciples and they become the presence and Body of Christ on earth. The Spirit starts shaping them into reflections of Jesus while uniting them as one community across all social divides. But they do not control the Spirit as a possession. The disciples must pray for and embrace the Spirit daily. Those who join this movement are Baptized as Jesus was. They make a break with the Way of Civilization and bond together as the living Body of Christ. The disciples of Jesus let go of all ownership. They share everything with each other to care for the daily needs of everyone in the Body of Christ. To refuse this sharing is to choose the path of death. They also begin expanding the healing ministry of Jesus. They invite others to be freed from slavery to the Way of Civilization. Freedom does not come through money. It comes through joining the Body of Christ and being daily filled with Jesus's word and Spirit. As it happened with Jesus, this work gets the disciples in trouble with Civilization's authorities. But the authorities' attempts to control, threaten, and arrest the disciples are useless. The disciples boldly refuse to obey anyone other than Jesus. The Creator repeatedly rescues them from prison. Frustrated, the authorities fight back under the leadership of a man named Paul. They kill a disciple of Jesus named Stephen, who declares that the Creator has always lived in the wilderness and never in Civilization. This begins a city-wide attack on Jesus's community that scatters his followers into the nearby regions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 1:1—8:3



### † The Spirit Spreads the Way †

The authorities' attack against the Body of Christ causes the message of the Creator's Rule to spread to the fringes of Israel. Northern Israelites, who reject the temple, begin receiving this message. An unclean Ethiopian man who worships in Jerusalem does as well. He takes the Way of Jesus back to Africa. Meanwhile, Paul tries to stop the spread of Jesus's Way by traveling around and imprisoning those who pledge their allegiance to Jesus. As Paul is on a journey to arrest and kill more disciples of Jesus, he is blinded by a great light. Jesus speaks to Paul in the light and reveals the truth of the Body of Christ. He calls Paul to leave behind the Way of Civilization and join in the mission of the Creator's Rule. Paul is filled with the Spirit of Jesus and his life is completely changed. This brings peace for a time to the Body of Christ. The word of the Creator's Rule continues to spread to the lowly and oppressed. Then the Creator goes to a Roman military officer and calls him to listen to the Way of Jesus. Peter is then urged by the Lord Jesus to welcome this man and preach the wilderness Way to him and his people. At the preaching of the Creator's Rule, these enemies and foreigners are filled with the Spirit of Jesus and their lives are completely changed. Back in Jerusalem, one of the rulers begins persecuting the disciples of Jesus. He kills one of the leaders of the Body of Christ and imprisons Peter in the hope of killing him the next day. But the Creator steps in and rescues Peter from prison and strikes down the ruler. Following this, outreach to the nations is expanded. Paul leads a mission into Asia Minor. Rejection and hate follow them everywhere they go. But some hear the message and cling to Jesus. Returning from the mission, news spreads about many people from the nations embracing the Way of Jesus. This causes great concern about people not following the ways of Israel's culture. But in 50 AD, the leaders of the Body of Christ gather in Jerusalem and declare that there is no difference between people of different nations. It is essential for everyone to let go of the Way of Civilization to find common unity and identity only in the Way of Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

### † The Spirit Disrupts Civilization †

Carrying this invitation for all people to join the Body of Christ, Paul goes out on another journey. He takes the Way of Jesus into Greece, the heart of Civilization's wisdom and learning. Paul calls them to turn away from trusting in the works and technology of Civilization. They must trust in the Creator who has always been taking care of them and reaching out to them. On this journey, the disciples find themselves in constant conflict over money and economic issues. This causes them to be arrested and thrown out of city after city. They are accused of rejecting obedience to the Roman Empire and declaring that Jesus is the true Lord instead. This makes the disciples of Jesus a threat to the foundations of Civilization. They are treated as such and barely avoid death many times. On his next journey, Paul continues the great healing

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<sup>14</sup> Acts 8:4—15:35

and freeing work of Jesus. This causes a great riot because his teachings about Jesus challenge and threaten the economy of Civilization. Paul then returns to strengthen and encourage many of the communities he started. He continues to preach and teach the word of Jesus that kills a person's life in Civilization and raises him to new wilderness life in the Creator's Rule. Paul knows he needs to continue to follow in Jesus's footsteps and be shaped into his image. So Paul goes to Jerusalem to confront the authorities of Civilization. On his way there, Paul says goodbye to the communities he started and places them into our Father's hands. Many of the disciples do not want Paul to go to Jerusalem. They know that suffering and prison await him there. But Paul resists the desire to save his life and worry about his safety. Once in Jerusalem, Paul tries to win over the Israelites by following the traditions of Moses. But this does no good as he almost gets killed when they find him in the temple. The Roman Empire barely intervenes in time to arrest Paul. The crowds begin shouting for Paul to be taken away and put to death.<sup>15</sup>

### † The Spirit Cannot Be Stopped †

Arrested, Paul stands trial before the same Israelite authorities that Jesus did. After this trial, Jesus speaks to Paul and assures him of his presence and care during this time. The Israelites then plot to have Paul moved to another location so they can ambush and kill him on the road. The Roman military officer finds out about this plot. Paul is then safely taken to stand trial before the Roman Governor, like Jesus did. Unable to figure out what to do with Paul, the Roman Governor leaves Paul in prison for two years. The next Roman Governor is ready to hand Paul over to the Israelites as a political favor. But Paul appeals to the Roman Emperor and demands to stand trial in Rome, the heart of their Civilization. The Roman Governor is flustered and angry. He has no choice but to send Paul to Rome. Paul's great boat trip to Rome in 60 AD is symbolic of the journey of faith and being shaped into the image of Jesus. Resistance and danger confront the group as they trust in their ship, which represents Civilization and technology. A storm, outside of their control, forces them to abandon the cargo and supplies of the ship. They throw all of their possessions overboard, realizing they are useless. Paul stands firm through it all. He promises the group that survival can only happen if they cling to the Creator in faith. Paul urges the group to put aside their fear and share a meal together. Finally, the ship of Civilization, that they thought they could trust in, is completely destroyed while they themselves are saved. Having lost everything, they are reborn on the shore of a wilderness island. There they receive care and hospitality from wilderness people. They have died to their old lives in the Way of Civilization and have been raised to new life in the Way of Jesus. After this hospitality nurses them back to life, Paul is able to finish his journey to Rome. Paul continues Jesus's story by boldly living and proclaiming the Way of Jesus to the people and rulers of Civilization.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 15:36—22:22

<sup>16</sup> Acts 22:23—28:31

# Walking the Way





## Baptism

### *Into the Way of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

#### † Born Into the Way of Civilization †

Without your choice you were born into Civilization and its story. The Way of Civilization is the satanic way of **control**. It trusts and relies on the idols of human intelligence and technology. It is the way of...

- ...**judging** for yourself what is good and bad.
- ...**breaking** natural relationships and limits through human progress.
- ...**using** the creation to build an unnatural and artificial world.
- ...**taking** everything you want through the power of technology.

The Way of Civilization is *fear, self-indulgence, competition, ownership, and violence*. It leads to **death** for all creation. But Civilization claims to be necessary and good for the world. It claims that it controls this life because the Creator is either imaginary, absent, or only concerned with the afterlife. If you are loyal to its Way, then Civilization promises to...

- ...**save** you from the wild of creation.
- ...**love** you through its man-made communities.
- ...**free** you through its governments and laws.
- ...**provide** for you through its agriculture and production systems.
- ...**protect** your body through its military and police forces.
- ...**improve and extend life** for you through its technologies.

Civilization is always putting this story into your mind and body. It does this through the habits and patterns of everyday life and through the media you consume. Because humanity has been captive to Civilization for generations, it is even in your genetics. It controls the way you think, speak, and live. It distracts you from the truth by keeping you busy with productivity and entertainment. You are **addicted** and **enslaved** to the Way of Civilization. It is a struggle to imagine life being any other way.<sup>17</sup>

#### † Called Into the Way of Jesus †

The Creator wants to save his creation from Civilization's destruction. So the Creator is calling you to join his story and become a lifelong disciple who walks the Way of Jesus. The Way of Jesus is the way of **faith**. It trusts and

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<sup>17</sup> Gen 3:1—4:22, 6:5-12; Dt 4:28; Ps 135:15; Isa 2:7-8, 24:4-5, 53:6, 59:2-15; Jer 1:16; Lam 5:2-16; Hos 6:7; Mic 7:2-4; Lk 3:7; Jn 8:44; Rom 1:18-32, 3:10-18, 3:23, 5:12; 1 Pet 5:8-9; 1 Jn 1:8, 3:8-10

relies on the Creator's power and the work of his hands. It is the way of...

...**allowing** the Creator to decide what is good and bad.

...**keeping within** the natural relationships and limits of the Creator.

...**serving** the Creator and all his creation.

...**receiving** what you need from the Creator through his creation.

The Way of Jesus is *patient courage, self-discipline, humility, generosity, and kindness*. It leads to **life** for all creation. Jesus assures us that the Creator is in charge and is able to take care of his world. If you are loyal to Jesus's Way, then the Creator promises to...

...**save** you from the grip of Civilization and its living hell.

...**love** you through his community of all creation.

...**free** you through his teachings and commands.

...**provide** for you through the abundance of his creation.

...**protect** your spirit through his word of truth.

...**give eternal life** to you through his constant presence.

Jesus is calling you to join his new Way and story through the lifelong and daily journey of Baptism. But leaving and breaking free from the story and Way of Civilization is scary and painful. It requires completely new habits and patterns. It is the death and rebirth of self and world. So you must count the cost of following Jesus for you and your children. Stepping out on the journey of Baptism will cost you everything. It is a commitment to daily and lifelong immersion in the teachings and life of the Body of Christ. The Creator is asking for your whole life—past, present, and future.<sup>18</sup>

### † Reborn Through Baptism †

Baptism starts as the Creator washes you with water and his word. This mystery marks the beginning of a daily and lifelong journey of being immersed and reborn in the Creator's story. Through his undeserved work of Baptism the Creator daily...

...**destroys** your addiction to relying on yourself and the Way of Civilization. Your life, dreams, and plans in Civilization are torn down as the Creator humbles you and brings you to nothing.

...**forgives** and releases you from your past disobedience and trauma. The broken parts of your past (the addictions, burdens, worries, grudges, hurts, struggles, and unfaithfulness) are no longer held against you. But your past is not erased, for the Creator heals you by bringing your past into his story.

...**resurrects** you spiritually and physically into a new life of letting go of control. You are changed into a child of the Father who relies on his grace and generosity for everything. You are a new creation who follows Jesus's word and example. You are filled with the Holy Spirit. You are part of heaven on earth as a member of the Body of Christ.

<sup>18</sup> Gen 2:15; Dt 30:15-20; Mt 3:2-12, 13:44-46; Lk 5:27-28, 9:23-25, 13:1-9, 14:25-35; Acts 2:38-40, 3:19; Jn 3:16-21, 8:12, 12:26; Rom 13:11-14; 2 Cor 6:1-2; Gal 6:7; Eph 6:10-18; Jas 1:27

...**gives** you everything you need. The whole earth is your inheritance. The Creator daily gives you his salvation, peace, love, freedom, provision, and protection. You share in the reality of eternal life and are promised to live in the Creator's presence, now and always.<sup>19</sup>

### † Walking Your Baptism Journey †

Reborn into the Creator's story, you daily walk your Baptism journey by following Jesus's Way of being human. You are now a disciple of Jesus who models every part of your life on his example. This is a daily life of...

...**remembering** what the Creator has done in the past.

...**loving** the Creator and his creation in the present.

...**trusting** the Creator with the future.

But Civilization will resist you changing your life and leaving its story. It will urge you to serve both Civilization and the Creator. But trying to serve both is to reject the Creator's presence and Rule over all of life and death. As Jesus says, "the old and new cannot mix" and "you cannot serve two masters." If you walk the Way of Civilization, then you are living as though the Creator is absent or dead. Therefore, daily practices, disciplines, and sacraments are needed to keep you faithful on your Baptism journey.

**Repentance** is your mind and heart turning away from your addiction to the Way of Civilization and toward the Way of Jesus. It is the change of who you are at your core and in your heart. It is the change of how you see, process, and live all of life. Repentance is lived out daily through the four individual practices of *listening, confessing, letting go, and following*.

**Communion** is the Body of Christ living together as a new family centered on the word of Jesus. It is our united life of leaving our addictions to the Way of Civilization and then walking the Way of Jesus. Communion is lived out daily through the four communal practices of *worshiping, sharing, caring, and inviting*.

The Holy Spirit reshapes all your thinking, speaking, and living through the sacraments of Repentance and Communion. Through these practices you are healed and changed into a living reflection of Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dt 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6-9; Ps 37:11, 91:1-16, 130:3-4; Isa 25:6-9, 65:17-25; Mt 5:5, 6:33; Mk 10:38-39; Lk 1:77, 3:3, 3:15-22, 11:13, 12:6-7, 12:22-34; Jn 3:3-8, 5:24-29, 11:23-26; Acts 1:4-5, 2:38-42, 8:26-39, 9:1-19, 10:43-48, 13:38, 22:1-21, 26:1-23; Rom 6:1-14, 8:5-27; 1 Cor 15:12-58; 2 Cor 5:17-20; Gal 6:15; Eph 1:7, 2:8-10; Tit 3:3-7; Jas 1:18

<sup>20</sup> Num 15:40-41; Dt 5:15; Ps 63:6-8, 77:11-15, 105:4-7; Mt 3:8-11, 4:17-22, 7:13-14, 12:33-35, 22:36-40; Mk 1:14-15, 5:36; Lk 5:36-39, 10:25-28, 13:24-30, 16:13, 24:6-8; Jn 13:34-35; Rom 8:29, 12:1-21; 1 Cor 12:12—13:13, 15:49; 2 Cor 3:17-18, 7:10; Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:1-11; 1 Jn 3:14-18



## Repentance

### *Listening, Confessing, Letting Go, & Following*

#### † Listening †

The Creator's work of Baptism is received through the daily practice of listening. The Creator's word and story is the greatest treasure. It is more important than food. It is the life-source and power of your Baptism journey. Through listening to Jesus, you will be completely changed and will be able to move mountains. But without it your Baptism journey will fail. Listening is...

- ...**surrendering** daily to the Creator's work within you. Admit that you are powerless. Stop your busyness. Remove the obstacles and barriers in your life to the Creator's word. Lay your entire life at the feet of the Creator and the Body of Christ. Trust that they know better than you and all of Civilization's experts and wisdom.
- ...**praying** continuously by quieting your mind of all voices except for Jesus's. Listen at all times for the Creator's voice in creation. Be a child of our heavenly Father by always seeking his desires and asking him for every need. Readily and patiently wait on our Father to rule, judge, provide, and protect.
- ...**learning** daily from other followers of Jesus. Study the sacred writings of the Body of Christ. It is most important to learn the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts, and John. Filter, judge, and interpret all other ideas and teachings of past and present through the Gospel of Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

#### † Confessing †

After listening to the Creator's word and story, the next practice of your Baptism journey is confessing. This begins to free you from the control of the spiritual forces and voices of Civilization. Confessing is...

- ...**self-examining** your feelings, thoughts, words, and actions in comparison to Jesus's life and word. Dig deep within and grow in self-awareness. Look at yourself with the help of others and discover the hidden truth of who and what you are.

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<sup>21</sup> Ex 14:14; 2 Chr 30:8; Job 22:21; Ps 19:1-4; Prov 3:6; Isa 57:14; Mt 4:4, 6:6-13, 7:21-27, 11:28-30, 17:5-8, 17:20, 18:3-4; Mk 11:22-24; Lk 3:4-5, 5:16, 8:11-21, 10:38-42, 11:2-13, 11:28, 18:1-8, 22:40-46, 24:27-31, 24:45; Jn 10:27, 15:1-7; Acts 17:11; 1 Th 5:17; Heb 10:23-25; Jas 1:19-25, 2:14-26, 4:7

- ...**exposing** yourself to the truth by being vulnerable with others. Openly share your struggles with other followers of Jesus. Speak out loud the secrets of your hidden life. Identify and name your disobedience and addictions.
- ...**accepting forgiveness** from the Body of Christ as the forgiveness of the Creator himself. Completely release your grip on the past. Move forward by making internal peace, and external peace where possible, with those you have hurt and those who have hurt you.<sup>22</sup>

### † Letting Go †

After confessing and becoming aware of the truth of who you are, the next practice of your Baptism journey is letting go of **control**. This means emptying yourself of your addictions to the Way of Civilization. This is done through daily and seasonal Sabbath—stopping and breaking free of Civilization’s patterns and habits through times of detox and retreat. Letting go of control is letting go of...

- ...**violence**. Do not hate or hold grudges. Do not complain, lie, be divisive, or abuse with your words. Do not control or manipulate others. Do not resist evil with evil or take revenge. Do not harm, kill, or destroy the Father’s creation.<sup>23</sup>
- ...**ownership**. Do not desire more than you need or what is not given to you. Do not speak or act like anything belongs to you. Do not hold on to or store up money or possessions. Sell your possessions and give to the poor.<sup>24</sup>
- ...**competition**. Do not be prideful, arrogant, or jealous. Do not compare and measure yourself or others by Civilization’s standards. Do not compete to lift yourself up over others. Do not take power over others.<sup>25</sup>
- ...**self-indulgence**. Do not serve your desires with unhealthy consuming of any kind. Do not be busy or lazy. Do not use others as objects or commodities. Do not have sex outside of lifelong marriage.<sup>26</sup>
- ...**fear**. Do not worry, stress, or be anxious about basic needs, safety, or tomorrow for yourself or your loved ones. Do not fear suffering, death, rejection, slavery, Civilization’s authorities, or anything other than the Creator.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ps 26:2, 32:3-5, 38:17-18; Prov 5:21, 28:13; Lam 3:40; Mt 3:6, 5:9, 5:23-24, 6:14-15, 10:26-27, 16:19, 18:18; Lk 10:16, 12:2-3, 17:3; Jn 3:19-21, 8:32, 20:21-23; Acts 19:18; Rom 12:18; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 13:5; Heb 12:5-11; Jas 5:16; 1 Jn 1:5—2:6

<sup>23</sup> Lev 19:18; Mt 5:21-22, 5:38-39; Rom 12:17-19; Phil 2:14; Col 3:8-9; Jas 1:19-20, 5:9

<sup>24</sup> Ps 24:1; Mt 6:19, 10:9, 19:24; Lk 9:3, 12:13-21, 14:33, 16:19-31, 18:18-30; 1 Tim 6:9-10; Jas 5:1-6

<sup>25</sup> Lk 4:5-8, 14:7-11, 18:9-14, 22:24-27; 1 Cor 13:3-4; Jas 2:1-6, 3:14-16, 4:13-16

<sup>26</sup> Prov 23:20; Mt 5:27-32, 19:3-12; Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 6:15-20, 7:1-40; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 2:3, 5:18; Phil 3:18-19; 2 Th 3:6-13; Jas 1:14-15; 1 Pet 4:3

<sup>27</sup> Mt 6:25-34, 10:26-31; Lk 12:22-23; Rom 8:35-39; 1 Jn 4:18



...**loyalty to Civilization.** Do not be controlled by the expectations, duties, schedules, and opinions of self, family, or nation. Do not seek their glory or approval. Do not promise allegiance to them. Do not be a divided hypocrite by trying to serve two masters.<sup>28</sup>

### † Following †

After letting go of your addictions to the Way of Civilization, the next practice of your Baptism journey is following Jesus with **faith**. This means replacing Civilization's habits by daily filling yourself with the *remembering, loving, and trusting* Way of Jesus. This is done through daily and seasonal growth—rebuilding your life around Jesus-centered habits, patterns, and disciplines. Following Jesus with faith is following with...

...**loyalty to the Creator.** Obey only the Creator. Seek only his approval.

Focus all your passion, energy, and time on the Creator's work. Let the Creator alone guide the direction and plans of your life.<sup>29</sup>

...**patient courage.** Patiently wait on the Creator, regardless of the consequences. Courageously take up your cross and daily embrace loss and death. Rejoice in weakness and suffering. Trust that the Creator is renewing all creation and is working all things for the good of those who are loyal to him.<sup>30</sup>

...**self-discipline.** Care for your body as the sacred dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Train yourself for following Jesus by keeping your desires under control. Be disciplined and self-restrained in creating healthy habits. Be content, satisfied, and at peace in all situations.<sup>31</sup>

...**humility.** Be humble, thankful, and unentitled. Lower yourself in the world. Be a servant of all. Be reliable and always follow through on your word. Do to others as you want done to you.<sup>32</sup>

...**generosity.** Give good things with no strings attached and without expecting anything in return. Get rid of money by helping those in need and building healthy relationships of giving and receiving.<sup>33</sup>

...**kindness.** Have compassion on all of the Creator's creatures, even strangers and enemies. Pray for those who hate you. Be loving to those who are mean to you. Help those who hurt you. Respond to all evil by doing good.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Mt 4:1-10, 5:33-36, 6:1-5, 10:34-37, 15:7-9, 20:25-28, 23:8-31; Lk 9:59-62, 12:1-3, 14:16-26, 16:13, 20:46-47; Acts 5:29; Jas 1:6-8, 3:17, 5:12; 1 Jn 2:15-16

<sup>29</sup> Dt 6:5, 6:13; Mt 6:33; Lk 4:5-8; Acts 5:29

<sup>30</sup> Ex 14:10-14; Ps 27:1-14; Mt 5:10-12, 10:16-23, 10:38-39, 16:24-26; Lk 6:22-23, 9:23-24, 10:3, 14:27; Jn 12:25, 15:12-13; Acts 4:29, 5:40-41; Rom 8:28; 2 Cor 3:12, 12:7-10; Eph 3:12; Col 1:24; Jas 1:2-4, 5:7-11

<sup>31</sup> Mt 4:2, 6:16-18, 9:15; Lk 2:37; Acts 13:2-3, 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16-17, 6:19-20, 9:24-27; Phil 4:11-12; 1 Tim 6:8; Tit 1:8

<sup>32</sup> Mt 5:37, 7:12, 23:11-12; Mk 10:42-44; Lk 6:37-38, 17:7-19; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 1 Th 5:18; Jas 4:10

<sup>33</sup> Mt 14:15-21, 15:32-38; Lk 6:30, 11:41, 12:33, 14:12-14, 16:1-11, 19:1-10; Acts 3:1-11

<sup>34</sup> Mt 5:7, 5:39-48, 25:31-46; Lk 6:27-36, 10:29-37; Rom 12:4-21; Jas 2:13; 1 Pet 2:21-23



## Communion

### *Worshipping, Sharing, Caring, & Inviting*

#### † Worshipping †

The Creator's work of Baptism is also received through the daily practices of communal life in the Body of Christ. The first communal practice is worshipping the Creator. Through worship, we die to the ego-centered Way of Civilization. Life is no longer about us as we humbly center our entire lives on the Creator. Worship is...

...**praising** the Creator through thanksgiving, prayer, liturgy, and song.

Instead of praising ourselves, we praise the Creator for providing for us, protecting us, and freeing us from slavery to the Way of Civilization.

...**telling** the Creator's story to each other through words and actions.

Instead of telling and living our own stories in a self-centered way, we now see our lives within the Creator's greater story. We daily remember that he is calling us out of Civilization's Way of control and into Jesus's Way of faith.

...**pledging allegiance** to the Creator as the only Lord. Instead of serving ourselves and the loyalties of Civilization, we commit ourselves to serving the Creator and his desires in all that we do.

At the center of all worship is the mystery of sharing bread and wine to remember Jesus's story. As we eat bread in Jesus's memory, we feed on him and become his united Body and presence on the earth. His love, word, and example is the bread of life that sustains us in all things. As we drink wine in Jesus's memory, his blood heals our relationship of obedience with the Creator. His blood empowers us to sacrifice ourselves instead of others. Through this mystery we are filled with the Creator's Spirit and learn to see the Creator in, with, and under all his creation.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ex 6:6-7, 7:16, 12:11-13, 12:21-34, 24:3-8; Ps 22:22-25, 40:9-10, 65:8, 100:1-5, 107:21-22, 111:1-10, 149:1-5; Isa 52:9; Jer 30:19, 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-28; Mt 18:20; Lk 6:40, 9:23, 22:7-20; Jn 6:48-51; 1 Cor 5:7, 10:16-17, 11:26; Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:15-16, 4:2; Jas 5:13

### † Sharing †

After worshipping, the next communal practice of your Baptism journey is sharing. As the Body of Christ, we are fully committed to each other and hold all things in common. We share by...

- ...**removing all divisions** within the Body of Christ. Civilization's political, economic, and social divisions are permanently torn down in our lives and community. We embrace each person on the Way of Jesus as a priceless part of our true and primary family.
- ...**giving all our time and resources** to the Creator and the Body of Christ. Through giving all our time we learn to patiently listen and wait on each other and the Creator. Through giving all our resources we learn to trust each other and the Creator for what we need, one day at a time.
- ...**carrying all burdens** as the united Body of Christ. The followers of Jesus no longer walk the journey of life alone. According to our unique giftedness, we each find our place and role within the Body of Christ. We support each other in both good and bad times. We follow Jesus's servant example by sacrificing our lives and bodies to walk with each other through all of life.

By daily sharing all of ourselves with the Creator and his community we let go of control over ourselves and others. This sharing creates an alternative political and economic reality to Civilization. Within the Body of Christ we have no debts, no slaves, and no private property.<sup>36</sup>

### † Caring †

After sharing, the next communal practice of your Baptism journey is caring. As the Body of Christ, we guard the physical and spiritual health of each member. We care by...

- ...**watching out** for false teachers who do not faithfully speak and obey Jesus's word. Carefully examine the words and actions of all teachers to know the truth of what they are. Do not be led astray by teachings that are comfortable and match your selfish desires. Only follow the teachers whose lives and words match those of Jesus
- ...**helping** everyone in the Body of Christ get the proper balance of food, clothing, shelter, healing, and love they need. We notice and pay attention to the situation of every member of the Body of Christ to lovingly meet his or her unique needs.
- ...**guiding** each other on the journey of daily Repentance. If you see a member of the Body of Christ consistently wandering from the Way of Jesus, then it is your duty to lovingly bring him back one-on-one. If he refuses to listen to correction from Jesus's word, then come back with one or two other brothers. If he still refuses, then bring

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<sup>36</sup> Mt 12:46-50; Lk 6:27-36, 8:19-21, 14:12-14, 22:21-30, 24:28-35; Jn 6:53-58, 13:1-15, 13:34-35, 15:12-14; Acts 2:44-47, 4:32-35; Rom 5:8-10, 12:1-2, 12:15; 1 Cor 10:21, 11:17-22, 11:27-32; Gal 6:2-10

him before the whole community. If he persists in his wandering from the word of Jesus, then release him from the Body of Christ in the hopes that he will one day come to Repentance. If at any point he repents and humbly accepts correction from the word of Jesus, then welcome him back as a full brother.<sup>37</sup>

### † Inviting †

After caring, the next communal practice of your Baptism journey is inviting. Life in the Body of Christ is the greatest gift we can offer the world. Even though it can be messy and difficult, life in the Body of Christ is heaven on earth. The Creator is fully present in Jesus's community as he brings healing to the broken, life to the dead, and freedom to the captives. The Body of Christ is a life-changing community where we painfully and beautifully grow in ways we cannot elsewhere. Finding our place and purpose within the Body of Christ is what we were all made for. So we call all people to their true home by inviting them to leave the isolating and dysfunctional hell of the Way of Civilization and join us in the heaven of the Way of Jesus. We invite all people to find belonging, identity, and love by following Jesus with us in the Body of Christ. If they are willing to submit to following Jesus, then we are open to receiving all people, no matter who they are. We bring this gift to the world by...

...**living** a faithful and patient life of free giving and receiving.

...**proclaiming** the Rule of the Creator.

...**Baptizing** people into the Body of Christ.

...**teaching** people to obey everything Jesus commands.

We give the Creator's peace to those who welcome Jesus's Way and we warn those who do not that destruction is coming upon the Way of Civilization.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Dt 4:9, 13:1-5; Prov 11:13; Isa 62:6-7; Jer 5:31, 14:14, 23:14-32; Ezek 22:25-29; Mt 5:9, 5:23-26, 6:14-15, 7:1-6, 7:15-20, 18:1-35; Mk 11:25; Lk 6:37-45, 15:1-32, 17:3-4; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 5:1-13, 11:32; 2 Cor 2:6-11; Gal 6:1; 2 Tim 3:1-7, 4:3-4; Heb 12:4-11; Jas 3:1, 5:16-20; 2 Pet 2:1-3

<sup>38</sup> Mt 5:16-19, 10:7-15, 28:19-20; Lk 4:18, 9:2, 10:9, 17:26-37, 21:8-36, 24:46-49; Acts 2:38-39, 3:1-11; 2 Cor 5:10—6:2

# Liturgy for the Way



## † Morning Liturgy †

### Gathering of Thanksgiving & Requests

What are you thankful for today? What concerns, anxieties, and worries do you have this day that need to be given over to our heavenly Father?

### Opening Response

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ✠ **we surrender our minds, bodies, and whole lives to you.**

(we make the sign of the cross, touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

Father, open our eyes this day ✠ **to your Rule over all creation.**

Change our minds this day ✠ **and give us the mind of Jesus.**

Fill us this day ✠ **with your Spirit and Breath of life.**

### Silent Meditation

We spend a few moments in silence, breathing deeply. We exhale our worries, stresses, and anxieties. We inhale the Creator's Spirit into every part of our bodies and lives.

### Song

### Scripture Reading

How is the text comforting you?

How is the text challenging you to grow?

What does the text have to say to us as the Body of Christ in this place?

### Daily Baptism Focus

We intentionally move forward on our Baptism journey by focusing our day on one of the practices of Repentance and Communion.

### Thanksgiving & Requests

We give thanks while placing this day's concerns, anxieties, and worries into our Father's hands. We trust that he will provide and protect in his own way and timing.

### Lord's Prayer Song

*♪ Our Father, bring your rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too. As we forgive and love in all we do. ♪ Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen. ♪ (tune: Old 124<sup>th</sup>)*

## † Dinner Liturgy †

### Opening Response

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ✠ **we surrender our minds, bodies, and whole lives to you.**

(we make the sign of the cross, touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

May our eyes be opened ✠ **as we share together.**

May we see the Creator ✠ **present here among us.**

May we see the Lord Jesus ✠ **in this food and in each other.**

### Song

#### “The Way of Jesus” Reading

#### Dinner Prayer Song

*♪ Our Father, we are thankful for all your gifts this day. Your Son is present with us and he shows us the Way. Your Spirit fills our bodies and teaches us to share. Your whole creation feeds us and keeps us in your care. Amen. ♪ (tune: Aurelia)*

#### Start of Dinner — Sharing the Bread

We share this bread ✠ **and remember that Jesus is the bread of life.**

#### Reflection on the Reading

What does this mean for us as the Body of Christ gathered in this place?

How can we pursue what the Lord is calling us into?

#### Time of Connecting

How are you feeling? What good is going on? What struggles?

#### End of Dinner — Sharing the Wine

We share this wine ✠ **and remember that Jesus’s love sets us free.**

#### Lord’s Prayer Song

*♪ Our Father, bring your rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too. As we forgive and love in all we do. ♪ Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen. ♪ (tune: Old 124<sup>th</sup>)*

## † Evening Liturgy †

### Gathering of Thanksgiving & Requests

What are you thankful for this evening? What concerns, anxieties, and worries do you have this evening that need to be given over to our heavenly Father?

### Opening Response

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ✠ **we surrender our minds, bodies, and whole lives to you.**

(we make the sign of the cross, touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

Father, forgive us this night ✠ **and give us a new start tomorrow.**

Fill us this night ✠ **with your peace and rest.**

We place our whole lives this night ✠ **into your hands.**

### Silent Meditation

We spend a few moments in silence, breathing deeply. We exhale our worries, stresses, and anxieties. We inhale the Creator's Spirit into every part of our bodies and lives.

### Song

### Scripture Reading

How is the text comforting you?

How is the text challenging you to grow?

What does the text have to say to us as the Body of Christ in this place?

### Daily Baptism Reflection

We reflect on our faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the day's Baptism focus. We ask for growth and forgiveness as we put this day aside and look for a new start tomorrow.

### Thanksgiving & Requests

We give thanks while placing this evening's concerns, anxieties, and worries into our Father's hands. We trust that he will provide and protect in his own way and timing.

### Lord's Prayer Song

*♪ Our Father, bring your rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too. As we forgive and love in all we do. ♪ Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen. ♪ (tune: Old 124<sup>th</sup>)*



## † The Lord's Day Liturgy †

### Invocation

Father, Creator of heaven and earth, ✠ **we thank you for your daily love and care.** ✠ Son Jesus, servant of all, ✠ **we follow your example.** ✠ Holy Spirit, presence of life, ✠ **rule and dwell in our hearts and community.** ✠ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ✠ **we surrender our minds, bodies, and whole lives to you.**

(make the sign of the cross, touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

Into your loving hands ✠ **we place our worries, anxieties, stresses, and burdens.** ✠ In stillness and patience ✠ **we wait on you in all things.**

(the Christ candle is lit to remind us that Jesus is present among us)

Lord, fulfill your promise to be present with us as we gather. ✠ **Amen.**

### Opening Song

#### Remembering Our Baptism Journey

Our heavenly Father loves us and makes us his children through Baptism as he puts to death Civilization's Way of control within us and then raises us to Jesus's Way of faithful obedience. We pray that he continues and completes this work of Baptism within us, as we daily leave everything behind to find true life in the word and story of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ✠ **Amen.** ♪ *Lord, baptize us and wash away our sin. Lord, baptize us and change our hearts within. Lord, baptize us and grow our discipline. Lord we praise you, for all that you do!* ♪ *Lord, baptize us to never be afraid. Lord, baptize us to love all you have made. Lord, baptize us to spread your help and aid. Lord we praise you, for all that you do!* ♪ (tune: *Sine Nomine*)

#### Prayer of the Day

The Lord Jesus be with you. ✠ **And also with you.** ✠ Let us pray.

Heavenly Father...

In the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord. ✠ **Amen.**

## † The Word of the Creator †

### Preparing to Listen

We gather at the feet of our Lord Jesus, listening to his word and allowing it to change and shape our minds, decisions, and lives. ♪ *Listen to what Jesus teaches, listen to him ev'ry day. Listen as you walk and follow, listen also as you pray. Listen to him ev'ry moment, listen with an open mind. Listen to find peace and patience, listen so you will be kind.* ♪ (tune: *Converse*)

## Liturgy for the Way

### Remembering the Saints & Martyrs

Father, we give you thanks for your Spirit-filled saints and witnesses who have gone before us and have embodied the Way of Jesus. Today we remember... Help us learn from their faith and example. ✠ **Amen.**

### Psalm

The reading comes from... ✠ **We listen with open hearts.**  
This is our Creator's word. ✠ **Thank you, Lord, for speaking to us.**

### Law & Prophets

The reading comes from... ✠ **We listen with open hearts.**  
This is our Creator's word. ✠ **Thank you, Lord, for speaking to us.**

### Epistle

The reading comes from... ✠ **We listen with open hearts.**  
This is our Creator's word. ✠ **Thank you, Lord, for speaking to us.**

### † Holy Gospel †

We stand for Jesus's word. ♪ *We praise our Lord Jesus who comes with healing in his hand. He frees us who are slaves of death, he raises us to stand. He fills us with his love and truth, he gives us all we need. We come to listen now and on his living word to feed.* ♪  
(tune: Kingsfold)

The holy Gospel comes from... ✠ **Jesus, we listen, ready to follow.**  
This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. ✠ **We will trust and obey.**

### Message

#### Reflection & Repentance

Let us reflect on how Jesus's word is speaking into our lives this day.  
(silence for reflection)

For not living by the word of Jesus and instead obeying the voices of self, family, and nation, ✠ **Father, forgive us.** ✠ For not living by faith and instead fearfully and anxiously trying to control our lives and world, ✠ **Father, forgive us.** ✠ For not being humble and self-disciplined and instead competitively feeding our selfish desires, ✠ **Father, forgive us.** ✠ For holding on to possessions and not loving all creatures, even our enemies, as Jesus loves us, ✠ **Father, forgive us.** ✠ Father, turn us back to walking in your Spirit. ♪ *Lord Father we have wandered and hidden from your face. Rescue your whole creation with your almighty grace. From trust in wealth and weapons and blindness to your Way, save us and all creation with your own hands we pray.* ♪  
(tune: Herzlich Tut Mich Verlangen)

Will you turn away from the Way of Civilization and reaffirm the Creator's claim upon you through your Baptism into the Way of Jesus?  
✠ **Yes, I renounce the Way of Civilization and pledge my full**

**allegiance to Jesus.** ✠ Will you release all debts and grudges that you hold against anyone—including yourself and those in this place? ✠ **Yes, I forgive all those who have hurt me, frustrated me, or owe me anything.** ✠ Our heavenly Father heals all those who return to his loving arms. You are forgiven and freed from all slavery to live life in the Way of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! ✠ **Amen.**

## Song of the Day

### Requests & Intercessions

*♪ Hear us Father now today, listen to us while we pray. Father let your will be done, please conform us to your Son. ♪ (tune: Patmos)*

(incense is lit to symbolize our prayers ascending to God and as its smell fills this space we are reminded of his presence among us)

*In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy. ♪*

**Our Father in heaven, make your name holy, bring your Rule, make your will be done—on earth as in heaven.** ✠ Father, heal your creation that we have harmed and destroyed by bringing heaven—your presence and rule—to earth through Jesus and your Spirit. Open our hearts, so we may trust and obey the word of Jesus. Starting with us, bring your peace and an end to all violent conflict. *Let us pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy. ♪*

**Give us this day our daily bread.** ✠ Father, be present among us this day as our provider and protector—take care of us and heal our brokenness. Especially, we remember... and those we name in our hearts... Give us exactly what we need this day and help us to find contentment in that. *Let us pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy. ♪*

**Forgive us our debts as we forgive those in debt to us.** ✠ Father, forgive us and free us from all that enslaves us. Help us to walk away from our addictions to the Way of Civilization so we may walk in the Way of Jesus. Empower us to forgive the debts and sins of all who repent, even our enemies, so all creation might share in your freedom. *Let us pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy. ♪*

**Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** ✠ Father, grow our trust in you and keep us from being tested when we are not yet ready. Free us from fear, self-indulgence, competition, ownership, and violence. Comfort us in the hope that your creation and children are being renewed and raised from the dead. *Let us pray to the Lord, ♪ Lord have mercy. ♪*

**For all authority, power, and glory are yours—now and forever.** ✠ Father, we thank you for all that you give—life, daily provision, and salvation from death and slavery. Empower us to celebrate your love through a life of patient courage, self-discipline, humility, generosity, and kindness. Help us to let go of being in charge so we might entrust our lives fully into your hands, trusting that you work all things to the good of those who love you. ✠ **Amen.**

## † The Lord's Supper †

### Sharing the Lord's Peace

We prepare to unite as the Body of Christ at the Lord's table by sharing with each other the peace and love our Father has freely given to us.

### Offering

Everything belongs to our Father and is to be used to love each other in the same way Jesus loved us. Therefore, we offer our entire lives as a living sacrifice to him while also offering gifts to support this community.

### Pledge of Allegiance

*♪ We come before you Lord to bow. We lay our lives at your feet now. All things are yours, we own nothing! Our lives are in your hands this day. Give what we need, oh Lord we pray. Please protect us, provide for us! Watch over us, ever with us, always love us! ♪*  
(tune: *Lasst Uns Erfreuen*)

Lord Jesus, we pledge every part of our lives to you...

**I pledge allegiance to God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. † I pledge allegiance to Jesus the Christ, who is God's only Son and my Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. The third day he rose from the dead. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. † I pledge allegiance to the Holy Spirit, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life with the Creator, now and always. Amen.**

### Thanksgiving

The Lord Jesus be with you. ✠ **And also with you.** ✠ Lift up your hearts! ✠ **We lift them to the Lord!** ✠ Let us give thanks to our Creator! ✠ **It is right to give him thanks and praise!** ✠ Praise and thanks are due to you, Father, ✠ **for you provide, protect, love, and renew us and all creation!** ✠ We stand in thankful awe as you bring heaven and earth together through Jesus and his love for all creation: *♪ Let all creation be humble and rejoice in awe and fear. We give thanks to our Lord Jesus who brings heaven to us here. He is giving himself to us and his presence has come near. ♪* (tune: *Picardy*)

### † Words of Our Lord Jesus †

On the night before our Lord Jesus was crucified, he revealed his Way of rescuing all creation from the Way of Civilization. Before supper, Jesus humbly washed the feet of his disciples and enemies. He said, "Follow my example. Love each other in the same way I have loved you." During

supper, Jesus took the bread and broke it. He gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is being given for you. Do the same for each other in my memory.” After supper, Jesus took the cup and gave thanks. He said, “This is my blood which is being shed for you, to free you from all your sins and addictions. Do the same for each other in my memory.”

*♪ When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death Lord Jesus. So as we share this feast may we, remember your love for us. Help us now to follow your Way, and to walk in your goodness, always make us one in you. ♪ (tune: Divinum Mysterium)*

#### Invitation to the Table

We gather around Jesus’s table, trusting that he is truly giving his whole self to us through this bread, wine, and community. We invite all the Baptized, who give their undivided allegiance to Jesus and are at peace with their brothers and sisters in Christ, to join us in this mysterious communion of heaven and earth. *♪ Oh come, Lord Jesus, come and dine, and give yourself through bread and wine. Feed us so we may have new birth, and bring your rule ov’r all the earth. Come now! Come now! Our Lord Jesus, and bring your healing love to us! ♪ (tune: Veni Emmanuel)*

#### Sharing the Bread & Wine

Welcome to the Lord’s table.

#### Sending

Jesus, you feed us with the bread of life ✠ **your body, given for us.** ✠  
You free us with your love and compassion ✠ **your blood, shed for us.** ✠  
✠ Help us to spread this life of new creation, ✠ **by giving our own bodies and shedding our own blood as we lay down our lives for each other.** ✠  
✠ Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit and strengthen us for this task! ✠ **Amen.**

*♪ We follow our Lord Jesus, we walk where he leads us, he teaches us to live in his presence now. We trust in his mercy, he saves us from worry, he has overcome death and teaches us how. We love all creation, share ev’ry possession, we wait on the Lord in ev’rything always. He is present with us, he cares and protects us, he gives us all that we need for all our days. ♪ (tune: The Ash Grove)*

#### Blessing

May the Father bless you and hold you in his hands. May the Son empower you to love others in the way he has loved you. May the Holy Spirit fill your body and give you a peace that is free of all anxiety.  
✠ **Amen.**

#### Closing Song

## † Baptism Journey Liturgy †

### Opening Response

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ✠ **we surrender our minds, bodies, and whole lives to you.**

(we make the sign of the cross, touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

May our hearts be opened ✠ **to look and explore within.**

May our ears be opened ✠ **to listen to Jesus and each other.**

Father ✠ **give me peace to accept what I cannot change, courage to change what I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.**

### Baptism Journey Introduction

We are a fellowship of Jesus's followers who are on the journey of Baptism. We are not here to give advice or fix each other. We are here to walk alongside each other as we recover from our common addiction to Civilization's Way. The only thing needed to participate is the desire to follow Jesus's Way. This is a safe place. What is shared here, stays here. I am not ok, and you are not ok, but Jesus is leading us to change and healing. Those who follow the Way of Jesus will recover and be saved. They will experience complete personal change and newness of life. Failure results from a refusal to listen and be truly honest with oneself and others. If we had no help, then walking the Way of Jesus would be too much. But the Creator is on our side and he has the power to move mountains. So be fearless and step out toward Jesus. Let go and fall into your heavenly Father's hands. Hold nothing back. He will change you. But do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain a "perfect" walk on the Way of Jesus. We look for growth rather than perfection. You are responsible for staying connected to the word of Jesus. Walk the journey one day at a time. Keep coming back to his word. It will completely change you if you put in the time and effort.

### Sharing Time

Hi, I am \_\_\_\_ and I am addicted to the Way of Civilization. ✠ **Hi \_\_\_\_.**

*How are you feeling about your Baptism journey today?*

*What addictions to Civilization's Way are you struggling to let go?*

*Where have you seen growth in yourself in following Jesus's Way?*

Thanks for listening everybody. ✠ **Thanks for sharing, \_\_\_\_.**

### Lord's Prayer Song

*♫ Our Father, bring your rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too. As we forgive and love in all we do. ♪ Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen. ♪ (tune: Old 124<sup>th</sup>)*

# Songs for the Way



The Advent of Our King (*tune: St Thomas*)

- ♪ *The advent of our King, who comes to serve and free. Truth, love, and kindness he will bring, God's mercy he will be.*
- ♪ *Let all the earth arise, to meet our lowly King. Do not turn from him and despise, the peace he comes to bring.*
- ♪ *True judge on clouds of light, his vict'ry he has won. He comes his members to unite, all earth and heav'n be one.*
- ♪ *All glory to the Son, who comes to set us free. With Father, Spirit, ever One, through all eternity.*

Hark the Glad Sound (*tune: Chesterfield*)

- ♪ *Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long! Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne, and ev'ry voice a song.*
- ♪ *He comes the pris'ners to release, in Satan's bondage held. The prison gates before him burst, the chains of slav'ry yield.*
- ♪ *He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure. And with the treasures of his grace, to save the humble poor.*

Come, Oh Long Expected Jesus (*tune: Jefferson*)

- ♪ *Come oh long expected Jesus, born to set your people free. From our fears and sins release us, open up our eyes to see. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth you are. You are judge of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.*
- ♪ *Born your people to deliver, born a child and yet a king. Born to rule in us forever, now your gracious kingdom bring. By your own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone. By your love that has no limit, bow us to your loving throne.*

Oh Come, Oh Come, Immanuel (*tune: Veni Immanuel*)

- ♪ *Oh come, oh come Immanuel, and rescue captive Israel. From depths of hell your people save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel has come to us and God is with us now!*
- ♪ *Oh come, oh wisdom from on high, who orders all things mightily. To us the path of mercy show, and teach us in his Way to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel has come to us and God is with us now!*
- ♪ *Oh come, oh light of all the earth, and transform us through your new birth! Dispel the shadows of the night, and turn our darkness into light. Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel has come to us and God is with us now!*
- ♪ *Oh come, oh king of nations bind, in one the hearts of all mankind. Bid all our sad divisions cease, and be yourself our king of peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel has come to us and God is with us now!*



From Heaven Above to Earth (*tune: Vom Himmel Hoch*)

- ♪ *From heaven to earth he comes to save, our Lord defeats death and the grave. He will himself our Savior be, from all our sins he sets us free.*
- ♪ *He will give you his daily love, his blessings for you from above. That in his kingdom, true and fair, you may with him his mercy share.*
- ♪ *You Lord who has created all, you choose to be so poor and small. You show us the Way to be great, you come to us in humble state.*
- ♪ *And thus dear Lord it pleases me, you make this truth quite plain to see. That all of the world's wealth and might, are bad and worthless in your sight.*

Hark the Herald Angels Sing (*tune: Mendelssohn*)

- ♪ *Hark, the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King. Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Joyful all you nations rise, join the triumph of the skies. With the heavenly hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark, the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*
- ♪ *Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord. Here to save behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb. In the flesh the Father see, he has come to set us free! Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel. Hark, the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*
- ♪ *Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die. Born to raise us on the earth, born to give us second birth! Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

What Child Is This (*tune: Greensleeves*)

- ♪ *What child is this who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste, to bring him praise, the babe the son of Mary.*
- ♪ *Why lies he in a humble state, where animals are feeding? Good Christians fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear will pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you. Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe the son of Mary.*
- ♪ *So bring him ev'rything you own, come to love and follow him. The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. Raise, raise a song on high, for through the Lord we never die. Joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe the son of Mary.*

Joy to the World (*tune: Antioch*)

- ♪ *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king! Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.*
- ♪ *Joy to the earth the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ. While fields and trees, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*
- ♪ *No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.*
- ♪ *He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.*

Of the Father's Love Begotten (*tune: Divinum Mysterium*)

- ♪ *Of the Father's love begotten, before all worlds came to be, he is Alpha and Omega. He the source, the ending he, of the things that are, that have been, and that future years will see, evermore and evermore!*
- ♪ *Oh that birth forever blessed, when a virgin, full of grace, by the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior in disgrace. And the babe the world's redeemer, first revealed his sacred face, evermore and evermore!*
- ♪ *Oh you heights of heaven adore him, angel hosts, his praises sing, pow'rs, dominions, bow before him, and extol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be silent, ev'ry voice in concert ring, evermore and evermore!*

Silent Night (*tune: Stille Nacht*)

- ♪ *Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright. The virgin gives birth to a child, holy infant so tender and mild. He brings heavenly peace, he brings heavenly peace.*
- ♪ *Silent night! Holy night! This child gives us true sight. He opens our blind eyes to see, he's the one to set us free. Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!*
- ♪ *Silent night! Holy night! God's Son is love's pure light. Radiant truth from his holy face, he's the dawn of redeeming grace. Jesus, Lord, at your birth! Jesus, Lord, at your birth!*

Hail to the Lord's Anointed (*tune: Freut Euch, Ihr Lieben*)

- ♪ *Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater son! Hail in the time appointed, his rule on earth begun! He comes to break oppression, to set the captives free, to take away transgression, and rule in equity.*
- ♪ *He comes with healing speedy, to those who suffer wrong. To help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong. To give them*

*songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light. Their souls condemned and dying, are precious in his sight.*

- ♪ *He comes down like rain showers, upon the fruitful earth. Love, joy, and hope like flowers, spring in his path to birth. Before him on the mountains, will peace and mercy go. And his good gifts in fountains, from hill to valley flow.*
- ♪ *To him will prayer unceasing, and allegiance ascend. His kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end. The tide of time will never, his covenant remove. His name will stand forever; that name to us is love.*

The People That in Darkness Sat (*tune: Lobt Gott, Ihr Christen*)

- ♪ *The people that in darkness sat, a glorious light will see. The light has shined on them who are, held in death's slavery.*
- ♪ *For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is giv'n. And on his shoulder ever rests, all pow'r in earth and heav'n.*
- ♪ *His name shall be the Prince of Peace, the everlasting Lord, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the God by all adored.*
- ♪ *His righteous government and power, will over all extend. On judgment and on justice based, his rule will have no end.*
- ♪ *For you their burden do remove, and break the tyrant's rod. For Civilization crumbles, before the Judge our God.*
- ♪ *Lord Jesus rule in us we pray, and make us yours alone, who with the Father ever are, and Holy Spirit one.*

Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (*tune: Winchester New*)

- ♪ *Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. Oh Christ your triumphs now begin, o'er captive death and conquered sin.*
- ♪ *Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. Take up your cross amid the strife, trust in God and lay down your life.*
- ♪ *Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die. Bow your meek head to mortal pain, then take oh Christ your pow'r and reign.*

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (*tune: Hamburg*)

- ♪ *When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.*
- ♪ *Forbid it Lord that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my Lord! All the empty things I love most, I give up all that I have stored.*
- ♪ *See from his head his hands his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?*
- ♪ *Were the whole realm of creation mine, that would be a gift far too small. Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul my life my all.*

My Song Is Love Unknown (*tune: Love Unknown*)

- ♪ *My song is love unknown, my Savior's love for me; love to the loveless shown, that I might loving be. O who am I that for my help, he should humble himself and die?*
- ♪ *In life no house no home, did my Lord try to save; in death no friendly tomb, but what a stranger gave. What may I say? He had no home, for he did roam all of his days.*
- ♪ *He came down from his throne, salvation to bestow; but he was all alone, no one did truly know. He was my friend, my Lord indeed, who at my need, his life did spend!*
- ♪ *Some people walk his Way, and his sweet praises sing; proclaiming on the Way, joyful songs to their King. But "Crucify!" is the crowd's breath, and for his death, they thirst and cry.*
- ♪ *Why what has my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite? He made the lame to run, he gave the blind their sight. He was no fool, he helped the poor, yet did ignore all human rule.*
- ♪ *They rise and reject him, my Lord taken away; a murderer they save, the Prince of Life they slay. Yet faithful he to suffering goes, that he his foes from death might free.*

Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed (*tune: Martyrdom*)

- ♪ *Alas, and did my Savior bleed, and did my dear Lord die! Would he devote that sacred head for sinners such as I?*
- ♪ *Was it for crimes that I have done, he groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity grace unknown! And love beyond degree!*
- ♪ *Well might the sun in darkness hide, and shut its glories in, when God the mighty maker died, for his own creature's sin.*
- ♪ *Thus might I hide my blushing face, while his dear cross appears; dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt mine eyes to tears.*
- ♪ *But drops of tears can ne'er repay, the debt of love I owe. Here Lord I give myself away, it's all that I can do.*

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted (*tune: O Mein Jesu, Ich Muss Sterben*)

- ♪ *Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, see him dying on the tree! He's the Christ by man rejected, yes my soul it's he, it's he! He's the long-expected prophet, David's son yet David's Lord; through his Son, God now has spoken: he's the true and faithful Word.*
- ♪ *Tell me, you who hear him groaning, was there ever grief like his? Friends through fear his cause disowning, foes insulting his distress. Many hands were raised to wound him, none would intervene to save. But he did not let this change him, he persisted and forgave.*
- ♪ *You who think of hate but lightly, nor think human evil great. Here may view its violence rightly, here its harm may estimate. It's the sacrifice appointed, see who bears the awful load. It's the Word the Lord's Anointed, Son of Man and Son of God.*

- ♪ *Here we have a firm foundation, here's the refuge for the lost. Christ, the rock of our salvation, look at how great is his cost. Lamb of God loves his enemies, turns his cheek to cancel guilt! All who trust him he truly frees, on his love their hope is built.*

Were You There (*tune: Were You There*)

- ♪ *Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*
- ♪ *Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?*
- ♪ *Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?*
- ♪ *Were you there when God raised him from the dead? Were you there when God raised him from the dead? Ohhh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when God raised him from the dead?*

Go to Dark Gethsemane (*tune: Gethsemane*)

- ♪ *Go to dark Gethsemane, you who feel the tempter's pow'r. Your Redeemer's conflict see, watch with him one painful hour. Turn not from his griefs away, learn from Jesus Christ to pray.*
- ♪ *Follow to the judgment hall, view the Lord of life in chains. He trusts in our God for all, so much pain his soul sustains! Shun not suffering, shame, or loss, learn from him to bear your cross.*
- ♪ *To his cross go make your climb, there to worship at his feet. It is here his kingdom's time, his self-sacrifice complete. "God forgive them," hear his cry; learn from Jesus Christ to die.*
- ♪ *Early follow to the tomb, where they laid his breathless clay. All is solitude and gloom, who has taken him away? Christ is ris'n! He meets our eyes! Savior, teach us so to rise.*

I Know That My Redeemer Lives (*tune: Duke Street*)

- ♪ *I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, he lives who once was dead. He lives to be my guide and head.*
- ♪ *He lives to bless me with his love, he lives to plead for me above. He lives my hungry soul to feed, he lives to help in time of need.*
- ♪ *He lives to silence all my fears, he lives to wipe away my tears. He lives to calm my troubled heart, he lives all blessings to impart.*
- ♪ *He lives to give me daily breath, he lives and I will conquer death. He lives my body to repair, he lives to keep me in his care.*

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today (*tune: Easter Hymn*)

- ♪ *Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia! Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia! Raise your joys and voices high, Alleluia! Sing heavens and earth reply, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia! Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia! And death cannot stop his rise, Alleluia! Christ has restored paradise, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia! Where oh death, is now your sting? Alleluia! Once he died our lives to save, Alleluia! Where's your vict'ry, boasting grave? Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Follow now where Christ has led, Alleluia! Following our risen head, Alleluia! Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia! Ours the cross, the grave, the prize, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia! Praise to you by both be given, Alleluia! The Lord of ev'ry nation, Alleluia! The first of resurrection, Alleluia!*

The Day of Resurrection (*tune: Lancashire*)

- ♪ *The day of resurrection! Earth tell it out abroad. the rescue of creation, the rescue from our God. From death to life eternal, from bondage to decay, our Christ has truly freed us, on this glorious day.*
- ♪ *Our hearts be pure from evil, that we may see aright. The Lord is raised to new life, in resurrection light. And list'ning to his teachings, may hear so calm and plain, his word of "Follow me!" that calls out to us today.*
- ♪ *Now let the heav'ns be joyful! Let earth the song begin! Let the whole world keep singing, and all that is therein! Let all things seen and unseen, live lives of truth and love, for Christ the Lord is risen, he saves us from above.*

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing (*tune: Sonne Der Gerechtigkeit*)

- ♪ *At the Lamb's high feast we sing, praise to our victorious King, who has washed us in the tide, flowing from his piercèd side, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Mighty Lord who will not die, pow'rs of hell beneath you lie. Death is conquered in the fight, you have brought us life and light, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Now no more can death defeat, now no more the grave we meet. You have restored paradise, and your saints in you will rise. Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Easter triumph, Easter joy! This alone can sin destroy. From sin's pow'r Lord set us free, newborn lives in you to be. Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Father, who the crown will give, Savior, by whose death we live, Spirit, guide through all our days, three in one, your name we praise, Alleluia!*

Holy Spirit, Light Divine (*tune: Song 13*)

- ♪ *Holy Spirit, truth divine, shine upon this life of mine. Word of God and inward light, wake my spirit, clear my sight.*
- ♪ *Holy Spirit, love divine, change within this heart of mine. Nurture ev'ry true desire, purify me with your fire.*
- ♪ *Holy Spirit, power divine, fill and guide this will of mine. Boldly may I always live, bravely serve and freely give.*
- ♪ *Holy Spirit, law divine, rule within this life of mine. Be my law and I will be, firmly bound and always free.*
- ♪ *Holy Spirit, peace divine, still this restless heart of mine. Speak to calm this tossing sea, help me to live patiently.*
- ♪ *Holy Spirit, all divine, dwell within this heart of mine. Cast down ev'ry idol throne, rule supreme and rule alone.*

Creator Spirit By Whose Aid (*tune: Melita*)

- ♪ *Creator Spirit by whose aid, the world's foundations first were laid. Come visit ev'ry humble mind. Come pour your joys on humankind. From sin and sorrow set us free, may we your living temples be.*
- ♪ *Oh source of uncreated light, the bearer of God's holy might. Change and grow us with your fire, our hearts with heav'nly love inspire. Your sacred healing message bring, to make us holy as we sing.*
- ♪ *Giver of grace descend from high, your loving gifts to us supply. Help us your love and truth receive, to practice all that we believe. Give us yourself that we may see, that Jesus has now set us free.*

Crown Him With Many Crowns (*tune: Diademata*)

- ♪ *Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne. Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns, all music but its own. Awake my soul and sing, of him who died for me, and hail him as your matchless king, through all eternity.*
- ♪ *Crown him the Lord of life, who conquered death and grave, and rose victorious in the strife, for those he came to save. His glories now we sing, who died and rose on high, who died eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.*
- ♪ *Crown him the Lord of love, behold his hands and side, rich wounds on our true Lord above, in beauty glorified. He got them on the cross, he died that we might live, he saves us from death and chaos, his whole self he did give.*
- ♪ *Crown him the Lord of heav'n, enthroned o'er all above. Crown him the king to whom is giv'n, the wondrous name of love. Crown him with many crowns, all thrones before him fall. Crown him you kings with many crowns, for he is king of all.*

At the Name of Jesus (*tune: King's Weston*)

- ♪ *At the name of Jesus ev'ry knee will bow, ev'ry tongue confess him King of earth right now. It's the Father's desire we should call him Lord, who from the beginning was the mighty Word.*
- ♪ *At his voice creation sprang at once to sight. All the seas and forests, all the stars of light, all plants and animals, rivers on their way, creatures all big and small, in their great array.*
- ♪ *In your hearts enthrone him, there let him subdue, all that is not holy, all that is not true. Look to him your Savior, in temptations' hour, let his will embrace you, in its light and power.*
- ♪ *Christians this Lord Jesus has not come in vain, through his Father's Spirit he does truly reign. For all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow, and our hearts confess him King of mercy now.*

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (*tune: Coronation*)

- ♪ *All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let all before him fall. Lay down to him all pow'r and fame, and crown him Lord of all. Lay down to him all pow'r and fame, and crown him Lord of all!*
- ♪ *All people who had lost your place, now rescued from your fall, hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all. Hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all!*
- ♪ *Let ev'ry tribe and ev'ry throne, respond now to his call, let go of ev'rything you own, and crown him Lord of all. Let go of ev'rything you own, and crown him Lord of all!*
- ♪ *Oh that with all his foll'wers strong, we at his feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song, and crown him Lord of all. We'll join the everlasting song, and crown him Lord of all.*

Jesus Will Reign (*tune: Duke Street*)

- ♪ *Jesus will reign where'er the sun, does its ongoing journeys run. His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons will wax and wane no more.*
- ♪ *People and tribes of ev'ry place, dwell on his love the sweetest grace. And all of the earth will proclaim, all their allegiance to his name.*
- ♪ *Blessings abound where'er he reigns, the prisoners leap to lose their chains. The tired find eternal rest, and all the poor and weak are bless'd.*
- ♪ *Let ev'ry creature rise and bring, the highest honors to our King. To him who does now raise the dead, give honor as you crown his head.*

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (*tune: Picardy*)

- ♪ *Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand. Ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand, Christ our God to earth descending, our full loy'ty to demand.*



- ♪ *King of kings yet poor and humble, as of old on earth he stood. Lord of lords now present with us, in the body and the blood. He will give to all the faithful, his own self for heavenly food.*
- ♪ *Let us welcome him among us, clear the path now for his Way. For the Light of light is descending, from the realms of endless day. That the pow'rs of hell may vanish, and the darkness clear away.*
- ♪ *At his feet we come together, through him we will never die. Joined as one we sing his praises, as with ceaseless voice we cry: "Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, Lord most high!"*

Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord (*tune: Old 124<sup>th</sup>*)

- ♪ *Draw near and take the body of the Lord, and drink the holy blood for you outpoured. Offered was he for greatest and for least, himself the victim and himself the priest.*
- ♪ *He who his saints in this world rules and shields, to all followers life eternal yields. With heav'nly bread he makes the hungry whole, gives living waters to the thirsting soul.*
- ♪ *Come forward then with faithful hearts sincere, and embrace the life of salvation here. Oh Lord our hearts with grateful thanks express, for in this feast of love you truly bless.*

Now Thank We All Our God (*tune: Nun Danket Alle Gott*)

- ♪ *Now thank we all our God, with heart and lives and voices. Who wondrous things has done, in whom his earth rejoices. Who through his guiding word, has bless'd us on his Way. With countless gifts of love, he cares for us today.*
- ♪ *Oh may our gen'rous God, through all of life be near us. With discipline for us, and loving peace to calm us. To keep us in his truth, and guide us through all things. And free us from all ills, and our selfish cravings.*
- ♪ *All praise and thanks to God, the Father now be given, his Son and Spirit bless'd, who rule in highest heaven. The one Creator God, whom heav'n and earth adore. He cares for us right now, and will do evermore.*

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (*tune: Lobe Den Herren*)

- ♪ *Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of creation! O my soul praise him, for he is your health and salvation! Come all who hear, now to his temple draw near, join me in glad adoration.*
- ♪ *Praise to the Lord, above all things is lovingly reigning. Sheltering you under his wings, and gently sustaining! Have you not seen, all that is needful has been, sent by his gracious ordaining?*
- ♪ *Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you. Surely his goodness and mercy will daily attend you. Ponder anew, what the Almighty can do, if with his love he befriends you.*

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (*tune: Hymn to Joy*)

- ♪ *Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, Lord of love. Hearts unfold like flow'rs before you, op'ning to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away. Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!*
- ♪ *All your works with joy surround you, earth and heav'n reflect your rays. Stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, flow'ry meadow, flashing sea. Chanting bird and flowing fountain, praising you eternally!*
- ♪ *Always giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever bless'd. Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest! Loving Father, Christ our Brother, let your light upon us shine. Teach us how to love each other, lift us to your joy divine.*
- ♪ *Mortals join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began. God's own love is reigning o'er us, joining people hand in hand. Ever singing march we onward, victors in the midst of strife. Joyful music leads us onward, in the loving song of life.*

Oh Bless the Lord, My Soul (*tune: St Thomas*)

- ♪ *Oh bless the Lord my soul, he heals all your blindness. So praise him now and bless his name, whose gifts are generous.*
- ♪ *Oh bless the Lord my soul, nor let his mercies be, forgotten in unthankfulness, ignored by you and me.*
- ♪ *Lord you forgive our sins, and you relieve our pain. You heal us of our sicknesses, and make us whole again.*
- ♪ *You fill each life with love, you rescue from the grave, and change our hearts by your Spirit, with mighty pow'r to save.*
- ♪ *You fill the poor with good, you give the sufferers rest. You send your judgments on the proud, justice for the oppressed.*
- ♪ *You show your works and ways, creation makes them known. You send the world your truth and grace, through your obedient Son.*

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise (*tune: St Denio*)

- ♪ *Immortal, invisible, God only wise, with you we are able to stand and to rise. Most loving, most generous, the source of all days, almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.*
- ♪ *Unresting, yet patient, and silent as light, not harmful nor absent, you rule now in night. Your justice like mountains, high soaring above, your gifts flow like fountains, of goodness and love.*
- ♪ *To all life you now give, to both great and small, in all life you do live, the true life of all. We blossom and flourish, as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish, but through you we're free.*
- ♪ *Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, as we come before you, now open our sight. All praise we now render, oh help us to share, in all of the splendor, of your daily care!*

The Church's One Foundation (*tune: Aurelia*)

- ♪ *The Church's one foundation, is Jesus Christ her Lord. She is his new creation, by water and the word. From heav'n he came and sought her, to be his holy bride. With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.*
- ♪ *Called out from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all the earth. The Body of salvation, one Lord, one faith, new birth. One holy name she blesses, on his good word she feeds. And to one hope she presses, while he tends to her needs.*
- ♪ *Because of her wand'ring heart, the world sees her oppressed. By arguments torn apart, by false teachings distressed. Yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, "How long?" And soon the night of weeping, will be the dawn of song.*
- ♪ *The church will never perish, her strong Lord to defend. To guide, sustain, and cherish, is with her to the end. There are those who will hate her, and men want her to fail. Against the constant traitor, she always will prevail.*
- ♪ *Through hatred from the nations, and violence from all war. She waits the resurrection, of peace for evermore. Till with the vision glorious, her longing eyes are bless'd. And the great church victorious, will be the church at rest.*
- ♪ *Yet she on earth has union, with God the three in one. And mystic sweet communion, with those whose rest is won. Oh blessed heav'nly chorus, "Lord, save us by your grace!" That we like saints before us, may see you face to face.*

Built on the Rock (*tune: Kirken Den Er Et Gammelt Hus*)

- ♪ *Built on the Rock, the Church will stand, even when steeples are falling. Christ builds his Church in ev'ry land, bells still are chiming and calling. Calling the young and old to rest, calling the poor and those distressed, longing for life everlasting.*
- ♪ *Not in a temple made with hands, God the Almighty is dwelling. All through the earth his temple stands, all of creation is filling. For he who dwells in heav'n above, chooses to live with us in love, making our bodies his temple.*
- ♪ *We are God's house of living stones, built for his own habitation. He fills our hearts, his humble thrones, giving us life and salvation. Were we but two his name to tell, yet he would choose with us to dwell, with all his grace and his mercy.*
- ♪ *Grant then oh Lord your will be done, keep your Church faithfully living. Help us to love so all may come, to hear your word now proclaiming: "I love my own, my own love me, you not the world my truth will see. My peace I leave with you always."*

For All the Saints (*tune: Sine Nomine*)

- ♪ *For all the saints who from their labors rest, who you by faith before the world confessed. Your name oh Jesus, be forever bless'd. Alleluia, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *You were their rock, their fortress, and their might. You Lord, their captain in the loving fight. You in the darkness were their one true light. Alleluia, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Oh may we now be faithful, true, and bold, and walk as the saints who followed of old, and live with them now in your loving hold! Alleluia! Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Oh bless'd communion, fellowship of yours! We across all time you work to restore. For all are one in you, for all are yours. Alleluia, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *And when the pain is fierce, the waiting long. Send then to us your loving hopeful song. Then hearts are brave again, and arms are strong. Alleluia, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Always to faithful foll'wers comes your rest. Sweet is the calm of paradise the bless'd. We wait on you to save us from the test. Alleluia, Alleluia!*
- ♪ *Still then there breaks a far more glorious day. Your faithful saints do rise again from clay. Our Savior Jesus leads us on his Way. Alleluia, Alleluia!*

This Is My Father's World (*tune: Terra Beata*)

- ♪ *This is my Father's world, and to my list'ning ears, all nature sings, and round me rings, the music of all frontiers. This is my Father's world, I rest now in the shade, of rocks and trees, of skies and seas, his hand creation made.*
- ♪ *This is my Father's world, the birds their chorus raise, the morning bright, the evening light, declare their maker's praise. This is my Father's world, he lives in all that's fair, in the moving grass I hear him pass, he speaks now ev'rywhere.*
- ♪ *This is my Father's world, why should my heart be sad? The Lord is king—let the heavens ring. God reigns—let the earth be glad. This is my Father's world, his kingdom has come 'round, for dear to God is the earth Christ trod, it is all holy ground.*
- ♪ *This is my Father's world, oh let me not forget, that though the wrong seems oh so strong, God is the ruler yet. This is my Father's world, the healing is not done, the dead will rise to the earth's surprise, heaven and earth be one.*
- ♪ *This is my Father's world, I will never stand alone. In the world around he is always found, God makes his glory known. This is my Father's world, I may wander and roam, whate'er my lot, it matters not, this truly is my home.*

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (*tune: Eine Feste Burg*)

- ♪ *A mighty fortress is our God, a shield that never fails us. He provides for us ev'ry need, that daily comes upon us. For still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe; his sly power is great, and armed with violent hate, on earth is not his equal.*
- ♪ *Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing. Were not the right one on our side, the one of God's own choosing. You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is he. Lord of all creation, he rules ev'ry nation, he cannot be defeated.*
- ♪ *And though this world with evils filled, should threaten to undo us. We will not fear for God has willed, his truth to triumph in us. The world's ruler attacks, but Jesus has our backs. His rage we can endure, for now his doom is sure. One little word can fell him.*
- ♪ *God's word rules o'er all earthly pow'rs, thanks to him who for us died. The Spirit and his gifts are ours, through him who is on our side. Let things and fam'ly go, and your own life also. The body they may kill, but God's truth remains still, his kingdom is forever!*

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past (*tune: St Anne*)

- ♪ *Our God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.*
- ♪ *Under the shadow of your throne, your saints have dwelled secure. Sufficient is your arm alone, and your love is our cure.*
- ♪ *Before the hills in order stood, or earth received its frame, from everlasting you are good, through endless years the same.*
- ♪ *A thousand ages in your sight, are like an ev'ning done, short as the watch that ends the night, before the rising sun.*
- ♪ *Time like an ever-rolling stream, bears all of us away. We fly forgotten as a dream, dies at the op'ning day.*
- ♪ *Our God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be you our guide while life will last, and our eternal home!*

Eternal Father, Strong to Save (*tune: Melita*)

- ♪ *Eternal Father strong to save, your arm does bind the restless wave. You bid the mighty ocean deep, all its appointed limits keep. Oh hear us when we cry to you, for your help, mercy, and rescue.*
- ♪ *Oh Savior your almighty word, the winds and waves submissive heard. You walked upon the surging deep, and midst the rage did trust and sleep. Oh hear us when we cry to you, for your help, mercy, and rescue.*
- ♪ *Oh Holy Spirit you did move, upon the chaos to remove, and bid their angry tossing cease, and turn confusion into peace. Oh hear us when we cry to you, for your help, mercy, and rescue.*
- ♪ *Oh Creator of love and pow'r, your children shield in danger's hour. From temptation, evil, and foe, protect them ev'rywhere they go. Oh hear us when we cry to you, for your help, mercy, and rescue.*

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less (*tune: Magdalen*)

- ♪ *My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' love and forgiveness; I dare not the world's game to play, but wholly walk on Jesus' Way. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.*
- ♪ *When darkness tries to hide his face, I rest on his unchanging grace. In ev'ry high and stormy wind, my anchor holds through discipline. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.*
- ♪ *His care, provision, and his blood, support me in the crashing flood. When all around me collapses, he is my hope in all changes. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.*

Lord Jesus Dwells Among Us (*tune: Thaxted*)

- ♪ *Lord Jesus dwells among us, to free and to unchain, to bear our human suffering, to share our human pain. To pour out God's own justice, to spread it through the earth, to liberate the captives, to give the poor their worth. To lift up all the oppressed, to feed all the hungry, to welcome in the stranger, to shelter the weary.*
- ♪ *He came to welcome sinners, to meet us in our need, the gospel of God's kingdom declare in word and deed. To bring down human powers, the lost to seek and find, to heal the weak and lowly, to give eyes to the blind. The voice of the Creator, the whole creation heard, to those with ears to listen, he spoke the living word.*
- ♪ *The way of life is sacrifice, to help and love the weak, to give our bread to the poor, to turn the other cheek. No worry for tomorrow, we wait on God alone, we are the slaves of all and step down from ev'ry throne. He trusted in his Father, till his very last breath, he gave his broken body, his blood even to death.*
- ♪ *His cross is for our freedom, the vict'ry over sins, and by his resurrection, our risen life begins. No tyrant will ever hold us, we carry our own cross, God is making a garden, to heal our ev'ry loss. We look in faith to Jesus, to follow where he trod, he pours his Spirit on us, to make us sons of God.*

Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast (*tune: St Flavian*)

- ♪ *Almighty God your word is cast, like seed upon the ground. Oh may it grow in humble hearts, and your good fruits abound.*
- ♪ *Let not the enemy of Christ, this holy seed remove. But give it root in faithful hearts, to bring forth loving fruit.*
- ♪ *Let not the world's deceitful cares, the rising plant destroy. But may it in converted minds, produce your peace and joy.*
- ♪ *Let then your word so kindly sent, to save us from burden, do its good work within our hearts, so we follow your Son.*

Come Unto Me, You Weary (*tune: Antbes*)

- ♪ *“Come follow me you weary, and I will give you rest.” Oh blessed voice of Jesus, which comes to hearts oppressed! It tells of resurrection, of freedom, grace, and peace, of joy that has no ending, of love that will not cease.*
- ♪ *“Come follow me you blind ones, and I will give you light.” Oh healing voice of Jesus, which comes to clear the night! Our hearts were filled with darkness, and we had lost our way. But you have given new eyes, so we don’t go astray.*
- ♪ *“Come follow me you dying, and I will give you life.” Oh raising voice of Jesus, which comes to help our strife! The enemy is eager, the journey hard and long. But you have made us mighty, and stronger than the strong.*
- ♪ *“And whosoever follows, I will not cast him out.” Oh patient love of Jesus, which drives away our doubt! And though we be unworthy, of love so great and free, he calls out to us daily, with his word, “Follow me!”*

Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake (*tune: Machs Mit Mir, Gott*)

- ♪ *“Come follow me,” the Savior spake, “All in my Way abiding. Deny yourselves, the world forsake. Obey my call and guiding. Oh bear the cross for you have died. Take my example for your guide.”*
- ♪ *“I am the light, I light the Way, a godly life displaying. I bid you walk as in the day. I keep your feet from straying. I am the Way, and well I show, how you must journey here below.”*
- ♪ *“My heart abounds in lowliness, my soul with love is glowing. And gracious words my lips express, with meekness overflowing. My heart, my mind, my strength, my all, to God I yield, on him I call.”*
- ♪ *“I teach you how to shun and flee, what harms your soul’s salvation. Your heart from ev’ry guile to free, from sin and its temptation. I am the refuge of the soul, and lead you to your godly goal.”*
- ♪ *Then let us follow Christ our Lord, and take the cross appointed. And firmly clinging to his word, in suffering be undaunted. For those who bear the battle’s strain, the crown of true life will obtain.*

Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways (*tune: Evan*)

- ♪ *Oh that the Lord would guide my ways, to keep his teachings still. Oh that my God would grant me grace, to know and do his will.*
- ♪ *Send down your Spirit now to write, your law upon my heart. Nor let my tongue indulge deceit, nor act the liar’s part.*
- ♪ *Now guide my footsteps by your word, and make my heart sincere. Let sin have no dominion Lord, but keep my pathway clear.*
- ♪ *Lord assist me when I do stray, a stricter watch to keep. And should I lose your loving Way, restore your wand’ring sheep.*
- ♪ *Help me to walk in your commands, a most delightful road. Nor let my head or heart or hands, offend against my God.*

Trust and Obey (*tune: Trust and Obey*)

- ♪ *When we walk with the Lord, in the truth of his word, he will always be guiding the Way. While we do his good will, he abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be walking with Jesus, but to trust and obey.*
- ♪ *Ev'ry burden we bear, ev'ry sorrow we share, is a gift that now shows us the Way. Ev'ry trauma and loss, ev'ry death on our cross, is now bless'd if we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be walking with Jesus, but to trust and obey.*
- ♪ *But we never can prove, the true depths of his love, until all things at his feet we lay. So we come to this throne and give up what we own, 'cause in him we will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be walking with Jesus, but to trust and obey*
- ♪ *Then in fellowship sweet, we will sit at his feet, and we'll walk by his side on the Way. What he says we will do, where he sends we will go, never fear only trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be walking with Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word (*tune: Erhalt Uns, Herr*)

- ♪ *Lord keep us steadfast in your word, curb those who by deceit or sword, would take the kingdom from your Son, and now undo all he has done.*
- ♪ *Lord Jesus Christ your pow'r make known, for you are Lord of lords alone. Defend your holy Church that we, may walk your Way eternally.*
- ♪ *Oh Spirit who gives us new birth, bring peace and unity on earth. Support us in our daily strife, and lead us out of death to life.*

I Leave All Things to God's Direction (*tune: Neumark*)

- ♪ *I leave all things to God's direction, he brings good through all that happens. His will and way must always be done, his love is seen in his actions. My fortress and my rock is he. What pleases God, that pleases me.*
- ♪ *God knows what must be done to change me, his love for me will never cease. His love is seen as hard times hit me, and also in the times of peace. My Father is always for me. What pleases God, that pleases me.*
- ♪ *God wants to save both body and soul, he loves each person as a whole. Therefore I let go of all control, all that matters is the Lord's goal. His will be done eternally. What pleases God, that pleases me.*
- ♪ *My God has all things in his keeping, he is the always faithful friend. He gives me laughter after weeping, and all his ways in blessings end. His love endures eternally. What pleases God, that pleases me.*



Guide Me, Oh Thou Great Redeemer (*tune: CWM Rbondda*)

- ♪ *Guide me oh my great Redeemer, as I journey through this land. I am weak but you are mighty, hold me in your powerful hand. Bread of heaven, daily feed me. Feed me with your word of truth, feed me with your word of truth.*
- ♪ *Open now your Spirit fountain, where your healing waters flow. Let your fire refine and cleanse me, changing me as I do grow. Jesus Savior, ever help me. Always be my strength and shield, always be my strength and shield.*
- ♪ *When I stand on the brink of change, help my anxious fears subside. Save me now from fear's way of death, bring me across the divide. Move me forward, as I follow, keep me daily on your Way, keep me daily on your Way.*

Take My Life and Let It Be (*tune: Patmos*)

- ♪ *Take my life and let it be, all for you Lord endlessly. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.*
- ♪ *Take my hands and let them move, at the guiding of your love. Take my feet and let them be, faithful, merciful, and free.*
- ♪ *Take my voice and let me sing, always only for my King. Take my lips and let them be, filled with kindness and mercy.*
- ♪ *Take my things and my money, teach me how to be empty. Take my whole self and now use, ev'ry part as you will choose.*
- ♪ *Take my will for your design, it will be no longer mine. Take my heart it is your own, it will be your sacred throne.*
- ♪ *Take my love for you I pour, at your feet its treasure store. Take my self and I will be, always yours eternally.*

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us (*tune: Bradbury*)

- ♪ *Savior like a shepherd lead us, much we need your guiding care. In your pleasant pastures feed us, for your use do us prepare. Love each other, love each other, teach us how to love and share. Love each other, love each other, teach us how to love and share.*
- ♪ *We are yours and you befriend us, be the guardian of our days. Keep your flock from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray. Love each other, love each other, teach us how to walk your Way. Love each other, love each other, teach us how to walk your Way.*
- ♪ *You have promised to receive us, poor and broken though we be. You have mercy to relieve us, grace to cleanse and pow'r to free. Love each other, love each other, teach us how we can be free. Love each other, love each other, teach us how we can be free.*
- ♪ *You have promised your divine peace, let us now be calm and still. Let our patience always increase, with your true rest our lives fill. Love each other, love each other, teach us to wait on your will. Love each other, love each other, teach us to wait on your will.*

What Is the World to Me (*tune: Was Frag Ich Nach Der Welt*)

- ♪ *What is the world to me, with all its many pleasures. When you and you alone, Lord Jesus, are my treasure! You only Lord Jesus, my life's delight will be. You are my peace my rest. What is the world to me!*
- ♪ *The world seeks to be praised, and honored by the mighty. But little do they know, that they are dead and empty. But what I only seek, above all things is he. My Jesus he alone. What is the world to me!*
- ♪ *The world seeks after wealth, to build up money and stuff. Yet never is content, for it is never enough. I have the only good, content with it I'll be. My Jesus is my wealth. What is the world to me!*
- ♪ *What is the world to me! My Jesus is my treasure. My life, my health, my wealth, my friend, my love, my pleasure. My joy, my crown, my all, my life eternally. Once more then I declare: What is the world to me!*

All Depends on Our Possessing (*tune: Alles Ist An Gottes Segen*)

- ♪ *All depends on our possessing, God's abundant grace and blessing, untainted by earthly wealth. He who trusts with faith unshaken, by his God is not forsaken, and will find spiritual health.*
- ♪ *Our Father has always fed me, and to many joys has led me, he has never let me down. He who always gently schools me, he who daily guides and rules me, will keep me under his crown.*
- ♪ *Many spend their lives in stressing, anxiously and in possessing, things that will only hurt us. I will strive to find the treasure, that will bring me lasting pleasure, the word of our Lord Jesus.*
- ♪ *When with sorrow I am burdened, back to hope I am then driven, all my longing will be stilled. To his loving-kindness tender, soul and body I surrender, for on God alone I build.*
- ♪ *He alone knows what to give me, for all of my dreams deceive me, lean on him from day to day. I will doubt his wisdom never, I am nothing but a beggar, I will follow on his Way.*
- ♪ *No matter how long my days run, God my weary soul has risen, all my trust in him I place. Earthly wealth is soul destroying, slowly pulling men from trusting, I must anchor in his grace.*

Lord Jesus, Think on Me (*tune: Southwell*)

- ♪ *Lord Jesus, think on me, and purge away my sin. From selfish passions set me free, and make me pure within.*
- ♪ *Lord Jesus, think on me, by anxious thoughts oppressed. Let me your loving servant be, and live your promised rest.*
- ♪ *Lord Jesus, think on me, amid struggle and strife. In all my pain and misery, please be my health and life.*
- ♪ *Lord Jesus, think on me, nor let me go astray. Through darkness and perplexity, point our your chosen Way.*

♪ *Lord Jesus, think on me, that when the flood is past, I may a new creation be, and walk with you steadfast.*

Just As I Am (tune: Woodworth)

- ♪ *Just as I am, without one plea, but that you gave your life for me. I need for you to set me free. Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- ♪ *Just as I am, though tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within without. Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- ♪ *Just as I am, poor empty blind. So much I need in you to find, sight, purpose, and change to my mind. Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- ♪ *Just as I am, you will receive, will love, forgive, change, and relieve. Now ev'rything behind I leave. Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
- ♪ *Just as I am, I say goodbye, to all things on which I rely, for you call me to come and die. Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Chief of Sinners Though I Be (tune: Gethsemane)

- ♪ *Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus gave his life for me. Died that I might self-deny, lived that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am his and he is mine.*
- ♪ *Oh, the height of Jesus' love, higher than the heav'ns above, deeper than the depths of sea, lasting through eternity! Love that found me, wondrous thought, found me when I sought him not.*
- ♪ *Only Jesus can impart, love to heal the wounded heart. Peace that flows from his teachings, joy that new life with him brings. Faith and hope to walk with God, in the way that Jesus trod.*
- ♪ *Oh my Savior help afford, by your Spirit and your word! When my wayward heart does stray, keep me in the narrow way. Grace in time of need supply, while I live and when I die.*

Fight the Good Fight (tune: Mendon)

- ♪ *Fight the good fight with all your might. Christ is your strength and Christ your sight. Grab hold his word and it will be, your joy and crown eternally.*
- ♪ *Run the straight race through God's good grace. Lift up your eyes, and seek Christ's face. Life with its paths before us lies, Christ is the Way and Christ the prize.*
- ♪ *Cast care aside lean on your guide. God's boundless mercy will provide. Trusting and patient faith will prove, Christ is your life to help you move.*
- ♪ *Faint not nor fear God's arms are near. He changes not who holds you dear. Only have faith and you will see, that Christ is all in all truly.*

Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus (*tune: Webb*)

- ♪ *Stand up, stand up for Jesus, you foll'wers of the cross! Lift high his Way of life, our vict'ry is through loss. Through suffering and death, his foll'wers he will lead, till ev'ry foe is loved, and Christ is Lord indeed.*
- ♪ *Stand up, stand up for Jesus, his word you need to hear. You are not too weak to stand, away with shame and fear. Whene'er you meet with evil, within you or without, remember his word you heard, you will stand with no doubt.*
- ♪ *Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in his strength alone. The arm of violence will fail, you dare not throw a stone. Put on the gospel armor, be clothed in love and prayer. When duty calls or danger, do not be stuck in fear.*
- ♪ *Stand up, stand up for Jesus, wait on him to prevail. No matter how dark it gets, our Father will not fail. To him that patiently waits, the vict'ry he will see. He with the King of mercy will reign eternally.*

Onward Christian Followers (*tune: St Gertrude*)

- ♪ *Onward Christian followers, walking on the Way. With the cross of Jesus, showing us the way! Christ the model servant, leads against the foe. Forward into the world, see his people go! Onward Christian followers, walking on the Way. With the cross of Jesus, showing us the Way!*
- ♪ *At the word of Jesus, all evil does flee, on then Christian foll'wers, on to victory! Hell's foundations crumble, with all acts of love. Brothers never give up, strength comes from above! Onward Christian followers, walking on the Way. With the cross of Jesus, showing us the Way!*
- ♪ *Always with unity, the Church moves forward. Brothers we are going, where the saints ventured. We are not divided, all one Body we. One in hope and teaching, one in charity. Onward Christian followers, walking on the Way. With the cross of Jesus, showing us the Way!*
- ♪ *Onward then you people, join God's holy Church. Come find life and meaning, end your worldly search. God is present with us, Jesus is the Lord. Let us walk the journey, led by his good word. Onward Christian followers, walking on the Way. With the cross of Jesus, showing us the Way!*

What a Friend We Have in Jesus (*tune: Converse*)

- ♪ *What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry, ev'rything to God in prayer! Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry, ev'rything to God in prayer!*

- ♪ *Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer! Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer!*
- ♪ *Are we weak, anxious, and worried, burdened with a load of care? Precious Savior still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer! Do your friends despise forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In his arms he'll take and shield you, you will find his comfort there.*

When Peace Like a River (*tune: It Is Well*)

- ♪ *When peace like a river comes flowing my way, when sorrows like large sea waves roll, whatever my lot you have taught me to say: It is well, it is well with my soul. It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.*
- ♪ *Though evil should strike me though trials should come. This reminds me God has control, that Christ has regarded my weak, helpless state. And has given himself for my soul. It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.*
- ♪ *He lives oh the joy of this wonderful thought, my old way of life as a whole, is nailed to his cross and I live it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord oh my soul. It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.*
- ♪ *Lord, open my eyes so my faith gives me sight, to see your whole creation's goal. The dead are arising for Jesus is here. And therefore it is well with my soul. It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.*

Be Still, My Soul (*tune: Finlandia*)

- ♪ *Be still my soul the Lord is on your side. Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. Leave to your God to order and provide. In ev'ry change he faithful will remain. Be still my soul your loving heav'nly Friend, through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*
- ♪ *Be still my soul your God does undertake, to guide the future as he has the past. Your hope your confidence let nothing shake, all now mysterious will be clear at last. Be still my soul the waves and winds still know, his voice who rules them as he dwells below.*
- ♪ *Be still my soul when dearest friends depart, and all is darkened in the veil of tears. Then will you better know his love his heart, who comes to soothe your sorrow and your fears. Be still my soul your Jesus can repay, from his own fullness all he takes away.*
- ♪ *Be still my soul the hour has now come here, for we are now forever with the Lord. We are no longer ruled by grief and fear, in the midst of sorrow we are restored. Be still my soul your time alone is past, the Lord has come to dwell with us at last.*

Amazing Grace (*tune: New Britain*)

- ♪ *Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.*
- ♪ *Grace taught my heart the Lord to fear, and grace my fears expelled.  
By grace Jesus has now come here, the Lord with me has dwelled!*
- ♪ *Through many dangers, toils, and traps, I have already come. Grace  
has sure kept me from collapse, and grace will lead me home.*
- ♪ *The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures. He  
will my strong provider be, as long as life endures.*

Abide With Me (*tune: Eventide*)

- ♪ *Abide with me, fast falls the eventide. The darkness deepens, Lord  
with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of  
the helpless oh abide with me.*
- ♪ *Swift to its close now comes life's little day, the world's joys fade its  
pleasures pass away. Death and decay in all around I see. Oh Lord  
who never dies abide with me.*
- ♪ *I need your presence ev'ry passing hour. What but your grace can  
foil the tempter's power? Who like yourself my guide and strength  
can be? Through good and evil oh abide with me.*
- ♪ *I fear no foe with you at hand to bless, though ills have weight, and  
tears their bitterness. Where is death's sting? Where grave your  
victory? I rise anew if you abide with me.*
- ♪ *Hold now your cross before my closing eyes. Grow me through loss  
and help me to arise. New life breaks through as death is forced  
to flee. In life in death oh Lord abide with me.*

Now the Light (*tune: Mude Bin Ich*)

- ♪ *Now the light has gone away. Father listen while I pray. Asking  
you to watch and keep, and to send me quiet sleep.*
- ♪ *Jesus Savior wash away, all that has been wrong today. Help me  
ev'ry day to be, walking your Way of mercy.*
- ♪ *Now my evening praise I give. You did die that I might live. All  
your blessings come for free, oh how good you are to me!*
- ♪ *You my best and kindest friend, you will love me to the end. Help  
me love your creatures more, always better than before.*

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow (*tune: Old 100<sup>th</sup>*)

- ♪ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Praise him all creatures  
here below! Praise him above you heav'nly host! Praise Father,  
Son, and Holy Ghost!*

# The Gospel of the Way

According to Luke-Acts

## Luke-Acts Outline

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## I. The Way Is Born † Luke 1:1—3:38

### Civilization Is Silenced † Luke 1:1-25

<sup>1,1</sup> Many have written the story of Jesus and what he did among us. <sup>2</sup> These stories are based on what was handed down to us by those who saw everything with their own eyes. <sup>3</sup> Because I have carefully researched and followed everything about Jesus, I also decided to put together an accurate account of his story. I have done this for those of you who have already begun your lifelong journey of being Jesus's disciple. <sup>4</sup> 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 building your lives.

<sup>5</sup> Herod the Great ruled Israel and the surrounding areas on behalf of the Roman Empire from 37 to 1 BC. During this time there was a temple-caretaker named Zechariah. In addition to the major festivals, Zechariah worked for one week, twice a year, in the Jerusalem temple—the heart of their Civilization. He did this with his priestly group that was eighth in the rotation of twenty-four. His wife, Elizabeth, was a descendant of Moses's brother, Aaron. <sup>6</sup> Both Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful Israelites who carefully kept all the commands and laws of the Creator. <sup>7</sup> However, they lived with the great social shame of having no children. Elizabeth was unable to have children and was now well beyond child-bearing age.

<sup>8</sup> One week in 4 BC, Zechariah was on duty with his group as a temple-caretaker. <sup>9</sup> He was randomly selected, according to the custom, for a once-in-a-lifetime job. He was to enter all alone into the temple's inner sanctuary. There he would burn the incense that was a symbol of the Creator receiving his people's prayers. <sup>10</sup> During this hour of prayer and incense, all the people of Jerusalem, about 60,000, were gathered to pray. <sup>11</sup> Suddenly there was a messenger from the Creator standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> Seeing him, Zechariah was deeply disturbed and terrified. <sup>13</sup> 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 childless family, like 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.’ <sup>14</sup> After all these years of sadness, you will finally be filled with great joy and many will rejoice at your son's birth. <sup>15</sup> Your child will be great, not in the eyes of Civilization but in the eyes of the Creator. Like the prophet Samuel, he must be completely devoted to the Lord's service. He must take a Nazarite vow to never drink alcohol. He will be filled with the Creator's Spirit and Breath, even in his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> John will turn many of the children of Israel back to the Lord their Creator. <sup>17</sup> As the prophet Malachi foretold, John will be the long-expected return of the prophet Elijah. He will do the Creator's work by preaching true justice. He will help 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.”

<sup>18</sup> In disbelief, 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!”

<sup>19</sup> Replying to him, the messenger said,  
 “I am Gabriel, who warned that rebuilding Civilization in Jerusalem would cause 490 years of exile from the Creator. I also foretold that salvation would come through the destruction of the Creator’s Christ, the city, and the temple. I was sent by the Creator to declare that the 490 years are coming to an end. I am proclaiming the Gospel to you. The Creator’s Rule is about to come to earth! <sup>20</sup> Look! You are a spokesman for Civilization. You will be silenced and unable to speak until the day your child is named. This is because the Way of Civilization is preventing you from trusting my words—which you will see are true.”

<sup>21</sup> The people were expecting Zechariah to come back out of the temple’s inner sanctuary at any moment. They were confused and amazed at his delay.

<sup>22</sup> When Zechariah finally came out, he was not able to use his voice to speak to the gathered crowd. Through his gestures, the people eventually learned that he had seen a vision in the temple’s inner sanctuary. <sup>23</sup> Then, when the days of Zechariah’s work in the Jerusalem temple were completed, he returned back home. <sup>24</sup> When they were back home, Elizabeth, his wife, became pregnant. She hid herself for five months, saying,

<sup>25</sup> “The Lord has finally come through for me in this season! He has had compassion on me and has taken away my shame of being childless!”

### The Creator Speaks † Luke 1:26-56

<sup>26</sup> During the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the Creator sent his messenger Gabriel to Nazareth. Nazareth was a village of around 300 people in Galilee, the northern region of Israel. <sup>27</sup> Gabriel was sent to a young woman named Mary. She was promised for marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel entered Mary’s home and said,

“Rejoice, for the Creator is generous and has shown you kindness! The Creator himself is with you!”

<sup>29</sup> But Mary was deeply disturbed and was wondering what this could mean.

<sup>30</sup> The messenger said to her,

“Do not fear, Mary! The Creator is showing you his generosity. <sup>31</sup> Look! You will become pregnant and you will give birth to a child. You will name him Jesus, which means, ‘the Creator rescues.’ <sup>32</sup> 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 family of David. <sup>33</sup> He will rule over the true people of Israel throughout this age and the age that is coming. His rule will never end!”

<sup>34</sup> Then Mary said to the messenger,

“How will this take place? I am a virgin. I have never been united with a man.”

<sup>35</sup> Answering, the messenger said to her,

“The Creator’s Spirit and Breath will fill you and the power of the Creator himself will come upon you. Your child will be distinctly different from the people of Civilization. He will be called, ‘Child of the Creator.’ <sup>36</sup> Look! Your childless relative, Elizabeth, has conceived a child in her old age. She is already in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> The word of the Creator is capable of anything and everything!”

<sup>38</sup> Mary said,

“Look! I am a servant of the Lord. Let this all happen to me exactly like you have spoken.”

Then Gabriel left her. <sup>39</sup> During those days, Mary quickly went south to a town in the hill country of Judea, the southern region of Israel. <sup>40</sup> She entered Zechariah’s house and embraced Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> As Elizabeth listened to Mary’s greeting, the baby in her womb began kicking. Elizabeth was then filled with the Creator’s Spirit. <sup>42</sup> She suddenly spoke up with a great shout,

“You are a blessed woman! The child in your womb is truly special!

<sup>43</sup> How can it be that I am worthy to have the mother of my Lord come to me?! <sup>44</sup> Look! As soon as I heard your voice, the child in my womb began kicking with extreme joy! <sup>45</sup> Privileged is the one who completely trusts the Creator! What was spoken by the Lord will be completed!”

<sup>46</sup> Then Mary, in her trust, poverty, and lowliness, declared the Creator’s word.

“I hope my life will bring glory to the name of the Creator. <sup>47</sup> Everything within me rejoices in the Creator who rescues me from all slavery. <sup>48</sup> He has kindly 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. <sup>49</sup> This is all because he, who is more powerful than all, has done great things in my life! His Way is distinctly different from the Way of Civilization. <sup>50</sup> His compassion is always upon those who fear him from generation to generation.

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

<sup>56</sup> Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months till the birth of John. Then she returned home.

### Divine Births † Luke 1:57—2:21

<sup>57</sup> When it was time, Elizabeth gave birth to her child. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord was being so compassionate toward her. They began rejoicing with her. <sup>59</sup> On the eighth day they went to circumcise the child. This marked him as free from the Way of Civilization and part of the

Creator's new creation. While they were there, their relatives and neighbors began calling the child by the name of his father, Zechariah. They wanted him to continue in the family line of temple-caretakers. <sup>60</sup> Elizabeth responded,

“No! His name will be John!”

<sup>61</sup> They said to her,

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

<sup>62</sup> They made motions to his father, to see what he wanted to name the child.

<sup>63</sup> 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 and the Way of Civilization. <sup>64</sup> Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again and he began giving honor to the Creator. <sup>65</sup> Fear then filled everyone living nearby. They were scared by 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 were being discussed throughout the entire hill country of the southern region of Israel. <sup>66</sup> 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. <sup>67</sup> His father, Zechariah, after trusting and submitting to the Creator's path, was filled with the Creator's Spirit. He prophesied, saying,

<sup>68</sup> “The Creator, not the Roman emperor, is the true Lord and is to be honored above all! He has kindly looked upon his people and has freed them from slavery! <sup>69</sup> He is bringing the power of his presence to the earth through the family of David. Through this he is freeing us. <sup>70</sup> He promised this through the voices of his faithful prophets. <sup>71</sup> He is coming to rescue us from the Way of Civilization and from the hand of everyone who disowns us. <sup>72</sup> He is coming to be compassionate with us and to be faithful to his covenant with us. <sup>73</sup> He will fulfill his promise to our father Abraham! <sup>74</sup> He is doing this so that, once we are free from the fear and oppression of Civilization, we will give him our undivided allegiance. <sup>75</sup> We will obediently walk with him in faithfulness and justice all of our days.

<sup>76</sup> But you, John, will be a prophet from the Creator. You will live and preach according to the Creator's Way. You will prepare the earth for his arrival. <sup>77</sup> You will show his people the path of salvation that leads out of Civilization and into wilderness freedom. <sup>78</sup> Because of our Creator's compassionate love for his creation, he will bring a day of new creation upon us. <sup>79</sup> He will appear to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. He will change our lives so that we faithfully walk on the only Way that leads to peace and harmony for all creation.”

<sup>80</sup> 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 the rulers of Civilization, John was hidden away in the wilderness. He lived apart from the Way of Civilization and its influences until the day he stepped forward to publicly preach the Creator's word.

<sup>2</sup> During the days surrounding John's birth, Emperor Augustus ordered the whole Roman Empire to be registered. He did this to collect taxes and place young men into the Roman military. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration while Quirinius was governing in the province of Syria. <sup>3</sup> So in 3 BC, every family returned to their city of origin to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Because he was from the family of David, Joseph went south to the region of Judea, to David's city of Bethlehem. Bethlehem was a village of around 300 people. <sup>5</sup> He went there to be registered with Mary, who was pregnant and promised for marriage to him. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, it was time for Mary to give birth. <sup>7</sup> 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 animal shelter. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in an animal's feeding-box. <sup>8</sup> That night in nearby land, there were outcast shepherders guarding their flocks of sheep. Shepherders lived in the wilderness and were hated by Civilization. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly, a messenger from the Creator stood over them and the power of the Lord was shining all around them. They were overwhelmed with great fear.

<sup>10</sup> The messenger said to the shepherders,

“Do not fear! I have come to declare a Gospel unlike that of the Roman Empire. This Gospel is from the Creator and it will bring great joy to you and all people. <sup>11</sup> The Creator has sent you a rescuer! The Christ, who is the Chosen Ruler of the earth, was born for you today in David's city! <sup>12</sup> 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.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly, along with the messenger, there was a heavenly crowd praising the Creator. <sup>14</sup> They said,

“All power and authority 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!”

<sup>15</sup> 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!”

<sup>16</sup> They quickly went and found Mary and Joseph, as well as their baby, who was lying in an animal's feeding-box. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> All those who listened were amazed at this message from the shepherders. <sup>19</sup> Mary remembered all these things and she treasured them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Having seen everything, exactly as it was promised to them, the shepherders returned to the wilderness while praising the Creator's victory. <sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, Mary and Joseph had the child circumcised. This marked him as free from the Way of Civilization and part of the Creator's new creation. Then they named him Jesus, as the messenger had instructed them before he was conceived in the womb.

### Signs of the Way † Luke 2:22-52

<sup>22</sup> The time came for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus to obey the Law of Moses and be ritually cleansed from the birth process. So they went to Jerusalem. They presented Jesus to the Creator and remembered their rescue from slavery to Civilization. <sup>23</sup> It is written in Exodus 13,

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

<sup>24</sup> Because they were poor, they offered the lesser sacrifice that was required by the law. It is written in Leviticus 12,

*“A pair of pigeons or two young doves.”*

<sup>25</sup> In Jerusalem there was a man filled with the Creator’s Spirit named Simeon. He was living in the Creator’s justice and was attentively waiting for the Creator’s people to be renewed. <sup>26</sup> Simeon had been told by the Creator’s Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Creator’s Christ and Chosen Ruler with his own eyes. <sup>27</sup> With the Creator’s Spirit leading him, Simeon came into the Jerusalem temple while Jesus was being brought in to follow Moses’s Law. <sup>28</sup> When he saw Jesus, Simeon embraced him in his arms and honored the Creator. <sup>29</sup> He said,

*“Master, you are now letting your servant die in peace and harmony, as you promised. <sup>30</sup> My own eyes now see your rescue plan! <sup>31</sup> You have been preparing this for all creation. <sup>32</sup> This child is a light that will reveal the evil of Civilization’s Way. Through him, victory will come to your faithful wilderness people.”*

<sup>33</sup> Jesus’s parents were amazed at what was being spoken about their son.

<sup>34</sup> Simeon then blessed them and said to Mary,

*“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. <sup>35</sup> 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.”*

<sup>36</sup> The elderly prophet Anna, from the lowly tribe of Asher, was also there in the Jerusalem temple. She had been married for seven years as a young woman.

<sup>37</sup> She was now an eighty-four-year-old widow. She never left the Jerusalem temple. Night and day, she was giving her allegiance to the Creator and urging his return by praying and going without food. <sup>38</sup> She was standing by at that hour. When she saw Jesus, she began to declare her loyalty to the Creator. She told everyone that Jesus was going to bring freedom to Jerusalem. <sup>39</sup> After Jesus’s parents completed everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned home. They went north to Nazareth in the region of Galilee, which was a hotbed of revolutionary activity against the Roman Empire.

<sup>40</sup> As Jesus grew up, the Creator’s generosity was showered upon him. He was filled, not with Civilization’s wisdom, but with the Creator’s wisdom.

<sup>41</sup> Every year Jesus’s parents journeyed to Jerusalem. They went for the Passover Festival to remember the Creator rescuing his people from slavery to Civilization. <sup>42</sup> In the spring of 11 AD, when Jesus was twelve years old, his family went south to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. <sup>43</sup> After the

celebration of the Passover was complete, Jesus remained in Jerusalem. His parents did not know this and began returning north to Nazareth. <sup>44</sup> They assumed Jesus was among the great crowd of journeyers. So they traveled toward home for a whole day before they began looking for Jesus among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> Unable to find Jesus, his parents frantically returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. <sup>46</sup> On the third day of 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 from them. <sup>47</sup> All who listened to Jesus speak were blown away at his understanding of the Scriptures, which were the sacred writings of Moses and the Prophets. They were amazed at his answers to the questions of the teachers. <sup>48</sup> Seeing Jesus sitting there, his parents were amazed. His mother said to him,

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

<sup>49</sup> Jesus said to them,

“Why could you not 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.”

<sup>50</sup> But Jesus’s parents did not fully understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>51</sup> 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. <sup>52</sup> Jesus then continued to grow in wisdom, stature, and generosity in the eyes of both the Creator and the people.

### **The Voice of the Wilderness † Luke 3:1-38**

<sup>3.1</sup> In the fall of 26 AD, during the fifteenth year of the rule of Roman Emperor Tiberius, Pontius Pilate was governing the nation of Israel. Herod Antipas, who was the son of Herod the Great, was assisting Pilate in the region of Galilee. <sup>2</sup> Annas and Caiaphas had been chosen by the Roman Empire as the leaders of the temple-caretakers. But the word of the Creator did not come through any of these powerful rulers of Civilization. Instead it came through John, the child of Zechariah, out in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> John was in the land of the Jordan River, the river that symbolized the Creator’s people entering the promised land of new creation. He was proclaiming a baptism of preparation for the Creator’s arrival. He was calling the people to change their thinking and be cleansed of the Way of Civilization. <sup>4</sup> As it is written in Isaiah 40,

*“The voice of truth is crying out in the wilderness. Prepare your lives for the arrival of the Lord. Remove the Way of Civilization from your lives so that his coming will not be painful for you. <sup>5</sup> Every imbalance of wealth and power will be leveled out. The poor and weak will be lifted up. The rich and powerful will be brought low. Every deceptive and unjust way will be turned into an honest path of justice. <sup>6</sup> All creation will be saved by the Creator.”*

<sup>7</sup> John the Baptist was preaching to the crowds, which were coming out to be baptized by him. He said,



“You were born, raised, and trained by the satanic Way of Civilization and its desire for control. Who warned you to flee from the destruction that is coming upon Civilization? <sup>8</sup> Reveal the core change of your mind and heart. Produce a life of faithful obedience to the Creator. Do not begin to say to yourselves,

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

I say to you, the Creator made his people from the earth once before. Therefore, he is even able to resurrect the children of Abraham from these wilderness stones! <sup>9</sup> Look! The axe is already at the root of Civilization! Every person that walks in Civilization’s Way will be destroyed.”

<sup>10</sup> The crowds began asking John the Baptist,

“What then must we do?”

<sup>11</sup> 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.”

<sup>12</sup> Tax-collectors, who were hated because they were wealthy traitors that worked for the Roman Empire, also came to be baptized. They said to John the Baptist,

“Teacher, what must we do?”

<sup>13</sup> John the Baptist said to them,

“It is better to quit your job and do nothing, than it is to support oppression by following Rome’s orders.”

<sup>14</sup> Those who had been forced to serve 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 reject their ways by how you live. You must do no violence. You must not participate in oppressing and exploiting the people you encounter. You must be content with the minimal food they give you.”

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

“I baptize, immerse, and cleanse you with water. 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. <sup>17</sup> He is coming to clean up the earth. He will gather the faithful into the Creator’s protection and care, while giving the unfaithful over to the permanent destruction coming upon Civilization.”

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> In his preaching, John the Baptist exposed Herod Antipas, the ruler of the region of Galilee. He revealed him as a wicked man who was part of a false marriage and

had no right to the power and wealth he claimed. <sup>20</sup> In response, Herod Antipas threw John the Baptist into prison in the summer of 29 AD.

<sup>21</sup> A couple months before John the Baptist was arrested, crowds of people were going out to the Jordan River to be baptized. During this time Jesus was also baptized. He was washed clean of the Way of Civilization and prepared for the Creator's arrival. While Jesus was praying during his baptism, there was an opening into the Creator's invisible realm. <sup>22</sup> 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.”

<sup>23-38</sup> 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 who led Israel fully into the Way of Civilization, of David, of Judah, of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, of Noah, of Methuselah, of Enoch, of Seth not Cain who was the founder of Civilization, of Adam, and of the Creator himself.

## II. The Way of Freedom † Luke 4:1—7:35

### The Way Out of Civilization † Luke 4:1-30

<sup>4</sup>1 Filled and guided by the Creator's Spirit and Breath, Jesus left the Jordan River. He escaped into the wilderness, away from the seductive comforts and luxuries of Civilization. <sup>2</sup>For forty days Jesus detoxed from the Way of Civilization. During this time, he was tempted and tested by Civilization's satanic desire for control. Jesus did not eat and he was extremely hungry. <sup>3</sup>In this time of great physical weakness, Civilization's desire for control challenged Jesus. It said,

"If you are the true Child of the Creator, then use your power to create food for yourself. Force 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."

<sup>4</sup>Jesus responded,

"It is written in Deuteronomy 8, *'Humanity does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from 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."

<sup>5</sup>Then the desire for control showed Jesus all the empires of Civilization in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup>It said to Jesus,

"I will give you all the authority and power of Civilization. It is my domain and it is mine to give to whomever I want. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, if you serve me and live in my Way, then all the authority and power of Civilization will be yours."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus responded,

"It is written in Deuteronomy 6, *'You will only serve and live in the Way of the Lord your Creator. You must 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."

<sup>9</sup>Then Civilization's desire for control brought Jesus to the Jerusalem temple. It said to him,

"If you are the true Child of the Creator, then throw yourself down from the top of the temple for all to see. Prove to everyone that the Creator's word can be trusted. <sup>10</sup>It is written in Psalm 91, *'The Creator will command his messengers for you, to protect you. <sup>11</sup>They will always watch over you so you will never cut your foot against a stone.'*"

<sup>12</sup>Jesus responded,

"It is written in Deuteronomy 6, *'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."

<sup>13</sup>After Jesus successfully resisted every seduction of the Way of Civilization, the desire for control left Jesus alone for a time.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus then returned north to Galilee, filled with the power of the Creator's Spirit. News concerning Jesus spread throughout the entire surrounding land. <sup>15</sup> Jesus began teaching in their synagogues, which were the sacred gathering places of worship. The people were fascinated and amazed by him. <sup>16</sup> 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 the synagogue and stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> The book of the prophet Isaiah was given to Jesus. He read from Isaiah 61.

*<sup>18</sup> "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 its Way. He has sent me to bring freedom to those oppressed under human rulers. <sup>19</sup> He has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord's hospitality. This is the everlasting Jubilee where all slaves are permanently freed, all debts are permanently forgiven, and all land is permanently shared."*

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

"Today, as you hear these words from my mouth, this writing is fulfilled. The Creator's never-ending Sabbath of freedom and justice is here. The new creation is arriving on the earth! The old ways must come to an end. Slaves must never be taken. Debts must never be held. Wealth must never be stored up."

<sup>22</sup> They were stunned by these words of generosity and freedom that would completely dissolve the basic structure of Civilization. They all began to speak against Jesus. They were saying,

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

<sup>23</sup> 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!'"

<sup>24</sup> Jesus then said,

"Truly I say to you, no prophet is listened to in his homeland and among those who know him well. <sup>25</sup> Do you remember the three and a half years of no rain and the great food shortage during the time of the prophet Elijah? There were many widows among the Creator's people during that time. <sup>26</sup> Yet Elijah was sent to none of them. He was only sent to a foreign widow in the land of the wealthy and hated Tyre and Sidon! <sup>27</sup> Do you remember the time of the prophet Elisha? Many of the Creator's people had a flesh-eating disease that was slowly destroying their bodies. Yet none of them were rescued. Only Naaman, the foreign military officer, was rescued! Do not be entitled and let what you think you know cut you off from the Creator's work!"

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

### **Spiritual, Physical, & Social Freedom † Luke 4:31—5:11**

<sup>31</sup> Jesus then went to Capernaum, a city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. There he began teaching them on the sacred day of rest. <sup>32</sup> The people were absolutely amazed at Jesus's teachings, for he challenged the foundation of Civilization. <sup>33</sup> There was a man in the synagogue who was controlled by the voices and expectations of Israel's Civilization. He hated what Jesus was teaching, so he confronted Jesus with a loud voice.

<sup>34</sup> "What are you doing here, Jesus of Nazareth?! Are you trying to destroy everything we have spent hundreds of years building?! Get in your rightful place, we are the ones in control here!"

<sup>35</sup> But Jesus rebuked him,

"Be silent! I am freeing you from your slavery."

After the voice and influence of Israel's Civilization put up one last fight, it released the man without doing any lasting harm. <sup>36</sup> Everyone watching was stunned. They began saying to each other,

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

<sup>37</sup> Concerned reports and rumors about Jesus exploded into all the nearby areas. <sup>38</sup> After leaving the sacred gathering place of worship, Jesus entered the house of Simon Peter. Simon Peter's mother-in-law was in the grip of an intense fever because the Way of Civilization was destroying her body. Her family and friends begged Jesus to help her. <sup>39</sup> Standing over her, Jesus rebuked the fever and she was free from its slavery. Immediately she regained her place within the community. The whole community was strengthened and healed as she once again began to serve those around her. <sup>40</sup> The people then started coming to Jesus under the cover of night, while they were less likely to draw the attention of the authorities. They brought to him all those who were sick and suffering because of the Way of Civilization. Dangerous work, toxic living conditions, and unhealthy food were destroying the people's bodies and spirits. Jesus placed his hands upon them. He healed them and brought them back into the community of all creation. <sup>41</sup> Jesus was also freeing many people from the grip of their false hopes and expectations for the Creator's Christ. Jesus silenced them and was not allowing them to control his path. <sup>42</sup> After sunrise, Jesus was wanting to get away from Civilization to rest and recover in the wilderness. But the crowds were relentlessly following him and pressing all around him. They began holding on to him so he would not leave. <sup>43</sup> But Jesus said to them,

"I must go. It is necessary for me to declare the Gospel of the Creator's Rule to the other cities. Spreading the message and freedom of the Creator's Rule is my whole purpose in life."

<sup>44</sup> Jesus then began proclaiming the Gospel in the sacred gathering places of worship throughout the lands of Israel.

<sup>51</sup> One day, Jesus was standing beside the Sea of Galilee when a crowd pressed against him. They wanted to listen to him teach about the Creator.

<sup>2</sup> Looking around, Jesus saw some fishermen washing their nets. Their two boats were sitting on the shore. <sup>3</sup> Jesus entered the boat that belonged to Simon Peter. Then he asked Peter to take the boat out a little distance from the shore. Sitting down, Jesus began to teach the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When he finished teaching, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“Now that you have faithfully listened to my teachings, go out to the deep part of the sea and lower your nets for a catch of fish.”

<sup>5</sup> Answering, Simon Peter said,

“Teacher, we are experts. We fished all night, which is the best time, and caught nothing! But I will trust the power of your word. I will ignore what I think I know. Even though this is the wrong time for fishing, I will try again.”

<sup>6</sup> When they obeyed the word of Jesus, they caught an amount of fish so massive that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Simon Peter saw that Jesus’s word, and not the expertise and wisdom of Civilization, brought true success. So he fell down at the feet of Jesus. He said,

“I am not worthy to even be in your presence! You are the true Lord and I am a disobedient man! I have been listening to the Way of Civilization instead of the Creator!”

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

“Do not fear! From now on you will be a different kind of fisherman. You will be part of the Creator’s judgment and salvation as spoken by the prophets Ezekiel and Amos. He is tearing the powerful and wealthy off their thrones of oppression. He is saving people from the chaos of Civilization.”

<sup>11</sup> After bringing their boats to the shore, they bought their freedom. They left the massive catch of fish with the tax collectors and those who held their debts. Then they left everything behind to follow Jesus.

### **Ignoring Civilization’s Way † Luke 5:12—6:11**

<sup>12</sup> When Jesus was in one of the cities in the region of Galilee, there was a man with a flesh-eating disease. The disease was slowly destroying him, symbolic of the decay of Civilization. Seeing Jesus, he fell to his face. He begged Jesus,

“If you desire it, I know you are able to rescue me!”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus then broke the law by reaching out and touching this diseased man. He said,

“I want to. You are now free from the decay of Civilization and are part of the community of all creation.”

Immediately the man was healed, freed, and welcomed into the community of all creation. <sup>14</sup> Jesus then again broke the law by not waiting for the temple-caretaker to come out to inspect the man. Instead, Jesus directed him to tell no one and said,

“Go into the city and show your healed condition to the temple-caretaker. Then offer the gift for your healing, as Moses commanded. You will be a living witness to them of the oppressive and unloving Way of Civilization!”

<sup>15</sup> But Jesus could not keep news of this incident contained. 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 freed from oppression. <sup>16</sup> But needing to rest and recharge, Jesus frequently escaped into the wilderness. He spent time in the wilderness to listen to his heavenly Father and be filled with the Creator’s strength.

<sup>17</sup> One day, while Jesus was teaching a crowd, some members of the political party of the Pharisees and some teachers of the Law of Moses came from Galilee, Judea, and even Jerusalem to see him. These authorities were sitting and watching while Jesus was filled with the Creator’s healing power.

<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, some men were carrying their paralyzed friend on a cot and trying to get him to Jesus. <sup>19</sup> Unable to get him through the crowd, they went up on the roof of the building. They pulled out the roof tiles and then let their friend down on his cot into the middle of the room. <sup>20</sup> Jesus saw the paralyzed man’s friends and their love, devotion, and trust. So Jesus said to the paralyzed man,

“You are free from your spiritual and social slavery!”

<sup>21</sup> The Scriptural scholars and those from the political party of the Pharisees began to say to themselves,

“Who is this man who is insulting the Way of our Civilization?! No one can free a person from spiritual and social slavery apart from our temple and its sacrificial and priestly system! That is the only place where the Creator works!”

<sup>22</sup> Seeing their frustration and anger, Jesus said to them,

“What is going on in your hearts?! <sup>23</sup> Which is easier to say? ‘You are free from your spiritual and social slavery’ or ‘Get up and walk!’ <sup>24</sup> But so that you may know that the Human One’s community has 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. The Creator’s spiritual healing has made you physically whole.”

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

“Today we witnessed things that make us question everything we think we know and all that we are comfortable with!”

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

“Drop everything and follow me.”

<sup>28</sup> So Levi stood up, left behind the Way of Civilization, and began following Jesus. <sup>29</sup> Levi threw a great party for Jesus in his house. A crowd of many tax-collectors and other social outcasts were dining with them. <sup>30</sup> The members of the political party of the Pharisees and their Scriptural scholars complained to Jesus’s disciples. They were saying,

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

<sup>31</sup> Answering, Jesus said to them,

“A healthy person does not need a doctor, only a sick person does.

<sup>32</sup> Therefore, I am not calling those who already live in the Creator’s justice to change. Instead, I am here to call those who live outside the Creator’s Way to completely change their hearts, minds, and lives.”

<sup>33</sup> Then they said to Jesus,

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

<sup>34</sup> 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! <sup>35</sup> But, yes, the days will come when I, the groom, will be taken away from my disciples. Then in that time they will have plenty of reason to mourn and go without food.”

<sup>36</sup> Jesus then began teaching them with an analogy. He said,

“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. This will make things even worse than before. The new cannot fit with the old. <sup>37</sup> Likewise, no one pours new wine into already stretched wineskins. Otherwise the new wine will burst the old and brittle wineskins. The wine will be lost along with the wineskins.

<sup>38</sup> Old and new cannot be mixed! The new teachings and Way I am bringing cannot be combined with the systems, institutions, and Way of Civilization. When the new comes there must be a total rebuild from the ground up. New wine must be put into new wineskins. <sup>39</sup> Yet people will passionately resist change even when it is for their good. They will simply stay in the familiar Way of Civilization because they are comfortable.”

<sup>61</sup> On one Sabbath, Jesus was walking through some grain fields. His poor and hungry disciples were breaking the Sabbath law by picking, rubbing, and eating heads of grain. <sup>2</sup> Some of the members of the political party of the Pharisees were watching this. They said,

“Why are you doing what is illegal on the sacred day of rest?! A person can be lawfully killed for breaking the Sabbath!”



<sup>3</sup> Answering, Jesus said to them,

“Have you not read what David, your most beloved ruler, did when he and those with him were hungry?! <sup>4</sup> He entered 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. Then he gave it to those with him.”

<sup>5</sup> 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’s community is in charge of the Sabbath.”

<sup>6</sup> On another sacred day of rest, Jesus entered the synagogue to teach the Creator’s Way. A man there had a withered right hand, a symbol of being powerless in Civilization. <sup>7</sup> The Scriptural scholars and the members of the political party of the Pharisees were hanging around Jesus. They wanted to see if he was healing people on the Sabbath. They were looking for a way to get him in trouble and put him to death. <sup>8</sup> Jesus perceived what they were doing. So he said to the man with the withered hand,

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

The man stood up. <sup>9</sup> 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?”

<sup>10</sup> 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 health.

<sup>11</sup> Seeing this, the authorities were furious. Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath. Yet he had done it without technically doing any work in the process. So the authorities began plotting among themselves how they could come up with a way to destroy Jesus.

### Jesus’s Way † Luke 6:12-49

<sup>12</sup> After running into conflict with Civilization’s laws and being rejected by its authorities, Jesus climbed a wilderness mountain to be by himself. There he spent the night in prayer to seek the Creator’s guidance and direction. <sup>13</sup> When it became day, Jesus called his disciples together on the mountain. He chose twelve men 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. They would be the first members of the Body of Christ. <sup>14</sup> These twelve representatives were Simon (whom he named Peter, meaning “rock”), Peter’s brother Andrew, Jacob Zebedee, John Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup> Matthew, Thomas, Jacob Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot (a member of the political party of the Zealots that hated the Roman Empire), <sup>16</sup> Judah Jacob, and Judah Daggerman (who later betrayed Jesus and was a member of a violent group of Zealots that secretly killed Roman soldiers).

<sup>17</sup> Coming down from the mountain after his encounter with the Creator, Jesus stood on a level place in the wilderness. There a large group of

his disciples gathered around him. Also a large crowd of people, from all the area of Israel and even from the wealthy and powerful seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, came to him. <sup>18</sup> They came to listen to his teachings and to be freed from their physical, spiritual, and social diseases. Many who were under Civilization's control were healed and freed by Jesus. <sup>19</sup> The whole crowd was seeking to touch Jesus because the Creator's power was coming out from him and renewing everything around him. <sup>20</sup> Looking at his disciples, Jesus said,

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

<sup>24</sup> But condemned are you who have ignored my words and have stayed comfortable and wealthy. You are stubbornly keeping away from the Creator's call into a life of complete trust. <sup>25</sup> Condemned are you who are filled now. You will be hungry when your wealth fails you. Condemned are you who are laughing now. You will mourn and weep when Civilization comes crashing down. <sup>26</sup> Condemned are you when you are loved by all of society. Every generation has loved the false prophets who misrepresent the Creator and preach a false peace.

<sup>27</sup> Moreover, I say to you who are truly listening and are open to change: Love your enemies. Do good things to those who disown you. <sup>28</sup> Speak well of those who speak against you and want you to fail. Pray for the good of those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> When someone hits you in the face, do not fight back. Instead, lovingly and firmly stand your ground. When someone takes your coat, do not stop him from taking your shirt as well. <sup>30</sup> Give good things to everyone who asks you. When someone borrows or steals from you, do not demand anything back. <sup>31</sup> Treat others in the way you want them to treat you. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> If you lend hoping 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. <sup>35</sup> So be truly different and generous by loving and doing good to your enemies and giving 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. <sup>36</sup> Be shaped into the image of the Creator. Be compassionate, in the way your heavenly Father is compassionate.

<sup>37</sup> Do not take vengeance over others and then you will not be judged. Do not take vengeance against others and then vengeance will not be taken against you. Free others and then you will be free. <sup>38</sup> Give to others and then the Creator will give to you so abundantly that all his goodness will overflow all around you. You will be treated by the Creator in the same way that you treat others.”

<sup>39</sup> 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? <sup>40</sup> As such, a disciple must first be guided by her experienced teacher. But, when her training is complete, every attentive disciple will become like her teacher. <sup>41</sup> So why do you see the twig in your brother’s eye, but do not observe the log in your own eye? <sup>42</sup> You say to your brother,

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

How can you do this while you are still blind yourself and do not see the log which is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First, you must work on 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.

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

<sup>46</sup> Therefore, why are you calling me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ while not obeying my teachings? <sup>47</sup> Come listen to my words and then go out and obey them. <sup>48</sup> If you do so, then you will be like a person who digs deep and builds a house on a foundation of solid rock. When the floods of life crash against you, then you will stand firm because you are built on the solid foundation of my word. <sup>49</sup> But if you listen and do not obey me, then you are like a person building a house without a foundation. When the floods of life crash against you, then you will break and collapse in complete ruin. Listening without obeying is worthless.”

### **Freedom Through Jesus’s Word † Luke 7:1-35**

<sup>7:1</sup> When Jesus finished teaching the people, he entered Capernaum, a city on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. <sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the valued slave of a Roman military officer had been injured in battle and was about to die. <sup>3</sup> The Roman military officer heard about Jesus. So he sent some of the leaders of the rich and powerful families of Israel to request Jesus to come and rescue his slave. <sup>4</sup> Coming up to Jesus, these leaders began urgently begging him,

“This man is worthy of your help! <sup>5</sup> He is not like most of our Roman enemies. He loves our nation and he even helped build our synagogue.”

<sup>6</sup> Jesus went with them. But when Jesus was not far away from the house, the Roman military officer sent a messenger to Jesus. He said,

“I now recognize that you, and not the Roman emperor, are Lord of all. Please do not come to my house. I am a wicked man who is part of great violence and oppression. <sup>7</sup> I am not worthy to even approach you in person. Please, speak the word and my slave will be healed from this injury I have caused. <sup>8</sup> 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. It is far greater than mine.”

<sup>9</sup> While Jesus listened to these things, he was amazed at the Roman military officer. 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 in my word!”

<sup>10</sup> When those sent by the Roman military officer returned to the house, they found that the slave was healed and freed from his injury. <sup>11</sup> During the next day, Jesus and his disciples, followed by a large crowd, went to the city of Nain in the southern part of Galilee. <sup>12</sup> Outside the city gate, there was a large crowd from the city leading a funeral procession for the only son of a widow. <sup>13</sup> When the Lord Jesus saw the widow, he had compassion on her. He saw that she was on the bottom of Civilization and would soon face the possibility of starvation. Jesus said to her,

“Do not weep.”

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

“Young man, I say to you, arise!”

<sup>15</sup> At the command of Jesus, the dead man sat up and began to speak. Freed from death, both the widow and her grown son received new life through Jesus. <sup>16</sup> Fear overwhelmed everyone as they saw the one thing most certain in their lives, death, being defeated. They were amazed at the power of the Creator, saying,

“A great prophet has arisen among us! The Creator is returning to his people!”

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

<sup>18</sup> While John the Baptist was still waiting in prison, his students reported to him all the things that Jesus was teaching and doing. John was beginning to doubt if Jesus was ever going to bring the revolution of freedom he was preaching. <sup>19</sup> So John the Baptist sent two of his students to Jesus, saying,

“Are you the chosen one we have been waiting on to free us from the Way of Civilization or should we be looking for someone else?”

<sup>20</sup> When they came to Jesus, the men said,

“John the Baptist sent us to you. He wants to know, ‘Are you the chosen one we have been waiting on to free us from the Way of Civilization or should we be looking for someone else?’”

<sup>21</sup> In response, Jesus freed many who were physically, socially, and spiritually enslaved and abused by Civilization. He opened the eyes of many who were blinded by Civilization's Way of thinking, seeing, and living. <sup>22</sup> Then Jesus said to John the Baptist's students,

“When you go, report to John the Baptist the things you listened to with your own ears and saw with your own eyes. Like it says in Isaiah 35,  
*The blind see. The disabled walk. The unclean are cleansed. The deaf-mute listen. The dead are raised. The poor have the Gospel of the Creator's return declared to them.*”

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

<sup>24</sup> When the messengers of John the Baptist had departed, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John the Baptist. He said,

“What did you come out to the wilderness to see? Grass blowing in the wind? <sup>25</sup> What did you come out to see? A person in fancy and expensive clothes? Look! Those with fancy and expensive clothes and possessions live in palaces. <sup>26</sup> What did you come out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet! <sup>27</sup> This was written in Malachi 3 concerning John the Baptist,

*‘Look! I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare the way for my return.’*

<sup>28</sup> I say to you, among all people no one is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least in the Creator's Rule is greater than he!”

<sup>29</sup> When all those who had been baptized by John the Baptist heard this, they praised the Creator. They rejoiced because the Creator was bringing freedom and justice by overturning Civilization. <sup>30</sup> But it was different for 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. They rejected Jesus's word and the Creator's call into a new life. Jesus then continued,

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

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

<sup>33</sup> John the Baptist came eating no bread and drinking no wine and you said,

‘He is occupied and controlled by evil!’

<sup>34</sup> Now the Human One has come eating and drinking and you say, ‘Look! He is an overeater and a drunk! He is a friend of Roman oppressors and the outcasts of society!’

<sup>35</sup> Nothing will make you happy! The emptiness of Civilization's wisdom is being revealed through the foolishness of your lives.”

### III. The Way of Trust † Luke 7:36—10:24

#### Trust in Jesus's Word † Luke 7:36—8:21

<sup>36</sup> One of the members of the political party of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After entering the man's house, Jesus took a seat. <sup>37</sup> A prostitute learned that Jesus was eating there and so she came to the dinner party. She had a flask of expensive, perfumed oil, which was essential to her job.

<sup>38</sup> Approaching Jesus, she knelt at his feet. She began weeping in joy at the possibility of being freed by Jesus from her life as a prostitute. Her tears began falling upon Jesus's feet. She scandalously let down her hair and began wiping his feet with it. Then she began pouring the expensive, perfumed oil on Jesus's feet, letting go of its wealth and any future as a prostitute. <sup>39</sup> The man, who had invited Jesus to dinner, saw this prostitute showing love to Jesus. He said to himself,

"If this Jesus was a true prophet he would have known what sort of woman is touching him! She is an obvious prostitute!"

<sup>40</sup> Jesus then said to his dinner host,

"Simon, I have something to tell to you."

Simon said,

"Teacher, please tell me."

<sup>41</sup> Jesus replied,

"Two needy people were in debt to their master. One needed two years to work off his debt. The other needed two months. <sup>42</sup> The master decided to be generous to both of them. He forgave their debts and did not require them to repay him anything. Therefore, which of the two will love their master more?"

<sup>43</sup> Answering, Simon said,

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

Jesus said to him,

"You have judged correctly."

<sup>44</sup> While turning to the woman, Jesus said to Simon,

"Now, you see this woman? I entered 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. <sup>45</sup> You showed me no signs of love. But she, from the moment she entered, has not stopped showing me love.

<sup>46</sup> You did not pour olive oil on my head. But she poured perfumed oil on my feet. <sup>47</sup> I say to you, because of her great love and generosity, she is free from the things holding her captive. But those who have been freed from little, love little."

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to the woman,

"You are now free from everything that has been enslaving you."

<sup>49</sup> Those who were gathered for the dinner began to say among themselves,

"Who is this man, who thinks he can give a prostitute a clean start in life?!"

<sup>50</sup> Then Jesus said to the woman,

“Your trust in the Creator has rescued you. Go in peace and harmony, living my new Way!”

<sup>8,1</sup> According to his plan, Jesus was traveling through cities and villages while proclaiming the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule. The twelve men he had chosen as the foundation of the Body of Christ and the new Israel were with him.

<sup>2</sup> Additionally, there were some women with him, who had been freed from Civilization’s control: Mary of Magdala (who had been rescued from seven of Civilization’s afflictions), <sup>3</sup> Joanna the wife of an administrator for Herod Antipas (who was rescued from her life of wealth and power), Susanna, and many others. These women were generously helping to support Jesus and his disciples with their resources. <sup>4</sup> A great crowd from the surrounding cities gathered around him. Jesus taught them with an analogy.

<sup>5</sup> “A gardener went out to scatter his seeds. During the scattering, some of the seeds fell onto the hardened human path. This led to the seeds being trampled and eaten up by the birds. <sup>6</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky soil. When these plants grew, they eventually dried up because they did not have deep enough roots to access water. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thornbushes. These grew entangled with the thornbushes and the new plants were eventually choked out. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell into the good and healthy soil. These plants grew to produce 100 times more fruit.”

After saying these things, Jesus began declaring,

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

<sup>9</sup> Afterward, Jesus’s disciples began asking him the meaning of this analogy.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them,

“Because you have left everything behind to follow me, the mysteries of the Creator’s Rule are being revealed to you. But for those who remain in their old lives, the message comes hidden in mysterious analogies. This will further harden their hearts until their lives in Civilization collapse. As Isaiah 6 says,

*‘So that they will be blind in their seeing and not understanding in their listening.’*

<sup>11</sup> The meaning of the analogy is this: The seed is the Creator’s word.

<sup>12</sup> The hardened human path represents the people who are completely consumed by the Way of Civilization. When they listen to the Creator’s word they immediately dismiss it as crazy, impractical, and irresponsible. This keeps them from trusting and finding freedom. <sup>13</sup> The rocky soil represents the people that listen and embrace the Creator’s word with initial joy and interest. However, because they still love Civilization deep down, they only embrace the Creator’s word in a superficial and shallow way. Because the word does not 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. <sup>14</sup> The soil cluttered with thornbushes represents the people who are busy with their responsibilities in Civilization and the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and power. They eagerly listen to the word of the Creator, but their trust and faith is choked out because they refuse to clear out the clutter of Civilization’s Way of life. <sup>15</sup> The good and

healthy soil represents the people who clear out everything in their lives for the Creator's word. They listen to the word and take it deep within them, treasuring it in their hearts above all else. These people produce the good fruit of the Creator's justice with long-lasting patience.

<sup>16</sup> Listen. After lighting a lamp, no one covers it up or puts it under a bed. Instead, you put it on a lampstand so that the light fills the room.

<sup>17</sup> Do not try to run or hide from the truth. Everything hidden in this life will be brought into the light and made known to all. I am here to uncover the lies of Civilization. <sup>18</sup> Therefore, watch out how you listen! Things can be understood in different ways based on the lighting of your assumptions and starting point. Civilization thinks the wealthy have it all while the poor have nothing. But I am revealing that 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 Civilization's possessions are only going to lose what they think they possess."

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

"Your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to see you."

<sup>21</sup> Answering, Jesus said to them,

"My mother, my brothers, and my true family are not my blood relatives.

My true family consists of all those who are listening to and living out the Creator's word."

### **Trust Versus Fear † Luke 8:22-56**

<sup>22</sup> During one of the days of Jesus's travel and preaching, he and his disciples got into a boat. Jesus 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."

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus peacefully went to sleep, trusting his Father to protect and provide. As they were making this 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. <sup>24</sup> The disciples frantically woke Jesus up. Filled with fear they said,

"Teacher, teacher! We are going to die!"

Waking up, Jesus silenced the wind and the waves of water. The creation listened to him and it became calm. <sup>25</sup> Jesus then said to his disciples,

"Where is your trust in the Creator?!"

Both afraid and amazed, they said to one another,

"Who is this man?! Even the wind and water listen to him and obey!"

<sup>26</sup> They arrived and came to shore in the Roman region on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. <sup>27</sup> While they were getting out of the boat, a man from the city, who was controlled by Roman Civilization, confronted Jesus. He was in open rebellion against the Creator and was living in the violence and death of Civilization's Way. <sup>28</sup> Seeing Jesus, he charged at him and cried out,

"What are you doing here, Jesus?! This is not your territory! I command you to leave us alone!"



<sup>29</sup> Many had tried to bind and control the power of the Roman Empire, but it always broke free and did whatever it wanted. Standing firm, Jesus ordered this power to free the man. <sup>30</sup> Jesus then asked,

“What is your name?!”

It answered,

“Roman Legion.”

The spiritual forces of the numerous Roman armies were controlling the man.

<sup>31</sup> The Roman Legion then began urging Jesus to back down and not throw them into total destruction. <sup>32</sup> A large herd of pigs was nearby, grazing on a mountain. The pig was the mascot and symbol of the Tenth Roman Legion which occupied the lands of Israel. After the Roman Legion urged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, Jesus permitted it. <sup>33</sup> Coming out from the man, the spirits of the Roman Legion entered the pigs. The herd then charged down the steep slope and into the sea to drown. This was like the Egyptian armies drowning in the Red Sea when Moses had led the Israelites out of Civilization.

<sup>34</sup> Seeing this all happen, the pig-herders fled and reported it in the local city and farms. <sup>35</sup> Many then came out to see what had happened. They found the man, who had been possessed by the power of Roman Civilization, totally changed and now learning at the feet of Jesus. Seeing this, they were greatly afraid. There was now a power at work greater than that of the Roman Legion.

<sup>36</sup> Those who witnessed it, continued to spread the news of how this man had been occupied by the Roman Legion and then rescued by Jesus. <sup>37</sup> Great crowds gathered from the whole surrounding region. They begged Jesus to leave their land. They were terrified that the Roman Empire would hear of Jesus’s actions and bring its vengeance upon them. So getting into the boat, Jesus started to return to Galilee. <sup>38</sup> The rescued man began begging to come along. But Jesus would not allow him. He said,

<sup>39</sup> “Return to your home and describe everything the Creator has done to free you from the power and Way of Civilization!”

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

<sup>40</sup> When Jesus returned to Galilee, a crowd eagerly welcomed him.

<sup>41</sup> Jairus, who was the rich and powerful leader of a synagogue, came to Jesus and fell down at his feet. He urgently begged Jesus to come to his house.

<sup>42</sup> Jairus had only one daughter and she was dying in Civilization’s privilege. She represented the privileged in Israel for she was twelve years old and was entering her peak child-bearing years. Filled with compassion, Jesus went to help Jairus. While he journeyed, the crowd continued to relentlessly press around him. <sup>43</sup> In the crowd, there was a poor woman, rejected by Civilization. She represented the oppressed in Israel. She had been unable to have children for the last twelve years because of a continuous menstrual flow of blood. She had spent everything she had on Civilization’s doctors, but they were not able to heal her. <sup>44</sup> Sneaking up behind Jesus, this shameful woman broke a social barrier by reaching out and grabbing the clothes of an honorable man. When

she held Jesus, her flow of blood immediately stopped. <sup>45</sup> Suddenly, Jesus turned around and said,

“Who held me?!”

While everyone was denying it, Peter said,

“Teacher, the crowds are constantly touching you. We need to keep moving to save the daughter of Jairus! He is an important man!”

<sup>46</sup> But Jesus would not continue his journey. He insisted,

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

<sup>47</sup> After a time, the woman concluded that she could not keep secret. So she came forward with great fear and trembling. Falling down before Jesus, she openly told her whole story to everyone. She spoke of how she had been dead in Civilization’s eyes, but then how clinging to Jesus brought her immediate healing. <sup>48</sup> After patiently listening to her whole story, Jesus said to her,

“You are a daughter of the Creator. Your trust in the Creator has freed you from your slavery to Civilization! Go and find peace and harmony in my Way.”

<sup>49</sup> While Jesus was still delaying his journey to make this poor woman his priority, a messenger arrived. The messenger said to the rich synagogue leader,

“It is too late. Your daughter has died. It is pointless to bother the teacher any longer.”

<sup>50</sup> But, when Jesus heard this, he responded,

“Do not fear! Only trust in the Creator’s power and she will be saved.”

<sup>51</sup> 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. <sup>52</sup> Everyone was weeping and grieving over her death. But Jesus said,

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

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

“Young woman, arise!”

<sup>55</sup> Immediately, the Creator’s life breath filled her once again and she stood up. Only after first dying to her life in Civilization was she now raised to life in Jesus’s Way. Jesus then ordered them to feed the young woman with the Creator’s word. <sup>56</sup> Her parents were beside themselves, but Jesus directed them to tell no one what had happened. He did not want to draw any more attention from the authorities.

### Receiving & Giving † Luke 9:1-17

<sup>9:1</sup> Jesus called together the twelve men he had chosen to represent the new Israel. He gave them power and authority to free people from their spiritual and physical slavery to Civilization’s Way. <sup>2</sup> Then he sent them to proclaim the Creator’s Rule and to bring the Creator’s healing to any who would listen.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus said to the twelve men,

“You are living proof of the Creator’s Rule having arrived on earth. Therefore, you must empty yourselves and become 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. Trust that the Creator himself will provide for you and protect you. <sup>4</sup> Whatever house welcomes you, stay there and receive their care until you leave. You do not want to make anyone think you are trying to make a profit. <sup>5</sup> If a town does not welcome you, then walk away. Brush the dust off your feet to warn them that their town is polluted by Civilization’s Way.”

<sup>6</sup> The twelve representatives left on their journey and began passing through the towns of the area. They declared the Gospel of the Creator’s arrival and brought freedom to many who were enslaved to Civilization’s Way. <sup>7</sup> Herod Antipas, the ruler of the region of Galilee, heard about all that Jesus and his disciples were doing. He became confused by all the rumors. Some were saying John the Baptist had been raised from the dead. <sup>8</sup> Others were saying that the prophet Elijah or one of the other ancient prophets had come back. <sup>9</sup> But Herod Antipas said,

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

So Herod Antipas began looking for Jesus to learn exactly who he was. <sup>10</sup> When they returned from their journey, the twelve representatives described to Jesus everything they had done. Jesus took them and privately withdrew from the city of Bethsaida, on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. They entered the wilderness to get some rest. <sup>11</sup> But a large crowd of people learned where they were and chased after them. Jesus welcomed them and began teaching them about the Creator’s Rule. His teachings brought healing and freedom to those in need. <sup>12</sup> As the hours dragged on and as daylight was fading, the twelve representatives came to Jesus. They said,

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

<sup>13</sup> But Jesus said to them,

“You give them something to eat.”

But they said,

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

<sup>14</sup> There were about 5,000 people gathered there to listen to Jesus’s teachings. Jesus said to his disciples,

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

<sup>15</sup> They did so and everyone sat down in their sharing groups. <sup>16</sup> Jesus took the five loaves of bread and two fish. He looked in trust to his heavenly Father

and thanked him for his provision. Then he honored the bread and fish for their sacrifice. After this, he broke the food into pieces and told his disciples to share the food with the people. <sup>17</sup> Everyone ate their fill. The Creator provided so much through their faithful sharing that they gathered twelve baskets of leftovers.

### The Way of the Cross † Luke 9:18-50

<sup>18</sup> After the crowd had gone away, Jesus spent time in prayer to discern the Father's desire and direction for his life. Only his disciples were with him in the wilderness. He asked them,

“According to the crowds, who am I?”

<sup>19</sup> 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.”

<sup>20</sup> Jesus said to them,

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

Answering, Peter said,

“The Christ—the Creator's Chosen Ruler!”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus urgently directed them not to use this title with anyone for it had too much false expectation with the people and authorities. <sup>22</sup> Jesus then said,

“As the prophets Isaiah, Daniel, and Hosea foretold, it is necessary for the Human One's community to greatly suffer, to be rejected by the political and religious leaders, to be killed, and to be raised from the dead by the Creator on the third day.”

<sup>23</sup> 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. You must especially say ‘no’ to your selfish inner-voice of ego and self-preservation. Then you must daily surrender your life by picking up your cross. You must embrace being disowned, persecuted, or killed by your family and nation. Finally, you must follow me by listening to my teachings and imitating my example.

<sup>24</sup> If you try to hold on to your current life in Civilization, then you will end up destroying the spiritual essence of your life. But if you obey my teachings and thereby destroy your civilized life of privilege, wealth, and power, then you will be rescued and find true life. <sup>25</sup> For what good is it to gain all the power, wealth, and privilege of Civilization while losing the spiritual essence of your life in the process?! <sup>26</sup> What will happen if you are dismissive of me and my teachings and instead follow the Way of Civilization? Then you will be dismissed by the Human One's community when the Creator's judgment comes upon the earth. <sup>27</sup> Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not die until they see the Creator's Rule fully arrive on the earth.”

<sup>28</sup> Eight days after this, symbolizing the day of new creation, Jesus went up on a mountain to be with his Father in prayer. He took Peter, John Zebedee, and Jacob Zebedee with him. <sup>29</sup> 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's appearance changed, revealing that he was already washed clean, freed, and renewed from the corruption of Civilization. Jesus had already passed from death into new life.<sup>30</sup> Two men appeared and began speaking with Jesus. They were Moses, representing the Law of Israel, and Elijah, representing the prophets of Israel.<sup>31</sup> They were speaking about the great final Exodus from Civilization's slavery that Jesus was going to lead in Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> Peter, John, and Jacob had fallen asleep. When they woke up and came to their senses, they saw Moses and Elijah standing with a renewed Jesus.<sup>33</sup> As Moses and Elijah were about to leave, Peter said to Jesus,

"Teacher, let us honor and preserve all three of your voices equally!"

He had no idea what he was saying.<sup>34</sup> As he was saying these things, the Creator's presence covered them with a cloud. They were terrified.<sup>35</sup> The Creator then spoke to them,

"This one is my beloved Child. Listen to him above all others!"

<sup>36</sup> When the Creator said these words, the disciples no longer saw Moses or Elijah. It was only Jesus who was to be listened to above all. This truth stunned them into silence. The idea of Jesus replacing the Law and the Prophets as the voice of the Creator was so revolutionary that they kept it all to themselves.

<sup>37</sup> The next day, Jesus came down from his time of prayer to find his disciples and a large crowd having gone astray. This was like Moses coming down from Mount Sinai to find the people disobeying the Creator.<sup>38</sup> A man from the crowd cried out to Jesus,

"Teacher, I beg you to help my child—he is the only one I have!<sup>39</sup> Look! He is controlled by the spiritual forces of Civilization. They enslave him and make him completely powerless to live his life for the Creator.<sup>40</sup> I begged your disciples to free him, but they were not powerful enough!"

<sup>41</sup> Jesus responded,

"What a faithless and corrupt society this is. Everyone is controlled by the Way of Civilization! How much more of this must I patiently endure?! Bring the child to me."

<sup>42</sup> While the child was brought to Jesus, the spirit of Civilization within the boy strongly resisted. But Jesus overpowered the spirit with his word. He freed the child from its grip and gave him back to his dad.<sup>43</sup> Everyone who saw this was amazed at the power and greatness of the Creator. But while they were still in awe, Jesus spoke to his disciples.

<sup>44</sup> "You! Put these words into your ears. As the prophet Daniel foretold, the Human One's community is about to be given over into the hands of Civilization's authorities."

<sup>45</sup> But Jesus's disciples did not understand what he meant. The Way of Civilization was making them deaf and blind to the true meaning of Jesus's words. But, because they were fearful of having their ignorance exposed, they did not ask Jesus to explain what he meant.

<sup>46</sup> Faced with their own failure to save the boy and then the success of Jesus, the disciples got competitive. They began wondering which of them was the greatest in power.<sup>47</sup> Jesus saw what was happening in their hearts. He took a lowly child and stood her in the middle of them.<sup>48</sup> He said to them,

“If you obey my teachings by embracing this lowly child, then you are embracing me. And if you embrace me, then you are 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.”

<sup>49</sup> Hearing this, John Zebedee admitted,

“Teacher, we saw someone obeying your teachings and freeing people from the Way of Civilization. But we stopped him because he was not part of our group.”

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said to him,

“Do not stop someone like him! Do not try to keep the Creator’s power for yourself! The Creator’s work is so much bigger and wider than you ever dreamed. If someone is not opposing your faithful obedience to my Way, then he is on your side.”

### Lambs Among Wolves † Luke 9:51—10:24

<sup>51</sup> Focused on the Father’s purpose for his life, Jesus became confident that his end goal was in Jerusalem. He would walk into that great center of power and confront the authorities of Civilization once and for all. <sup>52</sup> In preparation for this great confrontation, Jesus continued spreading his message. He planned to gather enough followers to allow him to survive his initial entrance into Jerusalem. So Jesus sent messengers to prepare the people for his visit to the villages of Samaria, the central region of Israel. <sup>53</sup> But the Samaritans would not welcome Jesus because they knew he was planning on going to Jerusalem. They hated that he would choose Jerusalem, Mount Zion, and its temple over Samaria and Mount Gerizim. <sup>54</sup> Learning of this 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 to destroy them?!”

<sup>55</sup> But turning to face them, Jesus strongly rebuked them for not loving their enemies and for not following his example over Elijah’s. <sup>56</sup> Then they moved on to another village. <sup>57</sup> As they were journeying, someone said to Jesus,

“I will follow you wherever you go!”

<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to him,

“Foxes have dens and birds have nests. But the Human One’s community is forced to wander the earth. We are rejected by Civilization and refuse to make our home within its Way.”

<sup>59</sup> 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 dies. I am part of his household and the Law of Moses says I have to obey him!”

<sup>60</sup> But Jesus said to him,

“Those who pursue the Way of Civilization and its responsibilities are already dead. I am calling you out of death so you can join us in the life of the Creator’s Rule!”

<sup>61</sup> 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.”

<sup>62</sup> But Jesus said,

“You cannot walk a straight line while looking behind you! Therefore, if you are concerned with the life you are leaving behind, then you will not be truly faithful to the Creator’s Rule.”

<sup>10.1</sup> The Lord Jesus then expanded his rescue mission to all creation. He chose a group of seventy disciples, one for each of the seventy nations that formed after Noah’s flood. Jesus sent these seventy disciples out in pairs into every city and place he was about to go. <sup>2</sup> Jesus said to them before they left,

“There are many that need to be brought 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Do not take money or supplies. Go barefoot to show that all creation is now sacred and holy ground. Do not let anyone stop you or sidetrack you from your mission.

<sup>5</sup> When you enter a house, first say,

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

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Stay at whatever house welcomes you. Accept their food, drink, and hospitality. 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 trying to make a profit. <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a city that embraces your life and teachings, then thankfully eat their food. <sup>9</sup> After receiving their care, heal those who are sick from the Way of Civilization. Then declare to everyone,

‘The Creator’s Rule is within your grasp!’

<sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a city that does not embrace your life and teachings, then leave that city. Go out into its streets and declare,

<sup>11</sup> ‘If you reject our teachings then we can have nothing to do with you. We do not even want the dust from your filthy city on our feet. Pay attention! This is your warning: The Creator’s Rule and salvation is within grasp and you are rejecting it!’

<sup>12</sup> 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!

<sup>13</sup> Oh cities of Israel, you should know better because you regularly hear the words of the prophets! But you will be condemned, for you are rejecting the Creator’s Rule that is arriving upon the earth all around you.

<sup>14</sup> Even your hated enemies that are full of arrogance, wealth, and power would repent and change their lives if they were seeing what you see. Their judgment will be easy compared to yours. <sup>15</sup> Do not assume that you will be part of the Creator's new creation. He is going to tear you down and you will be left in the realm of the dead.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore, my disciples, 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."

<sup>17</sup> So the seventy went out on their mission. When they returned they were filled with joy. They said,

"Lord, even Civilization's spiritual forces are powerless in the face of your teachings and Way!"

<sup>18</sup> Jesus said to them,

"As you spread the Creator's Rule, I am seeing the defeat of Civilization and its satanic desire for control! <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> So do not rejoice because you think you have power. Instead, rejoice in humility because the Creator knows your names and will always be on your side!"

<sup>21</sup> In that hour, Jesus was filled with the Creator's Spirit. He rejoiced and said, "I pledge my allegiance to you alone, Father. You are the Lord and Creator of heaven and earth. You have hidden the truth of your Way from the wise and intelligent. And you have revealed your truth to the voiceless on the bottom of Civilization. Yes, Father, this is your desire and it is for the healing of the earth. <sup>22</sup> I have nothing and know nothing that is not my Father's and has not come from him. Civilization does not know what it means to be a true child of the Creator. Civilization does not know the Creator and what he is like. It is only through the Child of the Creator and his teachings that the truth of the Creator is revealed."

<sup>23</sup> Turning to his disciples, Jesus said,

"Privileged are the eyes which see the truth of what is now happening all around you. <sup>24</sup> I say to you, many prophets and rulers wanted to see what you are seeing. But they could not see because of their spiritual blindness. And many wanted to listen to what you are listening to. But they could 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—11:13

<sup>25</sup> A scholar of Moses's Law approached Jesus to see if he would stay faithful to the teachings of Moses. He said,

“What must I do to participate in the eternal life of the Creator's new creation?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to him,

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

<sup>27</sup> The scholar of Moses's Law quoted from Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19.

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

<sup>28</sup> Jesus said to him,

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

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to limit the Creator's command and get himself out of all-in obedience. So he said to Jesus,

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

<sup>30</sup> Gladly taking up his question, Jesus said,

“A man was going down the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was attacked and robbed by terrorists. They took everything he had and stripped him of his clothes. They beat him almost to death and then left him to die. <sup>31</sup> A temple-caretaker was also coming down that road. When he saw the dying man, he passed by on the opposite side. He did not want to be interrupted from his important temple business, made ritually unclean by touching blood, or attacked by the terrorists himself.

<sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> Then a traveler from Samaria, passing through this enemy land, came by. When he saw the dying man, he had compassion on him. <sup>34</sup> Risking everything, including his safety, the Samaritan took care of the man's injuries. He poured expensive olive oil and wine on the wounds of this hated enemy of his. Mounting the dying man on his own animal, he took him to a lodge and helped care for him there. <sup>35</sup> The next day, he gave two days' pay to the lodge's owner. He said,

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

<sup>36</sup> Now which of these three do you think acted like a fellow creature to the one who was attacked by the terrorists?”

<sup>37</sup> The scholar of Moses's Law said,

“I suppose it was the one who kindly 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.”

<sup>38</sup> While they continued their journey, Jesus came into a village. A woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary who immediately began breaking social expectation. She sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus to listen to his word and teachings. <sup>40</sup> Martha was busy and distracted by all the tasks that needed to get done for dinner. So in frustration Martha eventually stood over them. She 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! If we do not get them done, we will not eat!”

<sup>41</sup> Answering, Jesus said to her,

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

<sup>11.1</sup> One day, while Jesus was spending time in prayer, one of his disciples approached him when he was done. He said to Jesus,

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

<sup>2</sup> 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. Set yourself above all other authorities by bringing your Rule to the earth and into our lives. <sup>3</sup> Provide what we need for this day. <sup>4</sup> Free us from everything that holds us in slavery. Empower us to forgive every debt owed to us. Protect our faith in you so we do not fall away in times of testing.’”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus then said to them,

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

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

<sup>7</sup> Would that friend answer,

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

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Therefore, 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. <sup>10</sup> Everyone who asks will receive. Everyone who seeks will find. For everyone who knocks it will be opened.

<sup>11</sup> For which dad among you, if his child asks for a fish, will give him a deadly snake?! <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> You evil people are blinded by the spiritual forces and Way of Civilization. Yet you usually still know how to give good and not bad gifts to your children. Imagine then how much more our heavenly Father will give the one good gift, his Spirit and presence, to those who ask him.”

**Wholehearted Focus † Luke 11:14-54**

<sup>14</sup> One day, Jesus healed a man who was unable to hear because of the spiritual forces of Civilization. The man had his ears and mouth spiritually and physically opened by Jesus. The crowds were amazed at this. <sup>15</sup> But some among them said,

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

<sup>16</sup> Others were testing Jesus to see if he would give them what they wanted. They began demanding a sign from the Creator that fit their expectations.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus perceived their thoughts and intentions. He said to them,

“Every government that is divided against itself will collapse. And every household that is divided against itself will fall. <sup>18</sup> You are claiming that I free people from Civilization using Civilization’s own power of death and decay. If that is true, then the satanic force behind Civilization has been divided against itself and its rule on earth is collapsing. <sup>19</sup> On top of this, your own students would also be destroying Civilization and taking you down. <sup>20</sup> But what if you are wrong and I am freeing people from the death and decay of Civilization with the life-giving power of the Creator?! Then the Creator’s Rule has arrived upon the earth to bring you down—like it brought down Egyptian Civilization in the time of Moses. Either way, it is over for you and Civilization.

<sup>21</sup> When a fully-armed and powerful man is guarding his own house, he thinks his possessions are safe and secure. <sup>22</sup> But eventually someone stronger comes along and conquers him. He loses everything he has and finally sees that his trusted weapons are worthless. You think the Way of Civilization keeps you safe and secure. But the Creator is coming to overpower you and expose the Way of Civilization as worthless. <sup>23</sup> If you refuse to stand with me and my teachings, then you are against me. If you are not helping me in my cause, then you are working against the Creator himself.

<sup>24</sup> So be aware! Whenever an addiction of Civilization loses its control over a person, it will always try to regain its power. <sup>25</sup> When it returns it often finds the person unprepared to resist its temptations and seductions. This is because the person has not filled his life with the Creator’s word and teachings. <sup>26</sup> So the addiction of Civilization comes back to reoccupy the person while bringing seven other addictions with it as well. Therefore, the person has actually become worse off than

before! Being freed from the addictions of Civilization is useless unless my Way of life replaces the Way of Civilization.”

<sup>27</sup> As Jesus said these things, a woman yelled out from the crowd, “You are truly special! Privileged is your mother and family for raising you!”

<sup>28</sup> 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. That is the only true sign of the Creator’s Rule and presence on the earth.”

<sup>29</sup> As the crowds were gathering around him, Jesus began to say,

“This culture is an evil culture! It is seeking a sign to prove the Creator’s presence on the earth. But it will not be given a sign other than the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>30</sup> Jonah became a sign for those in the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. He preached the Creator’s word to them and led them to change their lives. Likewise, the Human One’s community will be a sign for this culture. They will preach the Creator’s word and lead some to completely change their lives. <sup>31</sup> The Queen of Southern Arabia will stand judge against the people of this culture. She came from far away to listen to the Creator’s word through Solomon. She did this 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. <sup>32</sup> Likewise, the people of the capital city of the Assyrian Empire will stand judge against this culture. They changed their lives because of the preaching of the prophet Jonah. They did this 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!

<sup>33</sup> Look! No one opens a window to then cover it up. It is always opened to allow light to flow into the house. <sup>34</sup> 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 what if your eyes are not open to the Creator’s word and are instead focused on the Way of Civilization? Then your body and life will be shaped and filled by darkness. <sup>35</sup> Therefore, make sure that you are being guided by the light of the Creator’s word and not by the darkness of Civilization! <sup>36</sup> If your focus is only on the word of the Creator, then your entire body and life will be free of darkness. You will powerfully reflect the Creator’s light throughout the earth.”

<sup>37</sup> After Jesus was done teaching the crowds, a member of the political party of the Pharisees invited him over to eat. Jesus accepted and entered the man’s house. <sup>38</sup> The man was stunned when he saw that Jesus ignored the laws of their society. Jesus did not ritually wash himself before the meal. <sup>39</sup> The Lord Jesus responded to him,

“You members of the political party of the Pharisees only worry about superficial and exterior cleansing. On the inside your lives are full of stolen wealth and works of injustice. <sup>40</sup> Fools! You cannot separate the inside and outside of your lives. <sup>41</sup> Give away the wealth and possessions that you are storing up for yourselves and then everything in your life will finally be clean. <sup>42</sup> 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 on to 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 ignore these things. <sup>43</sup> You are condemned, for you pursue political and economic power, status, and privilege. <sup>44</sup> You are condemned, for you are leading people into fellowship with death and decay without them knowing it.”

<sup>45</sup> Responding, one of the scholars of Moses’s Law said,

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

<sup>46</sup> Jesus said,

“Well you scholars of Moses’s Law are condemned as well! You burden the people with your man-made rules, laws, and expectations. And then you do not even live up to them yourselves. <sup>47</sup> 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 killed them. <sup>48</sup> You approve of them killing the prophets by building fancy graves which reinforce that the prophets are dead and silenced. <sup>49</sup> The Creator in his wisdom knew that you would hunt down and kill his prophets and representatives. <sup>50</sup> So beware! You will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets who were beaten and killed for resisting the Way of Civilization. <sup>51</sup> The first was Abel, who was killed by his brother Cain for not living in the Way of Civilization. The last was John the Baptist’s dad, Zechariah, who was killed in the temple for standing up against Civilization’s injustice. Yes, I say to you, you will be responsible for it all because you are rejecting the Creator’s Rule that all the prophets proclaimed. <sup>52</sup> So yes, you scholars of Moses’s Law are condemned! You have been given the truth of the prophets, but you refuse to listen and you even stop those who are trying to obey.”

<sup>53</sup> The Scriptural 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. <sup>54</sup> They were hoping Jesus would say something that could be used to get him killed.

### Faithfulness † Luke 12:1-40

<sup>12:1</sup> A crowd of thousands gathered and they were trampling each other to see Jesus. Jesus spoke to his disciples who had left everything behind to follow him. He said,

“Be aware of the seductive messages and influences of Civilization all around you. Especially keep yourselves free of all hypocrisy and divided

loyalty. <sup>2</sup> All that is hidden will be revealed and made known. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> I say to you, my friends, do not fear human rulers who try to control you with the threat of suffering and death. They are powerless. <sup>5</sup> There is only one to fear and only one whose opinion matters—the Creator himself. He alone can throw you into the everlasting garbage heap where Civilization is going. Yes, I say to you, fear him alone. <sup>6</sup> Every single day small birds are sold by merchants 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. <sup>7</sup> The Creator is so intimately involved in his creation that he even knows the number of hairs on your head in every moment. So do not fear! The Creator is taking care of you and watching over you, as he does all his creatures.

<sup>8</sup> If you pledge your undivided allegiance to me over everyone else, then you will be under the Creator's care. <sup>9</sup> But if you compromise your allegiance to me, then you will stand alone and without the Creator's support. <sup>10</sup> Everyone who commits his life to my cause will be rescued and freed. But everyone who rejects the work of the Creator's Spirit will remain enslaved and trapped in the Way of Civilization. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Trust that the Creator's Spirit will guide and lead you into what is necessary in those moments."

<sup>13</sup> Someone from the crowd said to Jesus,  
"Teacher, tell my brother to stop being greedy and to divide the family inheritance with me! Our dad left us a lot of wealth when he died. Now my brother will not share it with me or talk to me!"

<sup>14</sup> Jesus replied to him,  
"Why should I be judge over such a misguided argument? Neither of you are right and both of you are wrong."

<sup>15</sup> Then Jesus said to the crowd,  
"Keep yourselves away from every desire to have more possessions. The storing of wealth will choke out your life. Anything more than your daily need is deadly."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus then told a story, saying,  
"The land of a wealthy man produced a huge abundance. <sup>17</sup> He said to himself,  
"What will I do with all this? I have nowhere to store all this abundance and it would be irresponsible to give it all away."

<sup>18</sup> Then he said,  
"I know what I will do. I will tear down my storehouses and I will build larger ones to hold all my possessions. I will save the excess for myself and my family. This is the responsible and wise thing

to do. <sup>19</sup> Then our futures will be secure. We will have everything we need for years. We will rest, eat, drink, and celebrate.”

<sup>20</sup> 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. It will tear them away from faith in me and cause conflict and division among them. You have destroyed your own life and cursed your family.”

<sup>21</sup> Learn this lesson! If you store up wealth and possessions, then you are poor in faith and are cutting yourself off from the Creator.”

<sup>22</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples,

“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. <sup>23</sup> True bodily life does not come from food and clothing. It comes from daily trust in the Creator’s care.

<sup>24</sup> Learn from the birds! They do not plant seeds and harvest crops. They have no lockboxes or storehouses. Yet the Creator still feeds them. If the Creator cares for the birds, then will he not also care for you? <sup>25</sup> Tell me, which of you, by worrying and stressing, is able to add even a single day to his lifespan? <sup>26</sup> If you are not able to do even that, then why are you worrying? <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> The Creator beautifully clothes the grasses of the field, which are here today and gone the next. Will he not also clothe you? Why do you have so little trust in the Creator?

<sup>29</sup> Therefore, do not waste your energy worrying about what you will eat or drink. Do not try to do the Creator’s job for him. <sup>30</sup> All the nations of Civilization are wasting their energy on these things. Your heavenly Father already knows exactly what you need. <sup>31</sup> Be content living under your Father’s Rule. If you do this, then he will provide everything you need. <sup>32</sup> Do not fear! You are under the Creator’s care. Your heavenly Father eagerly wants to provide for you and protect you. <sup>33</sup> So open yourself up to his care by selling your possessions and giving to those who are in need this day. Generous acts of love are the only investment of true value. They are forever remembered by the Creator and can never be taken from you. <sup>34</sup> 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?

<sup>35</sup> Therefore, live in this Way of mine so you are ready in every moment for the Creator’s arrival. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> Privileged are the servants that the Lord finds attentively obedient to his word. Truly I say to you, he will serve them and care for their every need. <sup>38</sup> Especially privileged are those who stay attentive to the Creator’s word while most

of the earth has wandered from him. <sup>39</sup> 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 faithfully obedient in every moment. <sup>40</sup> So be ready! The hour of judgment upon Civilization is coming in every generation. The Creator will step in to rescue the Human One's community when you least expect it."

### Repentance † Luke 12:41—13:9

<sup>41</sup> Peter said,

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

<sup>42</sup> The Lord Jesus said,

"Anyone who wants to be part of the Creator's new creation must faithfully let go of money and possessions. Those who entrust their lives to the Creator will be cared for and will receive everything they need.

<sup>43</sup> Privileged is anyone who is living in this faithful Way when the Creator brings his judgment. <sup>44</sup> Truly I say to you, the Creator will give all of his creation to those who faithfully empty themselves in obedience to his word.

<sup>45</sup> But what if someone starts living without trust in the Creator by taking advantage of others and building up wealth for himself?

<sup>46</sup> Then the Creator will show up when he is not expecting and will cut this untrusting one out of the Body of Christ. <sup>47</sup> The one who knows the Creator's teachings and does not change his life to obey them, will be disciplined greatly. <sup>48</sup> The Creator will be much easier on the one who does not know his teachings. 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.

<sup>49</sup> Know this, I came to refine and cleanse all the earth with the spiritual fire of my word. I am ready to set the world on fire. <sup>50</sup> But I still have my own baptism I must complete and I am under great pressure until it is done. <sup>51</sup> Do you think that I have come to bring superficial peace and harmony to the earth? That is not my goal 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. <sup>52</sup> Houses and families will be divided in half. They will become enemies with each other because of my word of truth. <sup>53</sup> Even fathers and sons, as well as mothers and daughters, will be divided and turned against each other. My word will reveal the true loyalties of all hearts."

<sup>54</sup> 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. <sup>55</sup> When the winds shift and blow in from the south, you say, 'It will be hot,' and it happens.

<sup>56</sup> You are hypocrites! 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?! Why do refuse to see the need to



completely change the course of your lives?<sup>57</sup> You are even refusing to open your eyes to how true justice works.<sup>58</sup> When you find yourself in a conflict, do not let it be taken to some human court. Instead, work one-on-one with the other person to sort it through. Civilization's judges only bring more injustice by putting people in prison.<sup>59</sup> 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."

<sup>13.1</sup> During that same season, reports were brought to Jesus about some revolutionaries in Galilee. They had committed acts of violence and then had been killed by Roman Governor Pontius Pilate.<sup>2</sup> Responding, Jesus said,

"Do you think these revolutionaries were more evil than everyone else in Galilee because they suffered this fate?<sup>3</sup> They were not! Their fate was a warning for you. 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.<sup>4</sup> Do you remember the eighteen people who were killed when the tower in southern Jerusalem collapsed on them? Do you think they were more evil than everyone else living in Jerusalem?<sup>5</sup> They were not! Their fate was a warning for you. If you do not break free from the Way of Civilization, then it will come crashing down on you as well."

<sup>6</sup> Jesus then began teaching about the urgent need for all people to change their lives and produce the fruit of the Creator's justice. He said,

"A man planted a fruit tree in his garden and, even after years of patient waiting, the tree produced no fruit.<sup>7</sup> The man said to his gardener,

'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 waste the soil?'

<sup>8</sup> Answering, the worker said to him,

'Lord, give it one more year. I will show it extra attention by digging around it and feeding it with manure.<sup>9</sup> See if it produces fruit this coming year. If it still does not, then we will cut it down.'

Therefore, know that I am here to offer you your last chance to change your life and be saved from the destruction coming upon Civilization."

### Self-Emptying † Luke 13:10-30

<sup>10</sup> On one Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in one of the sacred gathering places of worship.<sup>11</sup> A woman was there who had been oppressed by a sickness of Civilization for eighteen years. She was bent over and unable to stand up straight under Civilization's burden.<sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he said to her,

"Woman, you are free from your oppression!"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus then placed his hands upon her, thereby welcoming her back into the community of all creation. Immediately she was free from her oppression and began declaring the greatness of the Creator.<sup>14</sup> The ruler of the synagogue was furious that Jesus had broken the law by healing someone on the sacred day of rest. So the ruler began rebuking the crowd,

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

<sup>15</sup> The Lord Jesus responded,

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

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus was declaring these things, all those who had already rejected him continued to ignore his words. But the poor and lowly in the crowd were rejoicing at all the great things happening through Jesus. <sup>18</sup> Therefore, Jesus began saying,

“What is the Creator’s Rule similar to and with what will I compare it?”

<sup>19</sup> It is similar to a tiny and forbidden seed planted in a garden. This new seed starts as nothing as it falls into the ground, seemingly dead. But then it slowly and patiently comes to life and grows into a great tree that overtakes the whole garden. This tree creates a place where many creatures can find protection and provision.”

<sup>20</sup> Again Jesus said,

“To what will I compare the Creator’s Rule? <sup>21</sup> It is similar to a tiny and small amount of yeast hidden in a great amount of flour. This yeast starts as nothing, seemingly dead. But once it is in the flour, it slowly and patiently comes to life and works its way throughout all the dough. The flour is changed into a new and life-giving creation.”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus continued teaching throughout all the cities, while still having his eye focused on his end destination of Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Along the way, someone said to Jesus,

“Lord, are only a few people going to truly follow you and be rescued and freed from the madness of Civilization’s Way?”

Jesus said to those gathered,

<sup>24</sup> “Struggle and strive to empty and strip yourself of everything. Do this so you can fit through the narrow door into the Creator’s Rule. I say to you, many who are interested in participating in the Creator’s Rule will not be able to because they will refuse to let go of power, wealth, and ego. <sup>25</sup> The Creator will eventually close the narrow door into his Rule. 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.’

<sup>26</sup> Then you will begin to say,

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

<sup>27</sup> He will say to you,

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

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

<sup>31</sup> During that hour, some members of the political party of the Pharisees came to Jesus. They said,

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

<sup>32</sup> Jesus replied to them,

“I have this message for that fox, who is destroying the Creator’s garden and trying to take over the earth.

‘You listen here! I am freeing people from Civilization’s power and healing them of its addictions and sicknesses. I will do that today, the next day, and on the third day I will finish up here.

<sup>33</sup> That is my plan and I will accomplish it. You can try, but you will not be able to stop me. I must die in Jerusalem. It is not allowable for a prophet to be killed anywhere other than in the center of Civilization’s power and wealth.’

<sup>34</sup> 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 Way of Civilization. I have tried to gather you in, like a chicken gathering her chicks under her wings. But you have not been willing. <sup>35</sup> Look! I am coming to free your temple from the grip of Civilization’s Way. You will not see me till you declare the words of Psalm 118,

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

### Self-Emptying, Revisited † Luke 14:1-35

<sup>14:1</sup> One Sabbath, Jesus went to eat at the house of a leader of the political party of the Pharisees. Those gathered for the dinner were keeping a close eye on Jesus. <sup>2</sup> A man came in and stood in front of Jesus. The man was swollen with fluids, representing the weight and burden of Civilization’s expectations.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus then spoke to the scholars of Moses’s Law and the members of the political party of the Pharisees. He said,

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

<sup>4</sup> They refused to respond and said nothing. So Jesus placed his hands on the man. He welcomed back him into the community of all creation and freed him from his burden and oppression. <sup>5</sup> 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?”

<sup>6</sup> The authorities could give no response to Jesus’s words and arguments. <sup>7</sup> As the dinner continued, Jesus paused to observe those who had been invited. He saw that they were trying to gain social status by choosing the best seats for themselves. So Jesus taught them, saying,

<sup>8</sup> “When you are invited to a feast, do not take the best seat for yourself. What if someone more important than you has been invited? <sup>9</sup> The host will say to you, ‘Give up your seat.’ Then you will be moved down to the lowest seat in the house. <sup>10</sup> Instead, go sit in the worst seat. 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. <sup>11</sup> Listen! Everyone who lifts himself up in regard to power, wealth, or ego, will be torn down. But whoever lowers himself, will be lifted up by the Creator.”

<sup>12</sup> 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. They will likely repay the favor to you.

<sup>13</sup> But, when you host a feast, be certain to invite the poor, outcast, crippled, disabled, and blind. <sup>14</sup> You will be blessed because they cannot repay you. The Creator himself will repay you through the resurrection that is already happening for those who are obeying his word.”

<sup>15</sup> Listening to this, someone at the dinner said to Jesus,

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

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to him,

“The Creator’s new creation is like a great feast and celebration that he is inviting his people to join. <sup>17</sup> Because this great feast is beginning right now, the Creator is sending out his prophets to tell his people,

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

<sup>18</sup> But one at a time, the people turn down the Creator’s invitation to the feast. The first says,

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

<sup>19</sup> Another says,

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

<sup>20</sup> Another says,

‘I recently got married. I need to attend to family matters. Please excuse me from the feast. I do not have the time, I am too busy.’

<sup>21</sup> Returning, the prophets report all this to the Creator. Frustrated by this, the Creator says to his prophets,

‘Quickly, go find the lowliest among my people. Bring the poor, crippled, blind, and disabled to my feast of new creation. Certainly, they will not be too busy for me.’

<sup>22</sup> The prophets reply,  
 ‘Sir, all of them have already been brought in and there is still space available in the feast.’

<sup>23</sup> The Creator then says to the prophets,  
 ‘Go out beyond the boundaries of my people. Urge the outcasts, who have never been part of my people, to come to my feast and help me fill my house. <sup>24</sup> I say to you, none of those who reject my invitation will participate in the feast of new creation.’”

<sup>25</sup> As he continued his journey, Jesus turned to face the crowds that were with him. He said,

<sup>26</sup> “Consider this carefully! To truly be my disciple you must stop being controlled by your parents, spouse, children, siblings, and even your own self. You must let go of those relationships as you know them. <sup>27</sup> To truly be my disciple you must daily take up your own cross and follow my example. You must be ready to lose everything and to even die for my teachings.

<sup>28</sup> A wise man wanting to build a tower will always first sit down. He will count the cost to make sure he has enough resources to complete the project. <sup>29</sup> But the foolish man will lay the foundation and get part way through the building process, only to be forced to abandon the project. Those who see this will mock him. <sup>30</sup> They will say,

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

Therefore, do not follow me if you are not willing to give up everything and follow through to the end. <sup>31</sup> Likewise, any ruler caught in a war will first sit down. He will figure out whether he has enough soldiers to win the upcoming battles against his enemy. <sup>32</sup> If he does not 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. <sup>33</sup> To truly be my disciple you must give up all ownership, of both relationships and possessions. You must let go of being in charge and in control.

<sup>34</sup> Disciples who faithfully obey my teachings are life-giving and life-preserving parts of the earth. But what happens if this obedience stops or only goes part way? <sup>35</sup> A disobedient and hypocritical disciple is no longer good for the earth, even manure has more use! Therefore, such a disciple will be cut out of the Body of Christ and thrown out 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

<sup>15.1</sup> Many hated tax-collectors and outcasts were hanging around Jesus to listen to his teachings. <sup>2</sup> The members of the political party of the Pharisees and the Scriptural scholars began complaining about this. They said,

“Jesus is hanging out and eating with those who refuse to conform to our laws!”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus responded to them with an analogy.

<sup>4</sup> “If any one of you had 100 sheep and lost one of them, then you would drop everything and go look for this lost sheep. You would do this to protect your economic investment. <sup>5</sup> When you found it, you would rejoice and carry this heavy animal all the way home on your shoulders.

<sup>6</sup> At home, you would call together your friends and neighbors, saying,  
‘Join me in celebrating! I found my sheep that I thought was lost and dead!’

<sup>7</sup> I say to you, this is what the Creator is like. This is what kind of joy he has when one of his straying creatures leaves the Way of Civilization and returns to his teachings and community.

<sup>8</sup> Or what if a woman with ten valuable coins lost one of them? She will most certainly drop everything, light a lamp, sweep the house, and carefully look everywhere until she finds it. She will do all this because she knows the value of what is lost and wants to protect her economic assets. <sup>9</sup> After she finds it, she will call together her friends and neighbors, saying,

‘Join me in celebrating! I found my money which I thought was gone forever!’

<sup>10</sup> I say to you, this is what the Creator is like. This is what kind of joy he has when one of his straying creatures leaves the Way of Civilization and returns to his teachings and community. But you are hypocrites! You passionately protect your wealth at all costs, yet you get angry when I try to save the Creator’s lost creatures from the Way of Civilization.”

<sup>11</sup> Then Jesus said,

“Imagine the Creator had two children. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to him,  
‘Father, I wish you were dead. Give me the portion of your property which is my inheritance. 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 his portion of the inheritance to him. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger child gathered everything he now had and joined the Way of Civilization. There he began using his wealth to live in great luxury and self-indulgence. <sup>14</sup> After spending everything he had, a great famine came upon Civilization and this younger child began to starve.

<sup>15</sup> Not giving up his attempt to live without his Father, he sold his body into slavery. He was sent into the fields to do the humiliating and unclean work of herding pigs. <sup>16</sup> Everyone in Civilization was looking out for themselves and they refused to share any food with him. So his ego finally collapsed as his starvation made him desire the food of the pigs.

<sup>17</sup> On the edge of death, he came to his senses. He realized that neither the Way of Civilization nor his own wisdom could truly provide for him. 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! <sup>18</sup> I will return to my

Father and humble myself before him. I will say, “Father, I disobeyed and rebelled against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your child. If you are willing, take me back and I will be one of your servants.”

<sup>20</sup> So standing up, he left the Way of Civilization behind and went back home to his Father. But while this younger child was still a good distance from home, his Father, who had been watching for his return every day, saw him. The Father had great compassion on him. Completely shaming himself, he ran out to his child to get to him before anyone else. The Father excitedly embraced his child and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> The younger child then said to him,

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

<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Sacrifice the fattened calf. Spare no expense. We must celebrate! <sup>24</sup> My child was dead and now he lives! He was lost and now he is found!’

And so they began to party and celebrate. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Calling out to one of the servants, he asked what was happening. <sup>27</sup> 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 alive!’

<sup>28</sup> 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. He left his guests at the party and began begging his older child to return with him. <sup>29</sup> The older child answered his Father,

‘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. <sup>30</sup> But now this child of yours, who is no longer my brother, wastes your wealth on prostitutes. Then he has the nerve to come back. And you respond by sacrificing the fattened calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup> Then the Father said to his older child,

‘Child, please let go of competing with your brother and trying to hold things for yourself. If you do, then you will see that you are always with me and everything I have is already yours. This fattened calf belongs to you as well as your brother! <sup>32</sup> We must celebrate and rejoice this day. Your brother was dead and now he lives! He was lost and now he is found! Do not let your arrogance and pride cut you out of our family.’”

**Faithfulness, Revisited † Luke 16:1-31**

<sup>16.1</sup> Jesus then said to his disciples,

“Once there was a wealthy man who got angry at his business manager for not making him richer. <sup>2</sup>The wealthy man said to his manager,

‘What is this that I hear about you losing me money?! Return to me the book that documents all business transactions and all debts owed to me. You will never manage again. You are fired!’

<sup>3</sup> So the business manager said to himself,

‘What will I do without this job?! My reputation is ruined. I am not strong enough to dig and I am too proud to beg. <sup>4</sup> Money cannot save me now. I need to make friends who will welcome me into their homes when I am unemployed and homeless.’

<sup>5</sup> So before he returned the book of business transactions, he met with each of the clients who were in great debt to his boss. He said to one,

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

<sup>6</sup> The client replied,

‘A year’s worth of olive oil from 150 trees.’

Then the business 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.’

<sup>7</sup> Then to another client he said,

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

He said,

‘A year’s worth of grain from 100 acres.’

The business 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.’

<sup>8</sup> When the boss found out about all the debts the manager forgave, he actually praised the manager. He was impressed that the man acted intelligently. The man saw the end of his current path and completely changed his approach to life. You can often learn more about true faithfulness and change by observing ordinary people rather than those who are piously religious.

<sup>9</sup> I say to you, do not hold on to money for it is unjust in its 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 eventually will, you will have lasting treasure as you are loved and cared for by the Body of Christ. <sup>10</sup> If you live by faith when handling a worthless thing like money, then you will live by faith when handling the truly important things in life. On the other hand, if you live by fear when handling worthless money, then you will live by fear when handling the most important things in life. <sup>11</sup> If you are not living by faith when you handle unjust money, then who will trust you with things that really matter? <sup>12</sup> If you are not living by faith when handling the things of Civilization, then why would you ever expect the Creator to trust you with his precious creation? <sup>13</sup> No servant is able to give 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.”

<sup>14</sup> The members of the political party of the Pharisees, who loved money and possessions, heard these teachings and began to ridicule Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said,

“You people like to put on a show for others. You love the praise and glory of Civilization. But the Creator knows the true darkness of your hearts. The things which are esteemed and valued by Civilization, like money, are disgusting in the Creator’s eyes. For Civilization abandons the Creator and turns the Creator’s priceless creatures into objects used for selfish gain. <sup>16</sup> Up until John the Baptist, the Law of Moses and the Prophets were the voice of the Creator’s word of truth. But now the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule is being proclaimed. And all of Civilization is responding with violence against the Gospel. <sup>17</sup> But do not think the Gospel is overturning the Law of Moses. My life and teachings are the eternal pattern and fabric of the created order. They fulfill the true intent and purpose of Moses’s Law. <sup>18</sup> If you divorce your spouse and marry another, then you have been unfaithful and treated your spouse like an object. Likewise, if you disobey the Creator so you can serve another lord, like money, then you have cheated on the Creator himself. Do you really think you can get away with serving another lord and treating the Creator’s creatures like objects?

<sup>19</sup> Once there was a wealthy man, not even worthy to be named. He lived in luxury and partied every day while dressing himself in fancy and expensive clothes. <sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, there was a poor man named Lazarus, meaning ‘the Creator helps,’ who was oppressed by the Way of Civilization. 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 his locked gate.

<sup>21</sup> 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 the stray dogs had compassion on Lazarus and were licking his sores.

<sup>22</sup> Poor Lazarus eventually died and joined the Creator’s faithful people in comfort and rest. The wealthy man also died, but he was buried and separated from the Creator’s presence. <sup>23</sup> The rich man was greatly humiliated in the realm of the dead. He could now see that Lazarus was among the Creator’s true children. <sup>24</sup> But he continued in his arrogant, entitled, and hard-hearted ways. He yelled out orders, saying,

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

<sup>25</sup> But Abraham, representing the faithful people of the Creator, said,

‘Child, do you 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. Now Lazarus is being renewed while you are being ignored and allowed to suffer what you did to others as you stored up wealth for yourself and your family. <sup>26</sup> This judgment is final and permanent. You could have repented and changed your ways, but now it is too late.’

<sup>27</sup> The rich man replied,

‘Then send Lazarus to the house of my father! <sup>28</sup> Have him warn my five brothers to abandon their selfish pursuits of wealth. I do not want them to join me in this place of humiliation!’

<sup>29</sup> But Abraham replied,

‘They have the word of the Creator speaking to them through Moses and the Prophets. They must listen to them.’

<sup>30</sup> 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!’

<sup>31</sup> Abraham said to him,

‘If they will not listen to the Creator’s word through Moses and the Prophets, then neither will they listen to someone who has come back from the dead.’”

### **Wholehearted Focus, Revisited † Luke 17:1-37**

<sup>17.1</sup> Jesus said to his disciples,

“The seductive Way of Civilization is going to cause people to stop following me. But the person who leads others away from my teachings will be condemned. <sup>2</sup> It is better to have a giant stone tied around your neck and to be thrown into the sea, than to cause someone to stop following my Way.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, carefully watch over my community of the Body of Christ. 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 Body of Christ. <sup>4</sup> The perpetual Sabbath and Jubilee has come. Therefore, you must forgive the same person even seven times in one day if they are humbly trying to obey my teachings.”

<sup>5</sup> The twelve representatives said to the Lord Jesus,

“That kind of continual forgiveness and freedom from debts is crazy! It would turn the world upside down! Make us greater so we can learn to trust.”

<sup>6</sup> The Lord Jesus said,

“Trust is not about becoming greater. It is about becoming humble and obedient servants of the Creator. If you trust the Creator, then you will empty yourself and become poor and weak. 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.’ They will obey your word! <sup>7</sup> Look, no master says to his servant, who has finished gardening or herding sheep,

‘Come rest and sit down.’

<sup>8</sup> Instead, he will say to him,

‘Prepare dinner, so I may eat. Serve me while I eat and drink.

Then, when I am finished, you may eat and drink.’

<sup>9</sup> A master does not allow his servant to stop obeying because he previously did the things he was commanded. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, it should be the same for you in your relationship of trust with the Creator. Whenever you do everything the Creator commands, simply keep your focus on continuing to obey his word. Then say,

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

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued on his journey, focused on his eventual confrontation in Jerusalem. On the way, his group passed between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus was about to enter a village, ten men stood at a distance and yelled for him. They were total outcasts because they had a flesh-eating disease. This disease was slowly destroying their bodies and was symbolic of the decay caused by the Way of Civilization. <sup>13</sup> They said,

“Jesus, teacher, have compassion on us!”

<sup>14</sup> Seeing them and their condition, Jesus said to them,

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

They listened to Jesus’s word over the command of Moses, which did not allow them to enter the town. Then, as they obeyed Jesus, they were freed and rescued from the flesh-eating disease of Civilization. <sup>15</sup> When one of the ten men saw that he was healed, he returned to Jesus while praising the greatness of the Creator. <sup>16</sup> He fell to his face at Jesus’s feet. He 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. He was now seeing that the Creator’s temple and presence was in Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said,

“Were not ten men rescued from their outcast status and the destruction of Civilization? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Are they too entitled as Israelites to humble themselves in thanksgiving to the Creator?! Only this man of foreign birth is humble enough to give thanks and find complete healing through his gratitude.”

<sup>19</sup> Jesus then said to the Samaritan,

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

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

“The Creator’s Rule is not arriving through organizations, governments, or institutions. <sup>21</sup> People will not be able to say, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ to point out the Creator’s Rule. The Creator’s Rule is already here within and among you who are listening to, treasuring, and obeying my teachings.”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus then said to his disciples,

“The days will come when you will be craving the Creator’s judgment against Civilization and his rescue of the Human One’s 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. <sup>23</sup> People will say,

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

Do not trust them, follow them, or even bother with them. <sup>24</sup> The Creator’s judgment and rescue will be like a bolt of lightning streaking across the sky. It will be here one moment and gone the next. It will be easy to miss if you are not looking for it. And it will be unpredictable in its return. <sup>25</sup> But before these times of judgment and rescue, it is necessary for the Human One’s community to greatly suffer and be rejected by Civilization.

<sup>26</sup> As it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be when the Creator brings his judgment to rescue the Human One’s community.

<sup>27</sup> They were blindly living their lives for years. They were eating, drinking, and marrying each other right up to the day Noah entered the great ship that was shaped like a coffin. Then the flood suddenly came and destroyed all Civilization. <sup>28</sup> It also happened like that in the days of Lot. They were blindly eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building for years. <sup>29</sup> They lived their normal lives right up to the day Lot came out from the city of Sodom. On that day it suddenly rained fire from heaven, destroying their entire Civilization.

<sup>30</sup> This will be the pattern when the Creator’s judgment arrives and rescues the Human One’s community from Civilization’s oppression.

<sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> Remember Lot’s wife! She could not bring herself to leave it all behind and it killed her. You must drop everything and leave it all behind. <sup>33</sup> If you try to hold on to your life in the Way of Civilization, then you will destroy yourself. But if you leave it all behind and let it be destroyed, then you will find true life.

<sup>34</sup> I say to you, on that night two people will be sleeping in the same bed. One will remain in Civilization and get taken while the other will drop everything and be rescued. <sup>35</sup> Two people will be working together. One will remain in Civilization and get taken while the other will drop everything and be rescued.”

<sup>37</sup> Responding, Jesus’s disciples said to him,

“Where will they be taken, Lord?”

Jesus said to them,

“They will get taken into the destruction. The dead bodies of those who remain in Civilization’s Way will be found in the ruins of Civilization. Those who remain to stand with Civilization and those who remain to fight against Civilization will ultimately suffer the same destruction and judgment.”

**All-In Obedience, Revisited † Luke 18:1-30**

<sup>18.1</sup> Jesus began teaching his disciples to always pray and not be discouraged by the chaos of Civilization. <sup>2</sup> Jesus said,

“Once there was a city judge who neither feared the Creator nor cared about people. <sup>3</sup> A widow in that city began coming to this judge, saying, ‘Give me justice and save me from my enemy!’

<sup>4</sup> Initially the judge was not willing to do anything because he did not care. But the widow kept coming, day after day. Finally the judge said, ‘I do not fear the Creator or care about people. <sup>5</sup> But, because this widow will not stop bothering me, I will give her the justice she seeks. I will do anything to keep her from tiring me out with her endless begging!’”

<sup>6</sup> 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 begging. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, do you think the Creator will withhold justice from those who cry out to him day and night? Do you think the Creator will be slow in responding to his own children? <sup>8</sup> 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 rescue the Human One’s community, will he find any on the earth who are faithfully placing their lives into his hands?”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus then taught about the arrogant hypocrites who are convinced they follow the Creator even while they despise his creatures. Jesus said,

<sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the Jerusalem temple to pray. One was an esteemed member of the political party of the Pharisees. The other was a hated tax-collector. <sup>11</sup> The member of the political party of the Pharisees, standing for all to see, began praying. He said,

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

<sup>13</sup> But the tax-collector was kneeling far off by himself. He did not think he was worthy to stand or to lift his eyes to heaven. He was hitting his chest and saying,

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

<sup>14</sup> I say to you, it was the humble and repentant tax-collector who was living in the Creator’s justice. The arrogant and self-assured member of the political party of the Pharisees was not. If you lift yourself up in ego, power, and wealth, then you will be torn down. But if you lower yourself in ego, power, and wealth, then you will be lifted up by the Creator.”

<sup>15</sup> People then began bringing their babies to Jesus so he would hold them. But his disciples criticized the people for wasting Jesus’s time. <sup>16</sup> Jesus called out to his disciples, saying,

“Do not stop them! Allow the children to come to me. The Creator’s Rule belongs to those who have nothing and are nothing like these

- children. <sup>17</sup> Truly I say to you, you must become like a powerless and possessionless child to participate in the Creator's Rule."
- <sup>18</sup> A ruler approached Jesus and asked,  
"Good teacher, what must I do to participate in the eternal life of the Creator's new creation?"
- <sup>19</sup> Jesus said to him,  
"All good comes from the Creator himself. So why do you call me good and still ignore what I teach? <sup>20</sup> Certainly you know the Creator's commands from Deuteronomy 5,  
*"Do not have sex outside of lifelong marriage. Do not 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."*
- <sup>21</sup> The ruler responded,  
"I have carefully obeyed all of these commands since my youth."
- <sup>22</sup> Seeing the truth of the ruler's life that was plain to everyone, Jesus said,  
"You have ignored the one central piece: Love the Creator with everything you have and are. Go and make a complete break with the Way of Civilization. Sell everything you own and give to your neighbors who are in need this day. Through your emptiness and generosity, you will have true treasure that is valuable in the Creator's eyes. Then come back here and devote your entire life to learning from me. Follow my example and live as part of the Body of Christ."
- <sup>23</sup> At hearing Jesus's word and call to him, the rich ruler was horrified and grieved. He was deeply attached to his property and wealth. <sup>24</sup> Discerning the man's emotions, Jesus said,  
"Do you want to know how hard it is for those having stored up money and possessions to participate in the Creator's Rule? <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel, which transports possessions, to go through the eye of a needle than for a person storing up possessions to live in the Creator's Rule."
- <sup>26</sup> Those listening to this said,  
"Then who is able to be rescued and participate in the Creator's Rule? How can a person walk away from all wealth and possessions?"
- <sup>27</sup> Jesus replied,  
"The things that seem impossible to you are possible through the Creator's power."
- <sup>28</sup> Peter said,  
"Look! We have left everything behind and followed you into the unknown of this new life!"
- <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to his disciples,  
"Truly I say to you, every one of you who has left behind house, property, spouse, siblings, parents, and children to live under the Creator's Rule will have everything you need. <sup>30</sup> By joining in the shared abundance of the Body of Christ, you will have much more than you had in the first place. You will also be living the eternal life of new creation, now and always."

## V. The Way Defies Civilization † Luke 18:31—22:38

### Rescuing Oppressed & Oppressor † Luke 18:31—19:10

<sup>31</sup> Jesus took aside the twelve representatives of the Creator's new people. He 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's community. <sup>32</sup> The Human One's community will be handed over to the nations. They will be mocked, humiliated, and spit upon. <sup>33</sup> They will be beaten and killed. But then they will be raised from the dead by the Creator on the third day.”

<sup>34</sup> But Jesus's disciples understood none of this. They were blinded by the Way of Civilization and its assumptions and expectations. <sup>35</sup> When Jesus came near to Jericho, which was seventeen miles from Jerusalem, an oppressed blind man was begging next to the road. <sup>36</sup> When he heard the crowd coming, he began asking about what was going on. <sup>37</sup> They reported to him,

“Jesus of Nazareth is coming!”

<sup>38</sup> The blind man cried out,

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

<sup>39</sup> Those in the front of the crowd began rebuking him,

“Silence!”

But the blind man began shouting much more,

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

<sup>40</sup> Jesus stopped the procession and called the blind man to come to him. When the blind man was next to him, Jesus asked,

<sup>41</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man said,

“Lord, give me sight!”

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to him,

“Open your eyes. Your trust in the Creator has rescued you from the spiritual and physical blindness caused by the Way of Civilization.”

<sup>43</sup> Immediately, his eyes were opened and he saw the truth. Praising the Creator's power, he then left everything behind to follow the Way of Jesus. The crowd saw this and began praising the Creator.

<sup>19.1</sup> Jesus then entered Jericho, like Joshua had after the time of Moses. But, where Joshua had failed, Jesus hoped to succeed in defeating Civilization and bringing his people into the true promised land. <sup>2</sup> One of the most powerful and wealthy men in the city was Zacchaeus. He was the hated and oppressive leader of the Roman tax-collectors. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Refusing to be discouraged, Zacchaeus then shamed and humbled himself. He became like a child by running ahead of the crowd and then climbing a tree so he could see Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> As Jesus came up to the tree, he looked up. He saw this powerful and wealthy

grown man sitting in a tree like a child. Seeing the beginning of deep personal change, Jesus said to him,

“Zacchaeus! Get down here. Starting today your home is no longer your own. My disciples and I are coming to stay with you.”

<sup>6</sup> Zacchaeus was thrilled to hear this and quickly climbed down the tree. Then he welcomed Jesus into his home and offered him anything he needed. <sup>7</sup> Seeing all this, many in the city began complaining, saying,

“Why would Jesus stay with this evil traitor who supports the Roman Empire’s oppression?!”

<sup>8</sup> Hearing these complaints, Zacchaeus was ashamed at the bad name he was giving the Lord Jesus. He 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 behind the Way of Civilization, no matter the cost. 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 have oppressed. Today, I am giving it all away and quitting my job to start a new life with you.”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus replied to Zacchaeus,

“Today, you have been rescued and freed from being an oppressor of others. You are now a true and faithful child of the Creator. <sup>10</sup> The Human One’s community exists for this purpose—to seek out the oppressed and the oppressor and to rescue them both from the destruction of Civilization’s Way.”

### Confronting Civilization † Luke 19:11-48

<sup>11</sup> Seeing a powerful Roman tax-collector completely change his life, the people began expecting the Creator’s Rule to appear with an easy victory. Sensing this, Jesus wanted to correct their expectations about how all of this would play out when they entered Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup> 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 to be put officially in charge. <sup>13</sup> He wanted to know who he could trust and who would work for his cause when he returned. So he gave ten of his servants a year’s pay. He said to them,

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

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

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

<sup>15</sup> 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 to see how much money they had made while he was gone.

<sup>16</sup> The first came forward, saying,



‘Master, I used the money you gave me to take advantage of others in business dealings. I made a 1,000 percent return on your investment.’

<sup>17</sup> 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.’

<sup>18</sup> The second servant came forward, saying,

‘Master, I used the money you gave me to take advantage of others in business dealings. I made a 500 percent return on your investment.’

<sup>19</sup> The new ruler said to this one,

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

<sup>20</sup> Then another servant came forward, saying,

‘Look! I have wrapped your filthy money in a burial cloth as a symbol of the death coming upon you. <sup>21</sup> I refuse to obey you because you are a greedy and violent man who does not care for the Creator’s Way. You break the Law of Moses by charging interest. You also greedily take everything for yourself without doing any real work.’

<sup>22</sup> The new ruler was furious with this man’s resistance. He said to him,

‘I will judge you according to your own words, you evil servant! You knew I was a greedy and violent man who grabs everything for myself? <sup>23</sup> Then you were stupid not to obey me! You should have used my money to give out loans at high interest to cheat people out of their land. Then you would have at least saved your own life!’

<sup>24</sup> The new ruler said to his soldiers standing by,

‘Take away this man’s money and give it to the one who made the 1,000 percent return on my investment!’

<sup>25</sup> They said to him,

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

<sup>26</sup> The new ruler replied,

‘I say to you, the rich will get richer under my rule. And the poor will get poorer. <sup>27</sup> Now take this man and all who resist my authority and rule. Make an example of them and kill them in front of me. I will destroy all my enemies!’”

<sup>28</sup> After hearing these words of warning about what would happen when Jesus resisted the authorities, the crowds began to slow down. Jesus then fearlessly took the lead on their march to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> As Jesus approached two small towns to the east of Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples. <sup>30</sup> He said,

“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. <sup>31</sup> If someone asks you, ‘Why are you taking the donkey?’ respond, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

<sup>32</sup> Those who were sent found it exactly as Jesus had said. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the young donkey, its owners said to them,

“Why are you taking the donkey?”

<sup>34</sup> The disciples responded,

“Because the Lord needs it.”

<sup>35</sup> So they brought the donkey and covered it with their clothes. Then Jesus got up on the donkey. <sup>36</sup> During the week of the Passover in 33 AD, Jesus rode into Jerusalem in a mock military parade. He was fulfilling the prophet Zechariah’s words of the Creator’s return to bring true peace to the earth. As he went, the people were spreading out their clothes on the road. <sup>37</sup> Jesus approached the temple by descending the Mount of Olives. This was the mountain on which the prophet Zechariah said the Creator would come to rescue his people. The entire group of Jesus’s disciples began praising the Creator with a loud voice. <sup>38</sup> They were saying in the words of Psalm 118,

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

<sup>39</sup> Some of the members of the political party of the Pharisees said to Jesus,

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

<sup>40</sup> Answering, Jesus said,

“I say to you, if they were silent, then maybe you would hear that the rocks are shouting the same truth!”

<sup>41</sup> As Jesus looked over the great city of Jerusalem, he wept. <sup>42</sup> He said,

“If only you were aware of what brings true peace and harmony. But this is hidden from you behind Civilization’s lies. <sup>43</sup> The days are coming when your enemies will encircle you and surround you on all sides.

<sup>44</sup> They will tear you and all those who trust in your walls to the ground. Not one stone will be left standing within you. The Creator has come to set you free from the Way of Civilization. But you will be destroyed because you refuse to listen.”

<sup>45</sup> Jesus then rode straight into the Jerusalem temple—the political, economic, and religious center of their Civilization—and completely shut it down. He threw out everyone who was selling things. <sup>46</sup> He said,

“It is written in Isaiah 56, *‘The Creator’s house will be a house of prayer for listening to his words!’* But you have made it into what Jeremiah 7 foretold, *‘a hideout and cover for terrorist activity!’*”

<sup>47</sup> Jesus then took over and occupied the temple by daily filling it with his teachings. The leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Scriptural scholars, and the rich and powerful were furious. They began looking for a way to kill Jesus.

<sup>48</sup> But they were not sure how they could do it without causing a riot. Crowds of poor people were clinging to Jesus and eagerly listening to his words.

### Challenged by Civilization † Luke 20:1-40

<sup>20:1</sup> Everyday of Passover week in 33 AD, Jesus was teaching and declaring the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule in the Jerusalem temple. On one of those days, the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Scriptural scholars, and the leaders of the rich and powerful families stood over Jesus. <sup>2</sup> They said to him,

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

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered them,

“You must first answer a question for me. <sup>4</sup> Did John the Baptist’s baptism of preparation come from the Creator himself or was it of human origin?”

<sup>5</sup> 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?’ <sup>6</sup> 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.”

<sup>7</sup> Liking neither option, they refused to answer. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, Jesus replied to them,

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

<sup>9</sup> Following this, Jesus began to teach the people, saying,

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

‘What will I do? I will send my child to them. Hopefully, they will respect and listen to him.’

<sup>14</sup> 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 garden for ourselves!’

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

Listening, they said,

“Never!”

<sup>17</sup> Staring them down, Jesus said,

“Why do you continue to ignore the Scriptures? It is written in Psalm 118,

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

<sup>18</sup> And as the prophet Daniel foretold, this cornerstone will cause the collapse of all Civilization and crush it into dust.”

<sup>19</sup> Because they knew that Jesus was speaking against them, the Scriptural scholars and the leaders of the temple-caretakers wanted to immediately arrest Jesus. But they held back because they feared the crowds who were fascinated by him. <sup>20</sup> So keeping close to him, the authorities sent spies to try and trick

Jesus into committing treason. They were hoping to get him in trouble with the Roman governor. <sup>21</sup> These spies asked Jesus,

“Teacher, we know that you refuse to judge things according to human standards. You never compromise the hard truth of the Creator’s Way.

<sup>22</sup> 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?”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus perceived 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,

<sup>24</sup> “I do not have any money, so show me a coin. Whose graven image—which is forbidden by the Law of Moses—is on it? And what is written on it?”

They said,

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

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them,

“Give back to the emperor his worthless and man-made idols. But give back to the Creator everything he has made.”

<sup>26</sup> They were stunned into silence and were amazed that Jesus had avoided their trap. <sup>27</sup> Some members of the political party of the Sadducees then stepped up to publicly humiliate Jesus. They thought his belief in the resurrection of the dead made no sense. They said to Jesus,

<sup>28</sup> “Teacher, the Law of Moses states in Deuteronomy 25,

*‘If the brother of a man dies and leaves a childless wife, then the man must save his brother’s legacy. He must take her as his wife and have children with her on his brother’s behalf.’*

<sup>29</sup> There were seven brothers in this one family. The first brother took a wife and when he died she was childless. <sup>30</sup> The second married her and she was still childless when he died. <sup>31</sup> All seven brothers took her as wife and all of them died with her still childless. <sup>32</sup> Finally, the woman also died. <sup>33</sup> 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 notion of the resurrection makes no sense!”

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them,

“Those who are focused on this age spend their lives and energies trying to defy death through the Way of Civilization. They endlessly work to build a legacy of wealth, power, and children. <sup>35</sup> But those focused on the Creator and his new age of the resurrection do not play these games.

<sup>36</sup> They know that death has no power over them. They have already risen to new life for they are children of the Creator. <sup>37</sup> Even Moses, in Exodus 3, which is in your beloved Law, reveals that the dead rise to new life. He said,

*I am the Lord and Creator of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'*

<sup>38</sup> He is not the Creator of the dead, but of the living. All things are alive and continue to live through him. His faithful creatures are alive in him and rise again to new bodily life!"

<sup>39</sup> Responding, some of the Scriptural scholars said,

"Wow, teacher, that is beautifully said!"

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

### **Condemning Civilization † Luke 20:41—21:38**

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to those gathered in the temple,

"How can your teachers claim that the Christ will come in the image and pattern of David? <sup>42</sup> David himself says in Psalm 110,

*The Creator said to my Lord, "You are my right-hand man. <sup>43</sup> I will put all your enemies under your feet."*

<sup>44</sup> See, David knows that the Christ is his Lord. Therefore, the Christ cannot come in the image and pattern of wealthy and powerful David. The Christ is above David and much greater than David."

<sup>45</sup> While all the people were listening, Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

<sup>46</sup> "Be aware of who is influencing you! Stay away from the Scriptural scholars and teachers who walk around in expensive clothes and want power, status, and formal titles. <sup>47</sup> Their prayers are for show and they are getting rich by taking advantage of the widows they are supposed to care for. The judgment of the Creator against these false teachers will be greater than all others!"

<sup>21.1</sup> As he was saying this, Jesus saw many wealthy people putting large sums of money into the temple treasury. <sup>2</sup> But then he saw a poor widow put in two coins of the smallest value. <sup>3</sup> Jesus said,

"Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put in much more than all of these rich people. <sup>4</sup> The rich people gave out of their excess and kept most of it for themselves. But this widow put in literally everything she had. She is an example of true giving and trust in the Creator. But these temple leaders are condemned. Instead of supporting widows and orphans like her, they are getting rich by robbing her of everything she has!"

<sup>5</sup> Some people were staring in awe at the splendor of the Jerusalem temple and its beautiful stonework. Responding, Jesus said,

<sup>6</sup> "This great structure of human technology and achievement that you are impressed by will come crashing down. The days of the Creator's judgment are coming and not a stone will be left standing. All such works of Civilization will be torn down and completely dismantled!"

<sup>7</sup> They asked Jesus,

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

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.”

<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus began saying to them,

“Nations and empires will turn against each other. They will destroy themselves as they fight to rule and be in charge of the earth. <sup>11</sup> The structures of Civilization will start to collapse as food shortages and diseases spread all around. The nations will live in the grip of fear as the signs of their destruction will be all around them.

<sup>12</sup> But, before all of this 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. <sup>13</sup> It will then be your turn to give witness to the Creator’s Rule as you become his martyrs in word and action. <sup>14</sup> Do not plan what to say ahead of time. <sup>15</sup> I will give you words of truth which will silence and puzzle your opponents. <sup>16</sup> It will be your own parents, siblings, relatives, and friends that will hand you over to the nations. Some of you will even be killed. <sup>17</sup> Everyone in Civilization will disown you and want nothing to do with you because of your obedience to my teachings. <sup>18</sup> But have no fear. Not a single hair from your heads will be permanently destroyed. <sup>19</sup> By patiently and faithfully standing firm, even in the face of death, you will obtain resurrection life.

<sup>20</sup> So when you see Jerusalem or any city surrounded by armies, then know that the time of its collapse and rewilding is near. <sup>21</sup> If you are in or near the city, then drop everything and flee into the mountains. Do not go back for anything! <sup>22</sup> The Creator’s destructive judgment will come upon all Civilization, exactly as it is foretold in the Scriptures. <sup>23</sup> It will be a tragedy to be pregnant or nursing in those days. For the consequences of rebelling against the Creator will finally fall upon humanity. <sup>24</sup> Those who remain in the cities will be killed or taken captive. Jerusalem and all great cities will be trampled as the fighting of empires continues on throughout this age.

<sup>25</sup> The powers and authorities will show signs of this collapse. The nations will be in the grip of anxiety as chaos begins to overtake them. <sup>26</sup> Human joy will grow dim as people finally realize the impending destruction of Civilization and the overthrow of its authority. <sup>27</sup> It will be in that time that the nations will see the Human One’s community rescued and lifted out of this chaos, as the prophet Daniel foretold.

<sup>28</sup> So when you see all this beginning to happen, be confident and stand tall! The Creator is coming to rescue you from slavery to the Way of Civilization!”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus then taught them, saying,

“Pay attention to and learn from the trees. <sup>30</sup> When you observe that they have already put on their leaves, then you know that summer is right

around the corner.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, when you carefully observe that all I have said is happening, then you will know that the Creator's Rule is near.<sup>32</sup> Truly all these things will happen in this generation.<sup>33</sup> However, my words about this pattern of the Creator's Rule will never change. It will repeat itself in every generation.

<sup>34</sup> So stay attentive and be self-aware! Do not let your hearts get distracted by the pleasures and responsibilities of life. Do not be caught off-guard when that day suddenly comes.<sup>35</sup> It will eventually come upon all creatures across the entire earth.<sup>36</sup> So stay attentive and awake in every season. Beg to the Creator for the strength to flee and come out of the Way of Civilization so you can stand faithfully in the Human One's community."

<sup>37</sup> Jesus continued teaching every day 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.<sup>38</sup> Every morning, all the people of Jerusalem were getting up early to come listen to Jesus teach in the temple.

### **Celebrating Freedom From Civilization † Luke 22:1-38**

<sup>22:1</sup> The Festival of Unyeasted Bread, which is also called Passover, was near. During this time the people remembered their readiness to leave everything behind to follow the Creator out of Civilization.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the Scriptural scholars were trying to figure out how to kill Jesus without upsetting the crowds.<sup>3</sup> Judah Daggerman, who was one of the twelve representatives, was frustrated by Jesus's refusal to lead a violent revolution. So he began to be filled with the satanic desire for control.<sup>4</sup> Judah Daggerman approached the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the police captains. His goal was to betray Jesus to them and force Jesus to defend himself.<sup>5</sup> These authorities rejoiced and eagerly gave Judah an extremely large sum of money for doing this.<sup>6</sup> With his heart seduced by this wealth, Judah turned his back on Jesus and declared his loyalty to the temple authorities. He then began searching for an opportunity to arrest Jesus when the crowds were not around.

<sup>7</sup> As sundown approached on Thursday, the Passover and the time to sacrifice the Passover lamb were a few hours away.<sup>8</sup> So Jesus sent Peter and John Zebedee, saying,

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

<sup>9</sup> They said to him,

"Where do you want us to prepare it?"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them,

"I have planned everything ahead of time for this Passover. 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 disciples."

## The Way Defies Civilization

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

<sup>13</sup> Going into the city, they found it exactly as Jesus had said. So they began preparing the Passover meal. <sup>14</sup> After sunset on Thursday, when the time for the meal came, Jesus sat down with his twelve representatives. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to them,

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

<sup>17</sup> Jesus took the first of four Passover cups of wine. This cup symbolized the Creator’s people as set apart from the Way of Civilization. Jesus gave thanks and said,

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

<sup>19</sup> Jesus then took the Passover bread, which symbolized the difficult journey to freedom. Jesus gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. He said,

“This is my body which I am giving to set you free. Feed on me as the bread of life and become the Body of Christ. Then go do the same for each other in my memory. Lay down your lives to free others.”

<sup>20</sup> Likewise, after dinner, Jesus took the last Passover cup of wine. This cup symbolized the Creator’s rescue of his people from slavery to the Way of Civilization. He said,

“This is my blood which I am giving to set you free. I am bonding you in a new relationship with the Creator centered around my life and teachings. <sup>21</sup> Pay attention to how I love and give myself for you. I am even sharing this meal with an enemy who will betray me. <sup>22</sup> The Human One’s community will be betrayed, but those who betray them will be condemned.”

<sup>23</sup> Shocked, the disciples began trying to figure who was going to betray Jesus to the authorities. <sup>24</sup> This led to a competition among them, about which of them was the greatest and best disciple. <sup>25</sup> Frustrated, Jesus said to them,

“The rulers of the nations are all about competing for power and authority. They even think they are doing good when they are ruling and in charge. <sup>26</sup> But you in the Body of Christ must never be like the rulers of Civilization! Rather, the greatest among you must empty his ego. Whoever is your leader must live like a servant. <sup>27</sup> 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! Pay attention to how I am living in your midst as a humble servant.

<sup>28</sup> Listen, you have faithfully remained with me during all the struggles of my ministry. <sup>29</sup> I am giving myself to you, as my Father did with me. <sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> Simon Peter, you must pay special attention! Civilization’s satanic desire for control wants to test you and see how faithful you are.

<sup>32</sup> 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 fellow disciples stand firm on my faithful Way.”

<sup>33</sup> Peter said to him,

“Lord, I am ready to go with you anywhere. Even if I must go to prison and death!”

<sup>34</sup> Jesus replied to him,

“I say to you, Peter, before the rooster cries out this day you will reject me three times.”

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples,

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

They said,

“We lacked nothing. Everything we needed was provided for us.”

<sup>36</sup> Jesus said to them,

“Never forget that. But now, if you have any money or a pack, bring it with you. And if you do not have a sword, go sell your coat and buy one.

<sup>37</sup> I say to you, it is time for your faith in the Creator to be tested. It is also necessary for Isaiah 53 to be completed through me,

*‘He was found among those who do not obey the Creator.’*

All the things written about me are about to be completed.”

<sup>38</sup> They said,

“Lord, look! We already have two swords.”

Shaking his head in disappointment, Jesus said to them,

“That is plenty. It only takes one sword to stop relying on the Creator.”

## VI. The Way of the Creator's Rule † Luke 22:39—24:53

### Time of Testing † Luke 22:39-65

<sup>39</sup> According to their nightly custom, Jesus and his disciples left the city and went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>40</sup> When they got there, Jesus said to his disciples,

“Humble yourselves in prayer to the Father. This is the only way you will have the strength to stand firm in your time of testing.”

<sup>41</sup> Jesus went about a stone's throw away from them and submissively fell to his knees in prayer. <sup>42</sup> Jesus said,

“Father, if it is your desire, I beg you to remove this path of suffering, rejection, and death. But above all, I want you to fulfill your desires, not mine.”

<sup>43</sup> The Creator put his hand upon Jesus to strengthen him. <sup>44</sup> But, still being in great agony and filled with terror about the path ahead, Jesus began praying more intensely. His sweat became like thick drops of blood falling to the ground. <sup>45</sup> Finishing up his time of prayer, Jesus went back to his disciples. He found them sleeping because they were overwhelmed by the whole situation.

<sup>46</sup> Jesus said to them,

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

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

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

<sup>49</sup> Suddenly realizing what was happening, Jesus's disciples cried out,

“Lord, we will fight for you!”

<sup>50</sup> One of them swung his sword, intending to kill. But instead he only cut off the right ear of one of those who was there to arrest Jesus. <sup>51</sup> Responding, Jesus said to his disciples,

“After all of our time together, how could you be so violent?!”

Jesus then embraced his enemy's head and healed him. <sup>52</sup> Jesus turned to those who came out to arrest him—the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the temple police officers, and the leaders of the rich and powerful families. Jesus said to them,

“Have you really come out here with weapons as though you were arresting a violent terrorist?! I have never carried a weapon. <sup>53</sup> I was also with you every day 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 you have won.”

<sup>54</sup> They arrested Jesus and dragged him to the house of the Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers. From a distance, Peter followed them to the house. <sup>55</sup> After the crowd sat around a fire in the middle of the courtyard, Peter wandered in. He began to sit among them so he could keep an eye on Jesus.

<sup>56</sup> One of the servants stared at Peter as he sat in the light. Finally she said,

“This one was with Jesus!”

- <sup>57</sup> Peter denied it, saying,  
 “Woman, I do not even know him.”
- <sup>58</sup> After a little while, another servant saw Peter and declared,  
 “You are one of his followers!”  
 But Peter responded,  
 “Man, I am definitely not.”
- <sup>59</sup> 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 from Galilee!”
- <sup>60</sup> 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. <sup>61</sup> The Lord Jesus turned his head and looked at Peter. Peter was reminded of what Jesus had said to him,  
 “Before the rooster cries out this day, you will reject me three times.”
- <sup>62</sup> Leaving the courtyard, Peter began uncontrollably weeping. <sup>63</sup> The men holding Jesus captive began mocking and whipping him. <sup>64</sup> They blindfolded him and said,  
 “Tell us, prophet! Who is the one hitting you?!”
- <sup>65</sup> They continued to ridicule and mock Jesus in many other ways.

#### **Civilization on Trial † Luke 22:66—23:25**

- <sup>66</sup> At sunrise on the Passover, the leaders of the rich and powerful families, the leaders of the temple-caretakers, and the Scriptural scholars gathered together. They brought Jesus before their Sanhedrin Council, which was the most powerful governing group in Israel. <sup>67</sup> They said,  
 “Tell us if you are in fact the Christ and Chosen Ruler.”  
 Jesus said to them,  
 “If I answer you, you will not trust me. <sup>68</sup> And if I ask you any questions, you will not answer me. <sup>69</sup> But your reign of terror is coming to an end. Civilization is going to be destroyed. The Creator is now giving his full power to the Human One’s community.”
- <sup>70</sup> They all said,  
 “So you are the Child of the Creator!”  
 Jesus replied,  
 “You yourselves are about to reveal to the world that I am.”
- <sup>71</sup> Then they said to each other,  
 “Why do we still need witnesses?! We have heard it from his own mouth!”
- <sup>23.1</sup> Immediately agreeing, the entire assembly dragged Jesus to Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. <sup>2</sup> They began to accuse Jesus, saying,  
 “We found this man disobeying the laws of our nation! He commits treason by teaching the people not to pay taxes to the Roman emperor! He also says that he himself and not the Roman emperor is the only rightful ruler and lord!”

<sup>3</sup> Seeing that Jesus was a weak and poor man, the Roman governor started laughing. He asked Jesus,

“So you are the Christ 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 are revealing it to the world.”

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

“I am finding nothing in this crazy man as a cause for punishment. He is harmless. Ignore him.”

<sup>5</sup> But the Israelite authorities persisted, 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!”

<sup>6</sup> When the Roman governor heard this, he asked if Jesus was from Galilee.

<sup>7</sup> Hearing that Jesus was a resident of Galilee, the governor sent him to stand trial before the ruler of that region, Herod Antipas. Antipas had also come down to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. <sup>8</sup> When Herod Antipas heard he was going to meet Jesus, he was extremely excited. He had heard many rumors about Jesus and had wanted to meet him for a long time. He was hoping to see Jesus do a miracle. <sup>9</sup> Herod Antipas began his trial by questioning Jesus. But Jesus refused to answer any question and was completely silent. <sup>10</sup> The leaders of the temple-caretakers and the Scriptural scholars were passionately accusing Jesus of many things. <sup>11</sup> Herod Antipas was disgusted by Jesus and his silence. So he began mocking him and his teachings about poverty by dressing him up in fancy and expensive clothing. Then he sent Jesus back to the Roman governor. <sup>12</sup> Herod Antipas and Pilate had previously been enemies. But through their common hatred of Jesus and his teachings they became friends with each other on that day. <sup>13</sup> The Roman governor then called together the leaders of the temple-caretakers, the Israelite rulers, and the people. <sup>14</sup> He said to them,

“You brought me this man, accusing him of treasonously turning the people away from the Roman Empire. I have judged him in your sight about these things. But I have found nothing in this man as a cause for putting him to death. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, I will have him whipped for his teachings and way of life. But then I will release him.”

<sup>18</sup> Altogether the crowd cried out,

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

<sup>19</sup> Barabbas, meaning “Child of the Father,” was also claiming to be the Christ and Chosen Ruler. He had been thrown in prison because he had led a violent and bloody uprising in the city. <sup>20</sup> Pilate again told the crowd that he wanted

to release Jesus. <sup>21</sup> But the crowd wanted nothing to do with Jesus if he was not going to raise an army. They began shouting,

“Crucify! Crucify him!”

<sup>22</sup> 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!”

<sup>23</sup> But the crowd refused to back down. They pressed forward, demanding all the more that Jesus be killed by nailing him to a cross. <sup>24</sup> The Roman Governor was terrified by the energy of the crowd on this Passover day, when they celebrated their freedom from slavery. So he gave in to their demands. <sup>25</sup> He released the violent revolutionary from prison and ordered Jesus to be killed by crucifixion.

### **The Creator’s Rule Arrives † Luke 23:26-56**

<sup>26</sup> The soldiers took Jesus away to nail him to a cross. After a little while, Jesus was too weakened by his wounds to carry his cross anymore. So the soldiers grabbed Simon from Cyrene in northern Africa who was coming in from working in the fields. They made him carry Jesus’s cross the rest of the way.

<sup>27</sup> A great crowd of people were following this procession. There were many women who were weeping over Jesus’s fate. <sup>28</sup> Turning to the women, Jesus said,

“Daughters of Civilization, do not weep for me! Weep for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup> Look! The time is coming when people will say,

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

<sup>30</sup> The words of the prophet Hosea will be fulfilled. People will beg for the mountains to fall on them and for the hills to cover them from the arriving destruction. <sup>31</sup> Look at how terrible things are this day. Can you imagine the utter horror of what will happen when Civilization comes crashing down?!”

<sup>32</sup> With Jesus, there were two other enemies-of-the-state who were being led out of the city to be killed. <sup>33</sup> When they came to the hill called Skull, the soldiers crucified Jesus and the two terrorists—one on Jesus’s right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup> Jesus began saying repeatedly for all to hear,

“Father, forgive these people! Free them from their mindless ways. They do not realize what they are doing.”

The soldiers had stripped Jesus completely naked. They threw dice to see who got his clothes, which were his last earthly possessions. <sup>35</sup> The crowds stood by, watching everything. The rulers and authorities began loudly ridiculing Jesus. They said,

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

<sup>36</sup> The soldiers mocked Jesus by giving him cheap wine to drink. But as Jesus drank wine on the cross, he was trusting that the Creator's Rule had come to earth. <sup>37</sup> The soldiers were saying,

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

<sup>38</sup> There was an inscription over Jesus's head which declared his crime against Rome,

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

<sup>39</sup> One of the terrorists, who was hanging beside him, began ridiculing Jesus. He said,

“Are you not supposed to be the Christ?! Rescue yourself and us as well!”

<sup>40</sup> Rebuking this man, the other terrorist said,

“Do you not fear the Creator?! We are facing the exact same judgment.

<sup>41</sup> We certainly deserve this. But have you not been listening to and watching this man?! He has done nothing wrong in the Creator's eyes!”

<sup>42</sup> Then he said to Jesus,

“Jesus, remember me when you finally rule and are given the Creator's victory.”

<sup>43</sup> Jesus said to him,

“Truly I say to you, today the Creator's garden has begun to be renewed and we are sharing in it together!”

<sup>44</sup> At noon on the Passover day, April 3, 33 AD, darkness came upon the whole land for three hours. Civilization's power and authority was starting to collapse.

<sup>45</sup> The curtain of the inner-sanctuary of the temple was split down the middle. The Creator was breaking free from all human attempts to keep him contained.

<sup>46</sup> Jesus then cried out with a loud voice,

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

After saying this, Jesus breathed out and died. <sup>47</sup> Having seen everything from the moment of Jesus's arrest, the Roman military officer overseeing the crucifixions began praising the Creator. He said,

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

<sup>48</sup> The crowds which had come together for this spectacle and had seen everything, went away heartbroken and grieving. <sup>49</sup> All those who knew Jesus, along with the women who had followed him from Galilee, saw all this from a distance.

### **The New Creation Arises † Luke 23:50—24:12**

<sup>50</sup> On the Sanhedrin Council, which had condemned Jesus to death, there was a good man from Arimathea named Joseph. <sup>51</sup> Joseph had not supported the Council's actions against Jesus. He was hoping Jesus would bring the Creator's Rule to earth. <sup>52</sup> Joseph went to Roman Governor Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>53</sup> He got permission and took Jesus down from the cross. He quickly wrapped Jesus in a burial cloth. Then he placed him into an unoccupied grave that was cut into a stone hillside. <sup>54</sup> In addition to being the Passover, it was also the day of preparation for the Sabbath. This meant the sacred day of

rest would begin at sundown. <sup>55</sup> The women from Galilee saw the grave and how Joseph hastily buried Jesus's body. <sup>56</sup> Returning to the city, they prepared burial spices and perfumed oils for Jesus's body. But, to obey the law, they did nothing on the next day, which was the Sabbath.

<sup>24.1</sup> On the first day of the new creation, at daybreak on April 5, 33 AD, the women brought burial spices to the grave of Jesus. <sup>2</sup> There they were surprised to find the giant stone rolled away from the entrance to the grave. <sup>3</sup> Entering the grave, they were stunned for they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While the women were getting nowhere trying to figure out what had happened, two men in radiant clothes stood over them. <sup>5</sup> Gripped with fear, the women looked at 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 the Way of Civilization! <sup>6</sup> Jesus is not here! He is raised from the dead! Remember his words and teachings.

<sup>7</sup> He told you it is necessary for the Human One's community to be handed over to the authorities, to be crucified, and to be raised from the dead on the third day. The Creator's renewal of all creation has begun!”

<sup>8</sup> Then they remembered Jesus's words. <sup>9</sup> Leaving the grave, the women then reported all this to the eleven remaining representatives and to all the rest of Jesus's disciples. <sup>10</sup> Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary of Jacob, and those with them were the first to begin sharing the news of Jesus's resurrection. <sup>11</sup> But the men did not trust the report. It seemed like nonsense to them and women were not considered viable witnesses in their society. <sup>12</sup> Wanting to check things out for himself, Peter immediately ran to the grave. All he could find were the cloths for wrapping the body of Jesus. So he returned by himself, completely stunned at finding Jesus's grave empty.

### Opening Eyes † Luke 24:13-53

<sup>13</sup> On that same day, two of Jesus's disciples were walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Emmaus was the former site of a great victory of freedom for Israel. <sup>14</sup> As they walked, they were discussing everything that had happened around Jesus. <sup>15</sup> While they were seeking the truth together, Jesus himself came up to them and began to journey with them. <sup>16</sup> Because their eyes were blinded by the Way of Civilization, they did not recognize that it was Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them,

“What are you discussing while you journey?”

They stopped walking and hung their heads in grief. <sup>18</sup> Answering, the one named Cleopas said to Jesus,

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

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said to them,

“What happened?”

They said to him,

“It all centered around Jesus from Nazareth. Hearing his words and seeing his actions, the people were convinced that he was a powerful prophet from the Creator. <sup>20</sup> But then our own temple-caretakers and

leaders condemned him to death and had him crucified. <sup>21</sup> We had been hoping he was the Christ who was going to free us from slavery to Civilization. But now it is already the third day since his death.

<sup>22</sup> Yet this morning, some of Jesus's female disciples went to his grave and their report turned our lives upside down. <sup>23</sup> When they got there his body was gone! They came to us claiming they had seen messengers from the Creator. They were saying that Jesus was alive and raised from the dead. <sup>24</sup> So some of those with us ran to the grave and found it exactly as the women had said. But they could not find Jesus anywhere."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them,

"Your blind minds have been led astray by Civilization. Your hearts are resistant to trusting what the prophets have told you. <sup>26</sup> It was necessary for the Christ to be rejected and killed by the highest and most esteemed human authorities. Through this he exposed the truth of Civilization as well as the truth of the Creator's character."

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

"Stranger, we beg you to remain with us! Our home is yours. We will provide food, shelter, 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. <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> 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 truth of the Scriptures was revealed our hearts were burning and trying to tell us that he was with us!"

<sup>33</sup> Excited, they got up and, even though it was night, quickly returned the seven miles to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, they found the eleven representatives and the other disciples gathered together. <sup>34</sup> The representatives told them,

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

<sup>35</sup> Then the two disciples from Emmaus began telling the story of their own journey. They explained how Jesus was revealed to them as they shared their food and home with a stranger. <sup>36</sup> 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."



<sup>37</sup> Terrified and frightened, the disciples assumed they were seeing a ghost.

<sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them,

“Why are you scared and doubting the reality of my resurrection?

<sup>39</sup> 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 bones, as I do.”

<sup>40</sup> While saying this, Jesus showed them the scars on his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> They were in disbelief because of their overwhelming joy and shock. Jesus then said to them,

“Do you have anything I can eat?”

<sup>42</sup> They handed Jesus a piece of cooked fish. <sup>43</sup> Jesus took it and ate it in front of them, further showing them that his body was real and physically raised from the dead. <sup>44</sup> Jesus said to them,

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

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

“The Scriptures proclaim that the Creator’s Christ will suffer for loving his enemies but will be raised from the dead on the third day. <sup>47</sup> Starting in Jerusalem, all nations must be called to change their ways of thinking and turn away from the Way of Civilization. Life and freedom only come through the Creator’s Christ and his Way. <sup>48</sup> You are living testimonies of this new reality. You have witnessed the Creator’s Rule arrive on the earth. <sup>49</sup> Look! I am sending the presence of my Father upon you so you can accomplish the great task of spreading my Way of life. So wait in the city till you have been filled with the Creator’s power.”

<sup>50</sup> Jesus then led them to Bethany and, lifting up his hands, he gave them his blessing. <sup>51</sup> After he blessed them, he disappeared from their sight. <sup>52</sup> So the disciples returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. <sup>53</sup> While they were waiting on the Father to fulfill his promise, they worshiped, studied, and prayed in the temple.

## VII. The Spirit Creates the Body of Christ † Acts 1:1—8:3

### Waiting on the Father † Acts 1:1-26

<sup>1</sup> Friends of the Creator and disciples of Jesus: The first part of this book contained everything that Jesus did and taught. <sup>2</sup> 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.

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

“Do not leave Jerusalem. Wait there for the promised presence of the Father to come upon you. <sup>5</sup> John the Baptist baptized and prepared you with water. But soon you will be baptized into the full reality of the Creator's Spirit—you will become part of me and will continue my story.”

<sup>6</sup> Hearing this, the disciples began asking Jesus,

“Lord, so is this the moment in which you will bring our people back under the Creator's Rule?”

<sup>7</sup> 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. The Creator's Rule will come in every generation.

<sup>8</sup> Remember that you will receive power when the Creator's Spirit comes upon you and fills you. Your lives of faithful obedience will be a living witness of the Creator's Rule—you will continue my work as the Body of Christ. 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.”

<sup>9</sup> While they were watching, Jesus was then lifted up into the clouds as the prophet Daniel had foretold. The Creator was lifting up the Human One to be the ruler of all creation. <sup>10</sup> After Jesus was taken into the Creator's invisible dimension, his disciples continued staring into heaven. Suddenly two men in radiant clothes were standing in front of them. <sup>11</sup> They said,

“Why are you standing here, staring at the sky?! Jesus has not abandoned you. He will soon return to dwell among you, exactly as he told you. He will be more powerful and more present than ever.”

<sup>12</sup> So Jesus's disciples returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is within the allowable walking distance for a Sabbath. <sup>13</sup> There in Jerusalem they went into the large, upstairs room in the house where they were staying.

<sup>14</sup> The eleven representatives, the women, and the biological mother and brothers of Jesus, began gathering every day for communal prayer. <sup>15</sup> During one of those days of prayer, Peter stood up in the middle of them. The

community of the Body of Christ that Jesus had created now had about 120 brothers and sisters. <sup>16</sup> Peter said,

“My brothers and sisters, it is necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled. The Creator’s Spirit spoke through David, warning about our fallen brother Judah Daggerman who gave Jesus over to be arrested. <sup>17</sup> Judah Daggerman was one of us and was chosen to be one of the twelve representatives. <sup>18</sup> But he abandoned the Creator’s Way by turning on Jesus to make money. Instead of letting go of wealth and property, he bought land for himself. These decisions corrupted him from the inside out and ended up killing him. <sup>19</sup> Everyone in Jerusalem has now learned of his horrible death and his land is now called, ‘Field of Blood.’ <sup>20</sup> As it is written in Psalm 69,

*‘Let his land become wild and let no one dwell in it.’*

It is also written in Psalm 109,

*‘Let another take his position.’*

<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to bring the number of representatives back to twelve. We must display to everyone that the Body of Christ is the true Israel. We need to choose a man who was with us the whole time we followed the Lord Jesus. <sup>22</sup> This man needs to have seen everything from the time of John the Baptist’s baptism of preparation all the way through the time of Jesus’s resurrection.”

<sup>23</sup> The Body of Christ selected two men who met the requirements—Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then the community prayed,

“Lord, you know the hearts of all, so please choose the man you want.

<sup>25</sup> Show us who should fill this role and be a representative in the place of Judah Daggerman.”

<sup>26</sup> Having prayed and given the decision into the Father’s hands, they threw dice. The dice selected Matthias and he became the twelfth representative.

### Jesus’s Spirit Arrives † Acts 2:1-47

<sup>2.1</sup> The disciples of Jesus were all gathered together when Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover, arrived. This day was the Feast of Weeks that celebrated the giving of Moses’s Law and the first-fruits of the land. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly, a great and powerful wind from heaven filled the whole house. It was like the one that parted the Red Sea and saved Israel from Civilization. This wind was the return of Jesus through the Creator’s Spirit and Breath. <sup>3</sup> All of Jesus’s disciples were filled with his Spirit. Their tongues were empowered to speak the refining fire of the Creator’s word, as Jesus had. <sup>4</sup> Then the disciples began to speak in other languages. As the Body of Christ, they were not limited and confined by the cultural, national, and social divides of Civilization. <sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, thousands of those devoted to the temple and the royal line of David had come together from all over for the festival in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> At the sound of the great wind, a crowd of people gathered around the disciples. They were startled when they heard the disciples of Jesus speaking the languages of their homelands. <sup>7</sup> They were beside themselves, saying,

“What is going on?! Are not all these people from Galilee? <sup>8</sup> How are we each hearing the languages of our homelands? <sup>9-11</sup> We are from all parts of the Roman Empire and beyond—the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Yet somehow we are all hearing them preach about the Creator in our own native languages!”

<sup>12</sup> Everyone was thoroughly confused, saying to each other, “What is causing this to happen?!”

<sup>13</sup> Mocking them, others began saying, “They are drunk!”

<sup>14</sup> The twelve representatives then stood together as the new twelve sons of Israel in front of those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. Peter 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. <sup>15</sup> None of us are drunk—it is only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup> What you are seeing is the fulfillment of Joel 2.

*<sup>17</sup> ‘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. The elderly will have dreams.*

*<sup>18</sup> Especially during that time I will pour out my Spirit upon my faithful servants. Both males and females will speak my truth. <sup>19</sup> I will create wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below. <sup>20</sup> My return will be accompanied by great destruction. Bloodshed and fire will fill Civilization. Pillars of smoke will darken the sun and turn the moon red. The powers and authorities of Civilization will be conquered and revealed for what they are.*

*<sup>21</sup> But all creatures that faithfully cling to me will be rescued.’*

<sup>22</sup> Israelites, listen carefully to these words! You yourselves know Jesus of Nazareth. The Creator brought him to your attention as powers, wonders, and signs happened through his hands in your midst. <sup>23</sup> The Creator allowed it to happen, but you crucified and killed Jesus through the hands of Roman Civilization. <sup>24</sup> But death was not powerful enough to hold Jesus. The Creator raised him from the dead! He brought him through the pain of death and into the life of new creation. <sup>25</sup> Jesus made these words of David in Psalm 16 come true.

*‘I was determined to stay focused on the Creator in all things. Nothing can defeat me because he is by my side and has my back. <sup>26</sup> His constant presence causes my heart to celebrate and my tongue to rejoice! My body lives with hope.*

*<sup>27</sup> You, my Creator, will not abandon my life in death. You will not allow the one who lives your faithful Way to experience decay. <sup>28</sup> You have revealed to me the Way of life and you will always watch over me.’*

<sup>29</sup> My fellow Israelites, we can confidently say that David died and was buried. His grave is still among us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Therefore, David was not speaking of himself. He spoke as a prophet and trusted that the Creator would bring the Christ from his family line. <sup>31</sup> He even predicted the resurrection of the Christ—that he would not be abandoned in death and that his body would not decay. <sup>32</sup> The Creator raised Jesus of

Nazareth from the dead! We are witnesses of this fact. <sup>33</sup> Jesus has been taken to the Creator's side so he can return among us through the promised presence of the Creator's Spirit. And now Jesus has poured out his Spirit on the community of the Body of Christ. This is what you are seeing in our lives and listening to in our words! <sup>34</sup> David was not taken to the Creator's side in this way. He himself says in Psalm 110,

*The Creator said to my Lord, "You are my right-hand man. <sup>35</sup> I will put all your enemies under your feet."*

<sup>36</sup> Therefore, let all Israel know this with unquestioning certainty. The Creator has made Jesus, whom you crucified, Lord of all and his Christ and Chosen Ruler over the whole earth!"

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

"Brothers, what must we do?!"

<sup>38</sup> Peter said to them,

"Every one of you must change your hearts, minds, and decisions. Be baptized into Jesus's story. Be forgiven and freed from your lives of following the Way of Civilization. Start following the Way of Jesus, for he is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth. Then you will be filled with the gift of the Creator's Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The Creator's promise of new creation is for you, your children, and for all those the Creator calls to himself."

<sup>40</sup> With many other words Peter continued to challenge them with this basic message,

"Escape from the decay of Civilization in which you live!"

<sup>41</sup> Those whose hearts were open to these words were baptized into the life and story of Jesus. About 3,000 people joined the Body of Christ on that day.

<sup>42</sup> The members of the Body of Christ were constantly immersed in the teachings of Jesus, the sharing of a common life, the sharing of resources and food, and prayerful listening to the Father. <sup>43</sup> Like Jesus, the representatives were filled with the Creator's power. They did many wonders and signs. This caused fear to fill all those they encountered. <sup>44</sup> All the disciples of Jesus were devoted to the same purpose of seeking the Creator's Rule. They did this by giving up all ownership and holding all resources in common. <sup>45</sup> They made a break with the Way of Civilization as they sold their property and possessions. Then the common resources were divided up among the whole Body of Christ to take care of every need. <sup>46</sup> The disciples of Jesus lived joyful and simple lives. They prayed in the Jerusalem temple while sharing food and life in their common houses. <sup>47</sup> Everyday their praise for the Creator and their abundant generosity caused people to leave the Way of Civilization behind and be rescued into the Way of Jesus.

### Freedom Versus Control † Acts 3:1—4:22

<sup>3.1</sup> One day, Peter and John Zebedee went up to the temple at the hour of prayer. This was the hour that Jesus died—three in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup> Every day, 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. <sup>3</sup> Seeing Peter and John Zebedee about to enter the temple, he began begging them for money. <sup>4</sup> Peter stared at him and said,

“Look at us.”

<sup>5</sup> The man paused his begging, thinking he was going to receive some money.

<sup>6</sup> Peter said,

“I have no money. But I have something much better to give you. Through the power of the word and teachings of Jesus, who is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth, you are free from your slavery. Get up and walk into a new life as a member of the Body of Christ!”

<sup>7</sup> Taking hold of his right hand, Peter lifted the man up. Immediately he jumped up and was able to stand firm for the first time. <sup>8</sup> Following Peter and John Zebedee, the man began walking, jumping, and praising the Creator as he entered the temple for the first time. <sup>9</sup> All the people saw the man walking around and shouting the Creator’s praises. <sup>10</sup> They recognized him as the beggar who would sit at the door of the temple asking for money. They were amazed at the sight and were beside themselves trying to figure out what had happened. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Seeing the gathering crowd, Peter spoke to the people. He said,

“Israelites! Why are you amazed at this?! Why are you staring at us as though we were the ones who made him walk by our own power?”

<sup>13</sup> The Creator of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord of our ancestors, made his servant Jesus triumphant over all. This is the same Jesus you rejected and denied before the Roman governor who did not want to kill him. <sup>14</sup> You rejected the Creator’s chosen one who lived with true justice. Instead you asked for a violent revolutionary to be released from prison. <sup>15</sup> You killed the Creator’s example of true life and humanity. But the Creator raised him from the dead! Of all this we are eyewitnesses. <sup>16</sup> By trusting in the word and teachings of Jesus, this man standing before you was healed and freed from his slavery. Faithfulness to the word of Jesus made this man whole in your presence.

<sup>17</sup> My fellow Israelites! You acted in ignorance as you followed your rulers and authorities. <sup>18</sup> But through this, what the Creator had foretold through the prophets—that his Christ would suffer—was completed. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, change your hearts, minds, and decisions! Turn away from the Way of Civilization and follow Jesus’s teachings. <sup>20</sup> If you do, then the Creator’s kindness will be upon you once again. His Chosen Ruler, Jesus, will come upon you through his Spirit. <sup>21</sup> Jesus has fully entered the Creator’s invisible dimension. He is already beginning the renewal of all creation that was foretold by the prophets. <sup>22</sup> Moses said in Deuteronomy 18,

*“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.*”

<sup>23</sup> *Everyone who does not listen to this prophet will be completely removed from the Creator's people.'*

<sup>24</sup> Every faithful prophet, starting with Samuel, spoke of and announced these days. <sup>25</sup> You are the children of these prophets and of the relationship that the Creator made with your ancestors. The Creator said to Abraham in Genesis 12,

*Through your children all the families of the earth will be blessed.'*

<sup>26</sup> After raising his servant Jesus from the dead, the Creator has first sent him to you. He is hoping you will be blessed by turning away from the disobedient and destructive Way of Civilization."

<sup>4:1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> They were irritated with Peter and John Zebedee. This was because they were teaching the people the Way of Jesus. They were announcing that the resurrection of the dead had already begun through Jesus's faithfulness to the Creator. <sup>3</sup> So they arrested Peter and John Zebedee and held them in prison for the night. <sup>4</sup> Despite this, many who had listened to their teachings began to trust the word of Jesus. This caused the Body of Christ to grow to about 5,000 people.

<sup>5</sup> The next morning, the Israelite rulers, the leaders of the most powerful families, and the Scriptural scholars gathered together in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> They were also joined by the whole family of Annas, who was the Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers. <sup>7</sup> They placed Peter and John Zebedee in the middle of the gathering. Then they began asking them,

"By what power and authority did you heal this man?"

<sup>8</sup> Peter was filled with and led by the Creator's Spirit. He said to them,

"Rulers and authorities of the people! <sup>9</sup> Is it really true that we were arrested last night and are now being judged for freeing a man from his physical and spiritual slavery?! <sup>10</sup> Let this be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel. It is by the Way and word of Jesus of Nazareth that this man is standing whole and healthy in your sight. This Jesus is the Christ and Chosen Ruler. You crucified him, but the Creator raised him from the dead. <sup>11</sup> Jesus is the stone spoken of in the Scriptures that is rejected by his own people. He will destroy all Civilization and he is the foundation and pattern of the new creation. <sup>12</sup> Salvation from slavery and death comes through no other than this Jesus and his life, word, and teachings."

<sup>13</sup> The authorities were amazed that Peter and John Zebedee were able to be so confident while being low-class, illiterate, and uneducated men. This was a sign to them that they were in fact Jesus's disciples. <sup>14</sup> But the authorities were stuck. The man who had been healed of his disability had openly joined the community of the Body of Christ. He was publicly following Peter and John Zebedee everywhere. <sup>15</sup> So they ordered Peter and John Zebedee to leave the presence of the Sanhedrin Council. <sup>16</sup> They said to each other,

"What can we possibly do to these men?! All the people of Jerusalem have seen the healing of this disabled man. It is impossible for us to deny

its reality. <sup>17</sup> But we must keep this healing from spreading further. Let us threaten these men with punishment and death if they ever publicly teach the Way of Jesus again.”

<sup>18</sup> So they summoned Peter and John Zebedee and ordered them to never speak of or teach the Way of Jesus again. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John Zebedee replied to them,

“Do you really think it is right to listen to anyone other than the Creator himself?! <sup>20</sup> As for us, we will listen to the Creator. We cannot stop speaking and teaching about the things we have seen and heard.”

<sup>21</sup> But the authorities did not back down. They repeated 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. <sup>22</sup> The man who had been healed and completely changed by 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

<sup>23</sup> After being released from prison, Peter and John Zebedee returned to the rest of Jesus’s disciples. They reported all the warnings and threats that were given by the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the leaders of the powerful families. <sup>24</sup> After listening to the report, all the members of the Body of Christ prayed as one. They said,

“Lord, you have created and are continuing to create the heavens, earth, sea, and all creatures within them. <sup>25</sup> You are our Father and you provide for us and protect us. Your Spirit spoke through the mouth of your servant David in Psalm 2.

*‘Why do the nations ignore the Creator’s Way? Why do the peoples of Civilization focus on empty things? <sup>26</sup> All the rulers and leaders of Civilization are gathered together in rebellion against the Creator and his Christ.’*

<sup>27</sup> The rulers of Rome and Israel, accompanied by the popular opinion of the people, gathered together in this city against the truth. <sup>28</sup> They gathered against your faithful servant, Jesus, whom you chose to obediently live and teach your Way. <sup>29</sup> Now Lord, as the rulers of Civilization threaten the Body of Christ, give us boldness and courage. Give us confidence to always speak your word and live your Way. <sup>30</sup> We beg you to extend your hand and, through the Way of Jesus, bring the healings, signs, and wonders of your new creation.”

<sup>31</sup> 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. They began speaking the Creator’s word with courage, confidence, and boldness. <sup>32</sup> The Creator’s Spirit then continued to unite the faithful community of the Body of Christ in heart and life. Everyone who joined them let go of all ownership. Everything was held in common by the Body of Christ. <sup>33</sup> This life of trust and generosity was living proof of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and his defeat of fear and death. <sup>34</sup> Every follower of Jesus was freed from the slaveries of



debt and ownership. <sup>35</sup> 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 this complete sharing, everyone in the Body of Christ received everything that was needed.

<sup>36</sup> A temple-caretaker from Cyprus joined the Body of Christ during this time. His name was Joseph, but the representatives called him Barnabas, meaning “child of persuasion.” <sup>37</sup> Making a complete break with the Way of Civilization, Barnabas sold his family’s land and placed the money at the feet of the representatives. <sup>5.1</sup> There was also a couple named Ananias and Sapphira, who sold their property as they joined the Body of Christ. <sup>2</sup> But they were anxious about making a complete break with the Way of Civilization. They were worried about entrusting the future completely to the Creator. So Ananias and Sapphira held back some of the money for themselves. <sup>3</sup> When the money was placed at his feet, Peter said,

“Ananias, why have you allowed the satanic desire for control to lead you astray into hypocrisy?! You are misrepresenting Jesus and his Way by holding back money and possessions for yourself. <sup>4</sup> After you made the decision to join the Body of Christ, your property was no longer yours. Why would you dare do such a thing that mocks Jesus and his Father?!”

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> Some young men then took Ananias and buried him. <sup>7</sup> After about three hours, Sapphira entered without knowing what had happened to her husband. <sup>8</sup> Peter asked her,

“Is this how much money you received for the sale of the land?”

She responded,

“Yes, exactly that much.”

<sup>9</sup> 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. They will bury you as well.”

<sup>10</sup> Immediately she dropped dead. The young men entered and found her dead. They buried her next to her husband. <sup>11</sup> Great fear came upon the whole community of the Body of Christ and upon all those who heard about this. Through this sign they saw the urgency and seriousness of complete obedience to the word and Way of Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Ignoring the threats of the authorities, the twelve representatives daily gathered on the Porch of Solomon on the east side of the temple. They taught the people and brought the healing power of Jesus to those who were faithful to the Creator. <sup>13</sup> Others in the Body of Christ were nervous about joining the twelve in the temple. <sup>14</sup> The crowds were amazed by the representatives. Everyday more men and women left the Way of Civilization behind to faithfully walk the Way of Jesus with the Body of Christ. <sup>15</sup> Those who were sick from the conditions of Civilization were placed on cots where the

representatives gathered. They hoped Peter would stop and have compassion on them. <sup>16</sup> The outcast and broken were brought to the doors of the temple from all the cities surrounding Jerusalem. The representatives of Jesus welcomed and healed all of them without exception. <sup>17</sup> The Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers and all the members of the political party of the Sadducees became angry and furious. They hated the growing popularity of the representatives, the inability to control them, and the gathering of unclean people outside the temple gates. <sup>18</sup> So the authorities arrested all twelve representatives and threw them in prison. <sup>19</sup> But during the night, a messenger from the Lord Jesus opened the prison doors. He said to them,

<sup>20</sup> "Go! Stand in the temple and teach Jesus's Way of true life to all the people!"

<sup>21</sup> The representatives immediately obeyed. They entered the Jerusalem temple before daybreak and began teaching the Way of Jesus. When morning came, the Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers called together the Sanhedrin Council. He ordered the twelve prisoners to be brought in for trial. <sup>22</sup> But the servants of the temple-caretakers could not find the twelve representatives in prison. <sup>23</sup> 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!"

<sup>24</sup> When the police captain of the temple and the rest of the authorities heard this, they were completely confused and in disbelief. <sup>25</sup> Then a messenger arrived, reporting,

"The men you arrested and threw in prison are standing in the temple! They are teaching the people the Way of Jesus!"

<sup>26</sup> Fearing backlash and violence from the people, the police captain and his men retrieved the representatives without violence. <sup>27</sup> They brought the twelve representatives to the Sanhedrin Council. There the Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers spoke to them. <sup>28</sup> He said,

"We ordered you to never again teach the Way of Jesus! Yet you are still filling Jerusalem with Jesus's teachings while accusing us of killing him!"

<sup>29</sup> Answering, Peter and the representatives said,

"It is necessary to obey the Creator instead of human authorities. <sup>30</sup> You gave Jesus over to be crucified. But then the Creator, whom our ancestors worshiped, raised Jesus from the dead. <sup>31</sup> Jesus is the example of what it means to be truly human. He is rescuing the creation by changing our hearts and minds and freeing us from all the debts and slaveries of Civilization. <sup>32</sup> We ourselves are living witnesses of this. The Creator is filling all those who obey him with his Spirit."

<sup>33</sup> These words angered and enraged the authorities. They wanted all twelve representatives immediately killed. <sup>34</sup> But, before they could kill them, an influential scholar and member of the political party of the Pharisees named Gamaliel stood up. He ordered the representatives to be taken outside. <sup>35</sup> Then Gamaliel said to the Sanhedrin Council,

"Men! Israelites! Do not do something to these men you might regret! Carefully think this through.

<sup>36</sup> Remember Theudas? He claimed to be the Chosen Ruler and about 400 men committed themselves to him. But once he was arrested and killed, then all his followers disbanded and his movement was gone. <sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> Learn from this pattern. Ignore these followers of Jesus! If their movement is only another human movement, then it will disappear on its own. <sup>39</sup> But if somehow it is from the Creator himself, then all your efforts will be powerless 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. <sup>40</sup> Instead they had them flogged, leaving scars on their bodies that marked them as lifelong criminals. Then they freed them while commanding them to stop teaching the Way of Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The twelve representatives, having been beaten almost to death, left the Sanhedrin Council. They began openly rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer for Jesus. <sup>42</sup> Everyday they continued teaching the Way of Jesus in the temple and throughout Jerusalem.

### Following Jesus’s Way † Acts 6:1—8:3

<sup>6.1</sup> In the fall of 34 AD, the community of the Body of Christ got so large it ran into some organizational issues. The Greek-speaking members complained to the Hebrew-speaking members that their widows were being overlooked during the daily distribution of resources. <sup>2</sup> The twelve representatives called together the whole community of disciples. They said,

“Now that the Body of Christ 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. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, 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 ask them to oversee the distribution of the communal resources. <sup>4</sup> Then we will be able to commit our energies to prayer and the preaching and teaching of Jesus’s word.”

<sup>5</sup> This idea and solution was pleasing to the whole Body of Christ. So they chose Stephen (who was filled with the Spirit of Jesus and lived with great 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. Most of these men were Greek-speakers themselves to demonstrate that there was no favoritism in the Body of Christ. <sup>6</sup> The twelve representatives gathered around these seven men and placed them into this role through prayer. <sup>7</sup> After this change in the community’s organization, the Way of Jesus continued to spread. Many more in Jerusalem left everything behind to join the Body of Christ. This included a good number of temple-

caretakers, which began to threaten the structure and order of life in Jerusalem to its foundation.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen began demonstrating the generosity of Jesus in his life. The Creator's power was arriving upon the earth in miraculous ways through Stephen. <sup>9</sup> Many unfaithful Israelites, from all over the Roman Empire, began to oppose Stephen and tried to shut down his work. <sup>10</sup> But they were not strong enough to withstand the power of the Creator's Spirit which was guiding Stephen in word and action. <sup>11</sup> So they gathered together some witnesses who said,

"We have heard Stephen attack the Law of Moses. Therefore, he is attacking the Creator himself!"

<sup>12</sup> They called together the people, the leaders of the most powerful families, and the Scriptural scholars. Then they arrested Stephen and brought him to trial before the Sanhedrin Council. <sup>13</sup> Various witnesses came forward, saying,

"This man is attacking the temple and the Law of Moses! <sup>14</sup> We have heard him claiming that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy our sacred temple and change the way of life which Moses handed down to us!"

<sup>15</sup> Staring at Stephen, all those on the Sanhedrin Council saw his face. Some of them suddenly realized they might be staring at a messenger from the Creator.

<sup>71</sup> The Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers said to Stephen,

"Are these accusations against you true?!"

<sup>2</sup> Stephen answered,

"Fellow Israelites, I beg you to listen and pay close attention! The Creator of all things came to our ancestor Abraham while he was dwelling deep in Civilization. <sup>3</sup> The Creator said to him in Genesis 12,

*'Drop everything and leave your home and family to follow me into the wilderness. It is in the wilderness and not in Civilization that you will find me.'*

<sup>4</sup> So, after Abraham left Babylonian Civilization, the Creator brought him into this land in which you are now living. <sup>5</sup> The Creator did not give this wild land to Abraham to own nor did he make him a ruler over it. Instead the Creator simply promised that he and his children, even though he was childless, would live in this wild land. <sup>6</sup> The Creator then warned that Abraham's children would go astray from the path of faithfulness. They would become lost in Civilization. They would be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years. <sup>7</sup> The Creator said in Genesis 15,

*'I will bring my judgment upon the empire that enslaves them. Then I will bring them out of their slavery to the Way of Civilization so they can pledge their complete allegiance to me in this land.'*

<sup>8</sup> The sign of the covenant and relationship between the Creator and Abraham was circumcision. It was a symbol of new creation and the submission of one's 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 tribes of our nation.

<sup>9</sup> One of Jacob's twelve sons, Joseph, was sold into Egyptian slavery by his jealous brothers. But the Creator did not abandon Joseph

in Civilization. <sup>10</sup> He rescued him from all his oppressions. Joseph was well liked by the ruler of the Egyptian Empire, who exalted Joseph as a ruler over Egypt. <sup>11</sup> A great famine then came upon all of Egypt and the land of Israel. Our ancestors were without food. <sup>12</sup> Hearing that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob's trust in the Creator failed and he sent his sons to get provision from Civilization. <sup>13</sup> During one of their visits, Joseph recognized his brothers. This caused the ruler of the Egyptian Empire to suddenly understand Joseph's origin. <sup>14</sup> Joseph then asked his father Jacob and all seventy-five of his family members to come to Egypt so he could provide for them. <sup>15</sup> Jacob gave in to this temptation and abandoned the wild land that the Creator had given them. They moved into Egyptian Civilization, where he and his sons all died. <sup>16</sup> Because they knew moving to Egypt was unfaithful and disobedient, they had their bones relocated to the land of Abraham after they died.

<sup>17</sup> As the centuries went by, our people multiplied in Egypt and the time of the Creator's promised salvation approached. <sup>18</sup> A ruler arose in Egypt that did not know Joseph. <sup>19</sup> This ruler increased the oppression and abuse of our people to the point of genocide. He began to destroy our people by killing their male babies. <sup>20</sup> During that time, Moses was born and the Creator had mercy on him. Moses was nurtured by his family for three months. <sup>21</sup> But after he was thrown out to die, he was taken in by the daughter of the Egyptian ruler. She raised him as her own child. <sup>22</sup> Moses was taught all the wisdom of Egyptian Civilization and excelled in its Way. <sup>23</sup> But when Moses was forty years old, he became aware of his people and wanted to look out for them. <sup>24</sup> One day Moses saw an Israelite being mistreated. He stepped in and followed the violent wisdom of Civilization by killing the Egyptian master. <sup>25</sup> He assumed his Israelite brothers would see that the Creator was using him in this way to free them. But they did not see themselves as slaves. <sup>26</sup> On the next day, Moses saw a couple of Israelites fighting with each other. He got between them and said in Exodus 2,

*'Men! You are brothers! Why are you fighting with each other?'*

<sup>27</sup> But one of them pushed Moses away, saying,

*'Who made you a leader and judge over us?!'* <sup>28</sup> *'Do you want to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'*

<sup>29</sup> Hearing this, Moses fled from Egypt and settled in the wilderness where he had two sons. <sup>30</sup> After forty years of being cleansed of the Way of Civilization, the Creator came to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. There Moses saw a bush on fire that was not being destroyed.

<sup>31</sup> While Moses was being amazed at the sight, a voice spoke to him. In Exodus 3, the Creator said,

*'I am the Creator and Lord of your ancestors. I am the Lord of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'*

Trembling with great fear, Moses could not bring himself to look at the burning bush. <sup>33</sup> The Creator said to him,

*'Take the sandals off your feet. The ground of the wilderness is sacred and holy! <sup>34</sup> I have seen the oppression and destruction of my people. I have heard their struggles. So I have come down to rescue them from slavery to the Way of Civilization. Now follow me, for I am sending you into Egypt.'*

<sup>35</sup> So Moses, who had already been rejected by his people, was sent by the Creator to lead the people out of slavery to the Way of Civilization.

<sup>36</sup> Moses brought them out of 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. <sup>37</sup> Moses said to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 18,

*'The Creator will bring a prophet like me from among your brothers whom you must listen to above all else.'*

<sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> But our ancestors refused to listen. They pushed away from the Creator to pursue the Way of Civilization. <sup>40</sup> They said to Aaron in Exodus 32,

*'Make us some gods like the Egyptians, so they can lead us, protect us, and provide for us! Moses brought us out of Civilization, but now we are lost in the wilderness!'*

<sup>41</sup> So they made a golden calf in those days and sacrificed animals to this human-made god. They began following the Way of Civilization by celebrating the works and technologies of their own hands. <sup>42</sup> The Creator turned away from them as they worshiped Civilization's Way. Amos 5 says,

*'Israel, you were not worshiping me as you butchered and sacrificed countless animals for forty years in the wilderness. <sup>43</sup> The tent you made, thinking it was for me, was for the worship of Civilization's false gods. As a result of your continued disobedience you will be relocated and exiled in Babylon.'*

<sup>44</sup> This tent was with our ancestors in the wilderness. Moses constructed it thinking he was listening to the Creator. <sup>45</sup> Our ancestors clung to this tent and Joshua, son of Nun, brought it into this land. The Creator overlooked this and drove out the nations from this land till the time of David. <sup>46</sup> The Creator was also generous toward David. But David used that generosity to make himself rich and powerful, even building himself a luxurious palace. <sup>47</sup> Then his son Solomon built what he thought was a temple for the Creator. <sup>48</sup> But the Creator does not dwell in things made by human hands—neither tents nor temples! As Isaiah 66 clearly says,

*<sup>49</sup> '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?! <sup>50</sup> It is my hand that has made all creation.'*

<sup>51</sup> You temple authorities are defiant against the Creator! Even though you are physically circumcised, you are not part of his true people! Your hearts and ears are closed off to the Creator. You are constantly trusting in Civilization and rejecting the work of the Creator's Spirit. You trust

in the work and technology of human hands, like your ancestors did!<sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets, who spoke the truth 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!<sup>53</sup> You received the Law of Moses from the Creator. But you did not faithfully guard or obey the true spirit of its content!”

<sup>54</sup> Hearing these words, the authorities were uncontrollably angry and furious with Stephen. <sup>55</sup> But, being completely filled with the Creator’s Spirit, Stephen saw the truth in that moment. The Creator, with Jesus by his side, had returned to rule his creation. <sup>56</sup> Stephen said,

“Look! I am seeing the Creator’s truth! The Human One’s community is being persecuted by the empires of Civilization. But the Creator is rescuing them and they are ruling on the Creator’s behalf.”

<sup>57</sup> Horrified by these words against them, they covered their ears and shouted as they charged at Stephen. <sup>58</sup> 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. <sup>59</sup> While the stones were crushing Stephen, he cried out,

“Lord Jesus, take me into your hands!”

<sup>60</sup> Having been knocked to his knees, Stephen then shouted,

“Lord! Do not hold their violence and hatred against them!”

After forgiving his enemies, like Jesus, Stephen fell down and died. <sup>8:1-3</sup> The followers of Jesus were grieved over Stephen’s death and took care of his body. That same day, Saul, who oversaw and approved of Stephen’s killing, began a great persecution against the Body of Christ in Jerusalem. He began going into the community’s houses and arresting all the men and women he could find. Because the Body of Christ refused to fight back against Saul, they were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. However, the twelve representatives managed to stay in Jerusalem to continue their witness.

## VIII. The Spirit Spreads the Way † Acts 8:4—15:35

### To the Unlikely in Israel † Acts 8:4—9:43

<sup>4</sup> The disciples of Jesus who were driven out of Jerusalem declared the Gospel of the Creator's Rule everywhere they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip, who was one of the seven chosen to distribute the resources of the Body of Christ, entered the city of Samaria. Samaria was the former capital of the northern kingdom of Israel and its people rejected the temple in Jerusalem. Philip began proclaiming Jesus as the Christ and Chosen Ruler. <sup>6</sup> Miraculous signs of new creation surrounded Philip's work. This caused the crowds to attentively listen to the teachings of Jesus. <sup>7</sup> Many were freed from the spiritual forces and physical disorders of Civilization. <sup>8</sup> Great joy began to spread throughout the city. <sup>9</sup> There was a man in Samaria named Simon who had amazed the city with powerful acts of magic. He claimed to be a special gift from the Creator. <sup>10</sup> All the people, from the poor to the rich, were fascinated by him. They said,

“This man, who is called the Great One, possesses the power of the Creator!”

<sup>11</sup> Because his magic had been captivating the crowds for a while, Simon was popular among the people. <sup>12</sup> But when Philip declared the Gospel—the message of the Creator's Rule through Jesus the Christ—many people left this behind and were baptized into a new life of trust in the Way of Jesus. <sup>13</sup> During this time, even Simon was baptized. Simon then started following Philip around in amazement at the Spirit's miracles of new creation.

<sup>14</sup> When the representatives in Jerusalem heard that many in Samaria had embraced the Creator's word, they sent Peter and John Zebedee to them.

<sup>15</sup> They went there to beg the Creator to fill these new disciples with his Spirit and bring them into the Body of Christ. <sup>16</sup> The disciples in Samaria had only been baptized with water and not with the Creator's Spirit. They were still holding on to their possessions and not living as the united Body of Christ.

<sup>17</sup> So Peter and John Zebedee laid their hands upon the followers of Jesus and brought them into the Body of Christ and filled them with the Creator's Spirit.

<sup>18</sup> When Simon saw the Creator's Spirit fill those who gave their possessions to the community, he also brought some money to them. <sup>19</sup> He said,

“I want to buy this power and authority as well. I want to be able to give the Creator's Spirit to those I touch.”

<sup>20</sup> Peter said to him,

“Do you really think the Creator's gifts can be bought with money?! You and your money will be destroyed. <sup>21</sup> There is no place for you in the Body of Christ. You are not focused on the Way of Jesus. <sup>22</sup> Therefore, you need to leave the Way of Civilization and beg the Creator to change your heart and mind. <sup>23</sup> It is clear that you are still a slave to Civilization's poisonous Way of thinking and living.”

<sup>24</sup> Responding, Simon said,

“Please beg to the Creator on my behalf so that I will be saved from destruction!”



<sup>25</sup> After spending some more time 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 in the region of Samaria. <sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, a messenger from the Creator spoke to Philip,

“Get up! At midday you need to be on the road that heads through the wilderness from Jerusalem to Africa.”

<sup>27</sup> Philip obeyed and, on that road, he saw a castrated man of extremely dark skin. This man worked for the ruler of Ethiopia and was in charge of her treasury. He was an Israelite convert who had been in Jerusalem to worship. But, because he was castrated, he was not allowed in the temple. <sup>28</sup> He was now heading back to Africa in his chariot while reading the prophet Isaiah.

<sup>29</sup> The Creator’s Spirit said to Philip,

“Go join this man on his chariot.”

<sup>30</sup> So Philip ran over to him and heard him reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked him,

“Do you understand what you are reading?”

<sup>31</sup> The Ethiopian said,

“How can I rightly understand unless someone guides and teaches me?”

So he begged Philip to come sit with him in the chariot. <sup>32</sup> He was reading from Isaiah 53.

*“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. <sup>33</sup> He was denied justice because he was poor and lowly in the eyes of men. What can be said about a culture that would kill a man like him?”*

<sup>34</sup> The castrated man said to Philip,

“Tell me, who is the prophet talking about? Himself or someone else?”

<sup>35</sup> Beginning with this text, Philip declared the Gospel and taught the Way of Jesus. <sup>36</sup> During this time of learning, their chariot came by some water. The Ethiopian man said,

“Look! Water! Is there any reason I cannot be baptized and join the Way of Jesus and the Body of Christ?”

<sup>38</sup> When Philip did not resist, the Ethiopian stopped the chariot. They both entered the water and Philip baptized him. This began the Ethiopian man’s break with the Way of Civilization and his entrance into the new life and story of walking the Way of Jesus. <sup>39</sup> After the baptism, the Creator’s Spirit called Philip to another task. So the Ethiopian man continued his journey, rejoicing in the new Way of life he was bringing back to Africa. <sup>40</sup> Philip was then led to the Mediterranean Sea. He declared the Gospel of Jesus to all the cities on the coast including Caesarea, the Roman capital of the province.

<sup>9.1</sup> Meanwhile, Saul was still threatening, arresting, and killing the disciples of the Lord Jesus. He went to the Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers. <sup>2</sup> 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 anyone who was found following the Way of Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Receiving the letters, Saul journeyed to Damascus in the spring of 35 AD. As he approached the city, a light from heaven

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suddenly flashed all around him. <sup>4</sup> Falling to the ground, Saul heard a voice say to him,

“Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting and hunting me down?”

<sup>5</sup> 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 the community of the Body of Christ. <sup>6</sup> Get up! Enter the city and listen to the commands you are given.”

<sup>7</sup> The men traveling with Saul were frozen in fear. They heard the voice but saw no one. <sup>8</sup> When Saul got up off the ground, his eyes were open, but he could not see anything. So Saul was led by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days Saul shared in the death of Jesus and experienced a complete break from the Way of Civilization. He was completely blind and he did not eat or drink anything. <sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus appeared in a vision to Ananias, one of his disciples in Damascus. Jesus said to him,

“Ananias.”

Ananias responded,

“I am here at your service, Lord!”

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> I have revealed to him that a man named Ananias is coming to welcome him into the Body of Christ and open his eyes to my truth.”

<sup>13</sup> Ananias answered,

“But Lord, I have heard from many people that he has caused great pain and suffering among the Body of Christ in Jerusalem! <sup>14</sup> 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!”

<sup>15</sup> 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 Civilization, and to the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> He will learn quickly how my Way and teachings bring suffering and rejection from Civilization!”

<sup>17</sup> So Ananias obediently went to the house. He embraced Saul and welcomed him into the Body of Christ. Ananias said,

“Brother Saul, you are now part of the Body of Christ! 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.”

<sup>18</sup> 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 Body of Christ and the story of Jesus’s Way. <sup>19</sup> With the Body of Christ in Damascus, Saul started feeding on the bread of life—the word and teachings of Jesus. Through it he was strengthened and nourished. <sup>20</sup> Energized in his new life, Saul began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus. He said,

“Jesus is the Child of the Creator we have been waiting for!”

<sup>21</sup> All who heard him preaching were beside themselves, saying,

“Is this not the man who was killing the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem?! Did he not come here to our city so he could arrest Jesus’s followers and take them back to the leaders of the temple-caretakers?!”

<sup>22</sup> Saul was empowered by the Creator’s Spirit. His bold preaching angered those who were devoted to the Jerusalem temple. Everything Saul said and taught ended with this conclusion,

“Jesus is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the whole earth!”

<sup>23</sup> After a long period of time, those who were devoted to the Jerusalem temple were so fed up that they wanted to kill Saul. <sup>24</sup> They began closely watching the gates of the city. But, while they were waiting to arrest and kill Saul, their intentions were discovered. <sup>25</sup> Learning of the threat, the disciples of Jesus took Saul and lowered him down the city wall in a basket. <sup>26</sup> So in the fall of 37 AD, Saul returned south, hoping the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem would welcome him. But they were afraid of Saul and did not trust that he was a true disciple of Jesus. <sup>27</sup> Barnabas stood up for Saul and brought him before the twelve representatives. There Barnabas explained to them that Saul had met the resurrected Lord Jesus and had preached the Way of Jesus in Damascus so boldly that they wanted him dead. <sup>28</sup> Trusting Barnabas’s testimony, the representatives welcomed Saul and he joined them in boldly teaching and living the Way of the Lord Jesus. <sup>29</sup> Saul began by engaging with the Israelites who lived in the ways of Greek culture. But they rejected his message and wanted to kill him. <sup>30</sup> When the Body of Christ realized this, they got Saul out of town and took him to Caesarea. Then they sent him on a boat back to his hometown of Tarsus toward the end of 37 AD. <sup>31</sup> Following the conversion of Saul, their greatest enemy, the Body of Christ experienced a time of great peace and spiritual growth. By fearing and obeying only the Creator’s Spirit, the Body of Christ continued to multiply and spread.

<sup>32</sup> During this time, Peter was traveling around preaching the Gospel of the Creator’s Rule. At one point he visited the disciples living in Lydda, a town about thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem. <sup>33</sup> In that town there was a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for eight years. <sup>34</sup> Peter said to him,

“Aeneas! Jesus, who is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth, is healing and freeing you. Get up and stand firm on the Way of Jesus!”

Aeneas immediately obeyed and stood up. <sup>35</sup> Seeing this man’s healing, a great many in the region changed their lives and turned in obedience to the Lord Jesus. <sup>36</sup> In the nearby town of Joppa, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, there was a disciple of Jesus named Tabitha. She obediently followed the teachings of Jesus by generously giving up her possessions to help the poor and needy. <sup>37</sup> While Peter was in Lydda, Tabitha grew weak and died. Her body was washed and placed in the highest room of the house. <sup>38</sup> When the disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was about seven miles away in Lydda, they sent two men to summon him. They said,

“Please, drop everything you are doing and immediately come help us!”

## The Spirit Spreads the Way

<sup>39</sup> 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. They began showing Peter all the clothes she had made for them.

<sup>40</sup> Peter had them all leave the room. 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. She saw Peter and sat up. <sup>41</sup> Peter reached out his hand and helped her stand up. Then he called for the disciples and widows. When they entered the room, they saw Tabitha standing there, raised from the dead.

<sup>42</sup> News of Peter raising the dead, like Jesus, spread throughout all Joppa. Many left behind the Way of Civilization to live by trust in the Way of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>43</sup> Peter then stayed for many days in Joppa with Simon, who had an unclean profession of using animal hides to make leather.

### To the Nations † Acts 10:1—11:18

<sup>10.1</sup> In Caesarea, the Roman capital of the province, there was a Roman military officer named Cornelius. He was part of a company of soldiers from Italy. <sup>2</sup> He was a respectable man and his whole house feared the Creator. They regularly gave gifts to the poor. They also humbly begged to the Creator for provision and protection through everything they did. <sup>3</sup> One day, at about three in the afternoon, the hour that Jesus died, Cornelius saw a clear vision of a messenger from the Creator. The messenger said,

“Cornelius.”

<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Send men to Joppa to summon a man named Simon Peter. Then listen to everything he teaches you.

<sup>6</sup> He is staying as a guest of Simon, a leather-maker, whose house is by the sea.”

<sup>7</sup> When the messenger had left, Cornelius summoned two members of his house and one of his loyal soldiers. <sup>8</sup> He explained everything to them and then sent them on the thirty-five-mile journey to Joppa. <sup>9</sup> At noon on the next day, while these men were almost to Joppa, Peter went up on the roof to pray.

<sup>10</sup> Peter was hungry and wanted to eat. But, while the food was being prepared below, he suddenly had a vision. <sup>11</sup> He saw the heavens opened and a great sheet being lowered to the earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> All the animals of the earth and the birds of the air were gathered on the sheet. <sup>13</sup> A voice spoke to Peter,

“Get up, Peter! Sacrifice these creatures and eat.”

<sup>14</sup> But Peter said,

“Never, Lord! I have always followed the Law of Moses and will never eat anything dirty and unclean!”

<sup>15</sup> The voice then said to Peter,

“All of the Creator’s creation is good and sacred. Do not call it dirty and unclean.”

<sup>16</sup> This happened three times and then the object was taken back up into the heavens. <sup>17</sup> Peter was thoroughly confused about what this vision meant. Meanwhile, the men who had been sent by Cornelius arrived at the house.

<sup>18</sup> They began asking if Simon Peter was staying as a guest. <sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Creator’s Spirit said to him,

“Look! Three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> Get up, head downstairs, and go with them. Do not judge them for being Romans and foreigners. I sent them to you.”

<sup>21</sup> So Peter went down to the men and said,

“Look! I am the one you are seeking. Why are you here?”

<sup>22</sup> They answered,

“We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman military officer. He fears the Creator and participates in works of justice. This is known by those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. Cornelius was commanded by a messenger from the Creator to summon you to his house so he could listen to your teachings.”

<sup>23</sup> Peter then welcomed these foreign and unclean men into the house and gave them hospitality as his guests. The next day, Peter and some of the disciples in Joppa began journeying with Cornelius’s three men. <sup>24</sup> The day after that, Peter entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had gathered his relatives and friends in anticipation of their arrival. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered the house, Cornelius fell down at Peter’s feet in worship. <sup>26</sup> Peter helped Cornelius to his feet, saying,

“I am a human, like you. No man, not even the Roman emperor, should ever be worshiped!”

<sup>27</sup> Peter saw that a great many people had been gathered to meet him. <sup>28</sup> Peter told them,

“You are likely aware that it is wrong for an Israelite like myself to have fellowship with foreigners like yourselves. Yet the other day the Creator revealed to me that nothing he created is dirty or unclean. <sup>29</sup> Therefore, I obediently came to you when you called for me. But I am curious, what caused you to look for me?”

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius responded,

“Four days ago at this same hour, three in the afternoon, I was praying in my house. Then suddenly a man stood before me in radiant clothing.

<sup>31</sup> He told me,

“Your prayers and your generosity toward the poor have been heard, seen, and remembered by the Creator. <sup>32</sup> Send for Simon Peter and listen to everything he teaches you. He is staying near the sea in Joppa as a guest of Simon the leather-maker.”

<sup>33</sup> Therefore, I immediately sent for you and you were kind to come to me. Now we are all here in the sight of the Creator. We are here to listen to everything that has been taught to you by the true Lord—not the Roman emperor but the Creator himself.”

<sup>34</sup> Peter said,

“I am beginning to see the truth that the Creator does not care about Civilization’s categories, like the background, skin color, or nationality of a person. <sup>35</sup> The Creator hospitably welcomes every single person who fears him and lives a life of justice.

<sup>36</sup> 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. Jesus, and not the Roman emperor, is the Chosen Ruler of the earth. Jesus alone is Lord over all.

<sup>37</sup> You certainly heard about and even saw what happened throughout all our province. It all started when John the Baptist began proclaiming a baptism of preparation and cleansing. <sup>38</sup> When Jesus of Nazareth was baptized, the Creator filled him with his Spirit and power. Because the Creator was with him, Jesus traveled around healing and freeing all those

who were enslaved by Civilization’s satanic desire for control. <sup>39</sup> 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, killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. <sup>40</sup> But the Creator got the final word by raising

Jesus from the dead on the third day. <sup>41</sup> The resurrected Jesus appeared, not to everyone, but to his faithful disciples. Jesus appeared to us and we ate and drank with him after he was raised from the dead. <sup>42</sup> Jesus instructed us to share his message with our words and lives. He is judging the living and the dead and is bringing healing to our broken earth. <sup>43</sup> All the true prophets of the Creator proclaim this truth. All who live by trust in the teachings and Way of Jesus will be free from the prisons and slavery of the Way of Civilization.”

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was speaking, the Creator’s Spirit filled all those who were openly listening to the word of Jesus. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised, Israelite disciples who had come with Peter were stunned. The gift of the Creator’s Spirit was filling these uncircumcised, Roman foreigners. <sup>46</sup> They heard these foreigners proclaiming the truth of the Creator in many different languages. Then Peter said,

<sup>47</sup> “How can we not baptize them with water into the Body of Christ? They have clearly received the Creator’s Spirit as we have!”

<sup>48</sup> So Peter baptized them into the Way of Jesus. Through this they pledged their allegiance to Jesus as the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth. Then they asked Peter to stay awhile so he might teach them everything he could about Jesus. <sup>11.1</sup> News of these Roman foreigners receiving the Creator’s word spread to all the Body of Christ. <sup>2</sup> So when Peter returned to Jerusalem, many circumcised followers of Jesus began judging him. <sup>3</sup> They said,

“You broke our laws! You shared a table with men who are not circumcised!”

<sup>4</sup> Peter began carefully explaining what had happened. He said,

<sup>5</sup> “While I was praying in Joppa, I saw a vision of a great sheet coming down from the sky. <sup>6</sup> As I stared at it, I saw every kind of animal and bird gathered upon it. <sup>7</sup> Then I heard a voice saying to me,

‘Get up, Peter! Sacrifice these creatures and eat.’

<sup>8</sup> I said,

‘Never, Lord! I have always followed the Law of Moses and will never eat anything dirty and unclean!’

<sup>9</sup> The voice spoke to me again, answering,

‘All of the Creator’s creation is good and sacred, do not call it dirty and unclean.’

<sup>10</sup> This happened three times and then the sheet went away. <sup>11</sup> Then immediately after this, three men from Caesarea were at the door of the house looking for me. <sup>12</sup> The Creator’s Spirit told me to meet with them without judging them for being Roman foreigners. These six fellow members of the Body of Christ, standing with me here, came along and we entered a house in Caesarea. <sup>13</sup> There we met Cornelius, a Roman military officer. He told us of how he saw a messenger from the Creator standing in his house. The messenger said to him,

‘Send some men to Joppa to summon a man named Simon Peter.

<sup>14</sup> Peter will proclaim a message to you that will save you and your household.’

<sup>15</sup> When I taught them about Jesus, the Creator’s Spirit filled them, like it had with us in the beginning. <sup>16</sup> Then I remembered what the Lord Jesus used to teach us,

‘John the Baptist baptized with water, but you will also be baptized and immersed in the Creator’s Spirit.’

<sup>17</sup> These foreigners trusted my message and pledged their allegiance to the Lord Jesus as the Chosen Ruler of the earth. The Creator responded by giving them the exact same gift that he also gave us. Therefore, who are we to try and stop what the Creator is doing?!”

<sup>18</sup> When they heard these things, they backed down and began declaring the greatness of the Creator. They said,

“Wow! The Creator is even changing the lives of Romans and foreigners! The Way of Jesus is for the people of every nation!”

### **The Lord Brings Justice † Acts 11:19—12:24**

<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, many of the disciples, who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death, went west to the island of Cyprus. Another large group went north into Syrian Antioch, one of the wealthiest and largest cities in the Roman Empire. In this city of around 500,000 people, they proclaimed the Way of Jesus to everyone who was devoted to the Jerusalem temple. <sup>20</sup> Some men from Cyprus and northern Africa then expanded this ministry in Syrian Antioch by also teaching Israelites of Greek culture the Way and Gospel of the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The hand of the Creator was with them. A good number of these Greek Israelites turned to the Lord Jesus and began living by trust in the Creator. <sup>22</sup> The news about these conversions came to the

Body of Christ in Jerusalem. So they sent Barnabas, who had left his life of wealth behind, to help preach the Gospel in wealthy Syrian Antioch. <sup>23</sup> Barnabas rejoiced when he saw the Creator generously at work in the city. He joined in by teaching the disciples how to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus while living in the midst of Civilization's wealth. <sup>24</sup> Barnabas was filled with the Creator's Spirit. His faithful obedience to the Way of Jesus caused a number of others to join the community of the Body of Christ. <sup>25</sup> Barnabas then traveled to Tarsus to find Saul. <sup>26</sup> After finding him in 43 AD, Barnabas brought Saul back to Syrian Antioch to help him teach the Way of Jesus. There they gathered together with the Body of Christ for a whole year, preaching to the crowds and training the first group of Christian disciples in Syrian Antioch.

<sup>27</sup> In the spring of 44 AD, a group of prophets from Jerusalem came to Syrian Antioch. <sup>28</sup> One of them named Agabus foresaw, through the power of the Creator's Spirit, that a great famine was about to fall upon all Roman Civilization. This famine took place from 45 to 48 AD because of great flooding on the Nile River. <sup>29</sup> The disciples in Syrian Antioch did not react in fear by turning to the Roman Empire for help or storing up possessions for themselves. Instead, they decided to live by trust in the Creator by sharing their resources with the poor members of the Body of Christ in Israel. <sup>30</sup> They sent these gifts to the Body of Christ through the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

<sup>12.1</sup> During that same season, Herod Agrippa arrested some members of the Body of Christ. Herod Agrippa was the ruler of the region of Israel and also the grandson of Herod the Great. <sup>2</sup> He had Jacob Zebedee, who was the brother of John, beheaded. <sup>3</sup> This was pleasing to those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. Herod Agrippa then arrested Peter during the Passover Festival. He hoped to destroy the Body of Christ by killing its leaders. <sup>4</sup> Herod Agrippa planned to publicly kill Peter after the Passover was over. Wanting to be absolutely certain that Peter could not escape, he placed Peter in prison under the watch of sixteen guards. <sup>5</sup> While Peter was being held under guard, the Body of Christ was intensely praying on his behalf to the Creator. <sup>6</sup> The night before his planned death, Peter was trustfully sleeping. He was physically chained to two guards while the locked prison door was being watched by the other fourteen guards. <sup>7</sup> 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. The messenger said,

"Quickly, get up!"

The chains fell off Peter's hands. <sup>8</sup> The messenger said to him,

"Put on your sandals!"

Peter did this. Then the messenger said to Peter,

"Grab your coat and follow me!"

<sup>9</sup> Peter began following him without knowing what was happening—he thought he was dreaming. <sup>10</sup> After going past two sets of guards, they came to the iron gate and it opened by itself for them. As they started going down a back alley, suddenly the messenger was gone. <sup>11</sup> Then Peter suddenly realized what was going on. He said,



“Wow! The Lord Jesus sent his messenger to rescue me from being killed!”

<sup>12</sup> Peter went to the community’s main house in Jerusalem, which was the house of Mary, the mother of the Gospel-writer John Mark. A large group of disciples had gathered there to pray. <sup>13</sup> When Peter knocked at the door, a young woman named Rhoda came to see who it was. <sup>14</sup> As soon as she recognized Peter’s voice, she excitedly forgot to open the door. She ran back to the disciples to tell them that Peter was at the door. <sup>15</sup> The disciples 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.”

<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile Peter continued to persistently knock on the door. When they finally opened the door, they saw Peter and were beside themselves. <sup>17</sup> Peter silenced their excited chatter and described to them how the Creator rescued him from prison. Then he said,

“Report these things to Jacob the brother of Jesus and the rest of the Body of Christ. Reassure them that the Creator is watching over us!”

Peter then left town. <sup>18</sup> When dawn came, the prison guards discovered that Peter was gone and they were greatly upset. <sup>19</sup> 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 Caesarea, the Roman capital of the province. <sup>20</sup> He went there to continue his political and economic battle with the wealthy 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. <sup>21</sup> So in the summer of 44 AD, Herod Agrippa gathered them 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 offered his people. <sup>22</sup> The crowd began chanting,

“This is not the voice of a man, this is the voice of a god!”

<sup>23</sup> Immediately, a messenger from the Creator caused Herod Agrippa to drop dead in his arrogance. Herod Agrippa was torn down from his lofty place of wealth and power and became food for worms. <sup>24</sup> As a result of the Creator’s intervention to rescue Peter and strike down this ruler, the Way of Jesus continued to spread and the number of faithful disciples grew.

### **The Struggle Into the Creator’s Rule † Acts 12:25—14:28**

<sup>25</sup> After delivering their gifts to the Body of Christ in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul returned to Syrian Antioch in 46 AD. They took the Gospel-writer John Mark with them. <sup>13.1</sup> The Body of Christ in Syrian Antioch had a number of prophets and teachers. They were Barnabas, Simeon Black, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who grew up with Herod Antipas, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were doing the work of the Lord Jesus and keeping their appetites in check by going without food, the Creator’s Spirit spoke to them. The Spirit said,

“Barnabas and Saul need to drop everything they are doing. I am calling them to go on a mission for me.”

<sup>3</sup> So, after more time for prayer and going without food, the Body of Christ sent Barnabas and Saul out on a mission in 48 AD.

<sup>4</sup> Led by the Creator's Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went to the coast and sailed to Barnabas's island home of Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> Starting on the east end of Cyprus, they began announcing the word of the Creator in the synagogues of those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. They had the help of the Gospel-writer John Mark. <sup>6</sup> From there they went west across the island to Paphos. There they came across a man devoted to the Jerusalem temple who called himself Barjesus, meaning "Child of Jesus." He practiced magic and falsely claimed to be a prophet and follower of Jesus. <sup>7</sup> He was also an advisor for the intelligent Roman governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paul. This governor was interested in listening to the word of the Creator and so he summoned Barnabas and Saul. <sup>8</sup> But the false prophet Barjesus, who also called himself Wiseman, began opposing Barnabas and Saul. He did not want the Roman governor to trust their word and teachings about Jesus. <sup>9</sup> But Saul, who took on the name Paul in honor of this governor's courage, was filled with the Creator's Spirit and stood firm against Barjesus. <sup>10</sup> Paul said to him,

"Your whole life is a lie! You are a child of Civilization's satanic desire for control! You are an enemy of true justice for you are constantly twisting and distorting the Way of the Lord Jesus. <sup>11</sup> Look! The hand of the Lord is revealing the truth of what you are. You will be blind and unable to see for a time."

Immediately, darkness fell upon Barjesus and he started stumbling around looking for someone to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup> Watching this take place, the Roman governor turned away from the Way of Civilization to live by trust in the Way of Jesus. He risked everything, even his life, by proclaiming that Jesus and not the Roman emperor was the true Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Finishing their work in Cyprus, Barnabas and Paul went north across the Mediterranean Sea to the province of Pamphylia. The Gospel-writer John Mark, however, decided to turn back to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> After readings from the Law of Moses and the Prophets, the leaders of the gathering spoke to Barnabas and Paul. They said,

"Fellow Israelites! If one of you has a word to share with the people, then please speak to us."

<sup>16</sup> So Paul stood up, lifted his hand, and said,

"Israelites and those fearing the Creator! Listen and pay close attention!

<sup>17</sup> The Creator chose our ancestors to be his people. And when they were foreigners in Egypt, he used his power to lift them out of their oppression and rescue them from slavery to the Way of Civilization.

<sup>18</sup> Then, for forty years in the wilderness, he was patiently providing for them and protecting them with his presence. <sup>19</sup> After taking down the seven nations in Canaan, he gave them that land in which to dwell. <sup>20</sup> He gave them judges to lead them for over 450 years until the time of the prophet Samuel. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> After removing Saul as ruler, the Creator chose a lowly shepherd named David to replace him. He said in 1 Samuel 13,

*'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.'*

<sup>23</sup> Then according to his faithful promise, the Creator brought Israel a rescuer from David's family line—his name is Jesus. <sup>24</sup> John the Baptist proclaimed a baptism into a new way of thinking. This was to prepare all the people of Israel to listen to the Way of Jesus. <sup>25</sup> While John the Baptist was faithfully doing this, he was saying,

*'Who do you think I am?! I am not the one to rescue the creation from slavery to the Way of Civilization. Look! He is coming after me and I am not even worthy to touch his feet!'*

<sup>26</sup> 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! <sup>27</sup> But those in Jerusalem and their rulers did not understand the Way of Jesus. So they unintentionally fulfilled the words of our prophets by condemning Jesus to death. <sup>28</sup> Even though the Roman governor could not find one legal reason to kill Jesus, the Israelite authorities still begged the governor to crucify him. <sup>29</sup> Then, after all these things written about Jesus were completed, he was taken down from the cross and buried. <sup>30</sup> But the Creator intervened and raised Jesus from the dead. <sup>31</sup> Jesus then appeared for many days to those who had left everything behind to follow him. These disciples of Jesus are now his living presence and witness to the people.

<sup>32</sup> Therefore, we are now declaring to you the Gospel of the Creator's Rule. This is the same one he promised to our ancestors! <sup>33</sup> The Creator has brought his Rule upon the earth and upon us by raising Jesus from the dead. As it is written in Psalm 2,

*'You are my child, today I have given birth to you and become your Father.'*

<sup>34</sup> The Creator raised Jesus from the dead and rescued him from decay. Therefore, he said in Isaiah 55,

*'For you, I will faithfully fulfill all the promises I made to David.'*

<sup>35</sup> And it also says in Psalm 16,

*'You will not allow the one who lives in your faithful Way to experience decay.'*

<sup>36</sup> After serving the Creator's purpose in his generation, David was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. <sup>37</sup> But Jesus was faithful where David was not. The Creator raised Jesus from the dead and he did not experience decay.

<sup>38</sup> Therefore, my fellow Israelites, know this! Because of the Creator's work through Jesus, freedom from all the debts and slaveries of Civilization is being announced to you. You were not able to be changed into people of true justice through the Law of Moses. <sup>39</sup> But, through Jesus, all those who live by trust in the Creator are being changed into people of true justice. <sup>40</sup> Therefore, watch out and pay

attention! You do not want what was spoken in Habakkuk 1 to come upon you.

*<sup>41</sup> 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 refuse to change your ways and trust in me, even if someone leads you by the hand.”*

<sup>42</sup> When the gathering was finished, they asked Paul and Barnabas to speak to them about these matters after the Sabbath day was over. <sup>43</sup> Many of them left the teachings of the synagogue to follow the teachings of Paul and Barnabas about living in the Creator’s generosity.

<sup>44</sup> On the next Sabbath day, almost the whole city gathered to listen to the word and teachings of the Lord Jesus. <sup>45</sup> Seeing the crowds, those devoted to the Jerusalem temple were filled with jealousy. So they began attacking Paul and the things he was teaching. <sup>46</sup> Confidently, Paul and Barnabas responded,

“It was necessary to speak the word of the Creator to you Israelites first. But you are pushing it away and are unwilling to embrace the eternal life of Jesus’s Way. Therefore, we must now turn our attention to the other nations of the earth. <sup>47</sup> For the Lord himself commanded us in Isaiah 49,  
*‘I have created you to be a light to all the nations of the earth. You exist to help bring freedom and rescue to all corners of the earth.’”*

<sup>48</sup> Listening to these words, those from the other nations began rejoicing and praising the word of the Lord Jesus. All those who embraced the eternal life of Jesus’s Way began living by trust in the Creator. <sup>49</sup> This caused the word of the Lord Jesus to begin spreading throughout the region of Galatia. <sup>50</sup> Those devoted to the Jerusalem temple then turned the wealthy women and the most powerful people in Pisidian Antioch against Paul and Barnabas. They hunted them down and threw them out of the city. <sup>51</sup> Paul and Barnabas followed Jesus’s command and shook the dust off their feet as a warning against them. Then they went to the Galatian city of Iconium. <sup>52</sup> In the face of this persecution, all the disciples of Jesus in that region were filled with joy and the Creator’s Spirit.

<sup>14.1</sup> In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spoke in the sacred gathering place of those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. A large crowd of them, as well as some Greeks, then started living by trust in the Way of Jesus. <sup>2</sup> But some of 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 disciples of Jesus. <sup>3</sup> But Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in the city for a significant amount of time. They were confidently teaching the Way of Jesus while the Creator did miraculous things through their hands. <sup>4</sup> The word of Jesus divided the loyalty of the city. Some sided with those devoted to the Jerusalem temple and some sided with Jesus’s representatives. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> So Paul and Barnabas fled south and east into the area of Lystra and Derbe.

<sup>7</sup> In the region of Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas began declaring the Gospel of the Creator's Rule. <sup>8</sup> In Lystra, there was a paralyzed man who had been disabled from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> After the paralyzed man listened to the teachings of Jesus, Paul stared at him and saw the trust that was growing in his heart. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Seeing what Paul had done, the crowds started crying out in their own language, saying,

“The gods have taken human form and have come to dwell among us!”

<sup>12</sup> They began calling Barnabas, “Zeus,” and then Paul, “Hermes,” because he was the main speaker. <sup>13</sup> The temple-caretaker of Zeus, who was outside the city with the crowds, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates. They wanted to make sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. <sup>14</sup> When they heard about this, Barnabas and Paul tore their clothes in protest and rushed into the crowd.

<sup>15</sup> They shouted,

“Why are you doing this?! We are humans like you! We have been declaring the Gospel of the Creator's Rule so you will turn away from these useless practices of Civilization! You should only worship the living Creator, for he made heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. <sup>16</sup> In times past, the Creator gave all the nations over to their own ways. <sup>17</sup> Yet he was always patiently appealing to you by giving you rain and fruitful seasons. He filled your lives with food and well-being.”

<sup>18</sup> After saying these things, they were barely able to keep the crowds from sacrificing to them. <sup>19</sup> After this, some of those devoted to the Jerusalem temple arrived from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium. They turned the crowds against Jesus. They violently threw stones at Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing they had successfully killed him. <sup>20</sup> But the disciples surrounded Paul and he miraculously stood up and returned to the city. The next day, Paul and Barnabas went east to the city of Derbe. <sup>21</sup> There they declared the Gospel of the Creator's Rule and trained a decent group of disciples. Then they went back through the same cities in Galatia that had rejected them and almost killed them. <sup>22</sup> In those cities they strengthened the disciples of Jesus and encouraged them to stand firm in faithfulness to Jesus. They said,

“If we faithfully follow the Creator's Rule, then we will face trouble, rejection, and oppression like our Lord Jesus did. These are gifts that help us let go of ourselves so we may hold on to the Creator alone.”

<sup>23</sup> Then, after a time of prayer and no food, they chose leaders for each new community of the Body of Christ and entrusted them into the hands of the Creator. <sup>24</sup> Following this, they returned to the province of Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup> They taught the Way of Jesus to the people there. <sup>26</sup> Then in 49 AD they returned to Syrian Antioch where they had been chosen for this mission and journey. <sup>27</sup> There they gathered with the Body of Christ 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 trust in the Way of Jesus. <sup>28</sup> They remained with the disciples of Jesus in Syrian Antioch for about a year.

**Staying Free of Civilization's Way † Acts 15:1-35**

<sup>15.1</sup> Some Israelites came to Syrian Antioch and began teaching the disciples of Jesus. They said,

“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 be saved from the Way of Civilization!”

<sup>2</sup> Paul and Barnabas passionately fought against this message. They tried to figure out who these men were and where they had come from. Then Paul, Barnabas, and some other members from the Body of Christ in Syrian Antioch were summoned to Jerusalem. They were to bring this debate before the representatives and elders of the Body of Christ. <sup>3</sup> So they went south through Phoenicia and Samaria. On the journey, they brought great joy to all the disciples of Jesus they encountered. They explained to everyone how people from the nations were changing their ways of thinking and starting to live by trust in the Creator. <sup>4</sup> They arrived in Jerusalem in the spring of 50 AD. They were welcomed by the Body of Christ, including the representatives and elders. They shared everything that the Creator had been doing in Syrian Antioch and on their mission journey to Galatia. <sup>5</sup> Some from the political party of the Pharisees, who were following Jesus, stood up. They said,

“It is absolutely necessary to circumcise any converts from the nations and direct them to obey the Law of Moses!”

<sup>6</sup> So the representatives and elders gathered together to sort through this argument. <sup>7</sup> After the group spent a good amount of time investigating the issue, Peter stood up. He said to the leaders of the Body of Christ,

“Brothers! You are most certainly aware that some time ago the Creator chose some Romans to listen to the word of the Gospel through my mouth. These Romans left the Way of Civilization behind to live by trust in the Way of Jesus. <sup>8</sup> The Creator, who knows the hearts of all, revealed this to us by giving them the same Spirit of Jesus that he gave to us. <sup>9</sup> By changing their hearts and lives through trust in Jesus, he revealed to us that there is no difference between us and them.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, why are you now challenging the Creator?! Why are you putting a bond of slavery upon the necks of Jesus’s disciples, which neither our ancestors nor we ourselves have been strong enough to carry?! <sup>11</sup> Even we ourselves are trusting that we are rescued through the generosity and Way of the Lord Jesus and not through Moses’s Law!”

<sup>12</sup> The whole gathering was silenced by these words. Then they began listening to Barnabas and Paul explain all the miraculous work that the Creator had done among the nations on their journey. <sup>13</sup> After Barnabas and Paul were finished speaking, Jacob the brother of Jesus spoke to the assembly. He said,

“Brothers and sisters, listen carefully. <sup>14</sup> Simon Peter has explained to us how the Creator first began bringing the nations into the Body of Christ.

<sup>15</sup> The words of Amos 9 agree with this.

*<sup>16</sup> ‘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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> And I will spread it throughout this age.'*

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, we must not burden those from the nations who are turning to the Lord Jesus by making them adopt the culture of our people. <sup>20</sup> However, we will write them a letter, instructing them not to corrupt themselves with the Way of Civilization. They must keep away from these practices—trusting in money, violence, and technology, using others for sexual pleasure and social gain, and eating meat from the empire's abusive food industry. <sup>21</sup> For keeping free from the seductive and destructive Way of Civilization was always the heart of Moses's message. This has been proclaimed everywhere among our people for generations."

<sup>22</sup> So the Body of Christ, under the lead of the representatives and elders, chose Judah Barsabbas and Silas to go with Paul and Barnabas to Syrian Antioch.

<sup>23</sup> They were to deliver this letter with their own hands,

"Greetings from the representatives, elders, and Body of Christ to the faithful brothers and sisters throughout the Roman Empire. <sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> We collectively decided to send you a couple men along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul. <sup>26</sup> These men have given their lives on behalf of our Lord Jesus, who is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of all the earth.

<sup>27</sup> Therefore, we sent Judah Barsabbas and Silas to teach you and report to you concerning these things. <sup>28</sup> The Creator's Spirit made it clear to us that you must only be burdened with what is absolutely necessary.

<sup>29</sup> You must keep away from these practices of Civilization—trusting in money, violence, and technology, using others for sexual pleasure and social gain, and eating meat from the empire's abusive food industry. If you carefully keep yourselves free from the Way of Civilization you will do well. Farewell!"

<sup>30</sup> So in the summer of 50 AD, the four men went to Syrian Antioch and shared the letter with the followers of Jesus. <sup>31</sup> After hearing it, the Body of Christ rejoiced at the decision. <sup>32</sup> Judah Barsabbas and Silas, who were prophets, challenged and encouraged the brothers and sisters so they might faithfully stand firm in the Way of Jesus. <sup>33-34</sup> After a time, the Body of Christ in Syrian Antioch sent Judah Barsabbas and Silas back to Jerusalem. <sup>35</sup> Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed in Syrian Antioch to continue teaching the Gospel and word of the Lord Jesus.

## IX. The Spirit Disrupts Civilization † Acts 15:36—22:22

### Freeing Civilization's Prisoners † Acts 15:36—17:14

<sup>36</sup> After a number of days in Syrian Antioch, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back to all the communities of the Body of Christ that we helped form on our journey. I want to see how our brothers and sisters are holding up."

<sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take the Gospel-writer John Mark with them. <sup>38</sup> But Paul did not want to. John Mark had left them before they got to Galatia and had not been there when they helped form those communities. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> In the fall of 50 AD, Paul took Silas with him after being given the Lord's blessing by the brothers and sisters in Syrian Antioch. <sup>41</sup> Paul and Silas began going north and then west into Asia Minor through Paul's homeland. Along the way they were helping the communities of the Body of Christ stand firm in their faithfulness. <sup>16.1</sup> When they arrived in the Galatian cities of Derbe and Lystra, they found a young disciple named Timothy. Timothy's mom was an Israelite follower of Jesus while his dad was Greek. <sup>2</sup> The disciples in Galatia were amazed at the faith of Timothy. <sup>3</sup> Seeing this, Paul began personally training Timothy in Jesus's Way. Because all the Israelites knew the heritage of Timothy's mom, Paul followed Israelite tradition and circumcised Timothy. <sup>4</sup> In all the cities they traveled through, Paul and Silas shared the command about staying free of the Way of Civilization. <sup>5</sup> All the communities of the Body of Christ they visited were growing both in their faithfulness and in size.

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> But in the north, the doors were also closed to their message and so the Spirit of Jesus pushed them onward. <sup>8</sup> They went west to the city of Troas, on the northwestern coast of Asia Minor. <sup>9</sup> One night while they were there, Paul had a dream of a man from the northeastern part of Greece. The man said to Paul, "Come to the province of Macedonia to help us!"

<sup>10</sup> On the next day, I—your narrator—joined Paul's group. We immediately began figuring out how we could get to the province of Macedonia. We were convinced that the Creator was calling us to declare the Gospel of Jesus in that place. <sup>11</sup> So we left Troas and sailed northwest to the city of Neapolis. <sup>12</sup> From there we went to the Roman colony of Philippi, which was the heart of Roman culture in that part of the province of Macedonia. We began staying there for some time. <sup>13</sup> On the Sabbath, we went outside the city and down to the river. We thought we might find a gathering place for prayer there. Finding what we were looking for, we sat down and began speaking to the women who had gathered. <sup>14</sup> A woman named Lydia, who was fearing the Creator and was a dealer of expensive purple cloth, began listening to the Way of Jesus. The Lord opened her heart to the words of Paul. <sup>15</sup> So she and her household were



baptized into Jesus's story and they completely changed their lives. Lydia then urged the disciples, 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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 a person's life. Her owners were running a business and were getting extremely rich by using and exploiting this power of hers. <sup>17</sup> She began following us around and shouting,

"These people are servants of the Lord of all creation! They are announcing to you the way of freedom!"

<sup>18</sup> 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, who is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth, to leave this girl alone!"

And in that moment the girl was freed. <sup>19</sup> When her owners saw their way of making money disappear, they arrested Paul and Silas. They dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers of the city. <sup>20</sup> They said to the police officers and rulers,

"These men are disturbing our city! <sup>21</sup> They are living and teaching a way of life that goes against the most basic values of being a Roman!"

<sup>22</sup> The crowd was furious. So the police officers ripped off Paul's and Silas's clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> After severely beating them, they threw Paul and Silas into prison and ordered the prison-guards to watch them closely. <sup>24</sup> So the prison-guards put them under the tightest possible guard and locked up their ankles in a block of wood. <sup>25</sup> At midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs to the Creator while the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly, a great earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. Immediately, all the prison doors were opened and all the restraints came undone. <sup>27</sup> Waking up and seeing the prison doors wide open, the prison-guard drew his sword. He was going to kill himself rather than be killed for letting the prisoners escape. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted to him,

"Do not kill yourself! We are all still here!"

<sup>29</sup> Calling for a lantern, the prison-guard rushed in and fell before Paul and Silas. The guard was shaking in fear. <sup>30</sup> He brought them out of their prison cell and to his home. The prison-guard asked the prisoners,

"What must I do to be freed and saved from the Way of Civilization?"

<sup>31</sup> They said,

"Live by faith in Jesus as the true Lord and then you and your household will experience true freedom and salvation."

<sup>32</sup> So Paul and Silas taught him the Way of the Lord Jesus, along with all those in his household. <sup>33</sup> The prison-guard responded by washing their wounds. Then the prison-guard and all his family were baptized into the Way of Jesus. They began obeying Jesus as the only Lord. <sup>34</sup> Following this, they entered the house. The prison-guard prepared a meal for them while rejoicing about his

new life under the Creator's care. <sup>35</sup> When it became day, the police captains sent some officers to the prison. They said,

"Release those men."

<sup>36</sup> 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!"

<sup>37</sup> Paul responded,

"So they whipped and punished Roman citizens without a fair trial! Then they 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."

<sup>38</sup> The police officers reported all this to the police captains. They were terrified of the possibility of being severely punished for mistreating Roman citizens. <sup>39</sup> So the police captains personally went to Paul and Silas and begged them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup> Paul and Silas honored their request. They visited Lydia and the other disciples and then they left Philippi while I remained behind.

<sup>17:1</sup> Heading west, Paul and Silas came to the city of Thessalonica, where they found a synagogue. <sup>2</sup> According to his pattern, Paul gathered with the Israelites in the synagogue. Over the course of three Sabbaths he taught them from the Scriptures. <sup>3</sup> He was trying to persuade them by saying,

"It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and then be raised from the dead. This Jesus I am teaching you about is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth!"

<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> But a group of those devoted to the Jerusalem temple became jealous of these conversions. They 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. <sup>6</sup> When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the other disciples to the city leaders. They cried out,

"The followers of Jesus, who are revolting against Civilization itself, are now in our city! <sup>7</sup> 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!"

<sup>8</sup> This news deeply disturbed the crowd and the city leaders. <sup>9</sup> So they heavily fined Jason and the other disciples before releasing them. <sup>10</sup> That night, Paul and Silas snuck out of the city and went to Berea. When Paul and Silas got to Berea they went to the Israelite synagogue. <sup>11</sup> These Israelites in Berea were much more receptive than those in Thessalonica. They passionately listened to the word of Jesus. They spent time every day studying the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup> Many of them, along with a considerable number of Greek women and men of high class, completely changed their lives to live by trust in Jesus's Way. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Paul was forced to escape town on a boat, while Silas and Timothy were able to stay behind.

### Judging Civilization † Acts 17:15—18:22

<sup>15</sup> The boat brought Paul to Athens, which was the center of religious, economic, and political ideas in the Roman Empire. Paul then sent a message back to Silas and Timothy, requesting them to join him in southern Greece.

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them to join him, the Creator's Spirit caused him to become irritated. He saw how Athens was centered on arrogantly trusting in human intelligence, wisdom, and technology. <sup>17</sup> So Paul began spending every day in the synagogue addressing those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. He would also speak to anyone who would listen in the public gathering places.

<sup>18</sup> Paul came across some Epicureans, who believed that the divine was completely separate from the material world. He also encountered some Stoics, who believed that the divine is one and the same as the material world. They gathered to exchange ideas with Paul. They listened to Paul declare that the Creator's Rule had arrived through Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. Some of them said,

“What on earth is this man teaching?!”

And others said,

“Like Socrates, whom we killed, he is teaching ideas that challenge everything important to us!”

<sup>19</sup> So they arrested Paul and brought him before the Mars Hill Council, which judged who was worthy of death. They said to Paul,

“We have the right to know this new way of life you are teaching. <sup>20</sup> You are a guest in our city and are trying to persuade us with your ideas. So tell us exactly what you are saying!”

<sup>21</sup> All the residents and visitors of Athens would spend their free-time discussing the latest ideas of politics and economics. <sup>22</sup> So standing in the middle of the Mars Hill Council, Paul said,

“Men of Athens! I see that you have great respect for all ideas and spiritual forces. <sup>23</sup> While observing your city and your sacred things, I 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 honor unknowingly!

<sup>24</sup> The one who created the earth and everything in it is the true Lord. He alone owns all heaven and earth. He does not dwell in things made by human hands. <sup>25</sup> He needs nothing from humans and cannot be controlled by them. He generously gives life, breath, and provision to all creatures. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the peoples of the earth. He has overseen and ordered their movements and boundaries through all time. <sup>27</sup> The Creator desires for humanity to seek after him and live under his Rule. He wants all people to touch and find him in the creation. Indeed, the Creator is not far away from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> Through him

we receive all life, movement, and being. Even one of your own, Aratus, has said,

“We are born and exist through him.”

<sup>29</sup> Therefore, because we have received our existence from the Creator, we must recognize that he cannot be contained in the works and technologies of human hands. <sup>30</sup> 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 turn away from the Way of Civilization. <sup>31</sup> 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.”

<sup>32</sup> 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.”

<sup>33</sup> Then, like Jesus had done in Nazareth, Paul was able to walk right through this gathered group without being harmed. <sup>34</sup> Dionysius of the Mars Hills Council, a woman named Damaris, and a few others joined Paul and began living by trust in the Creator.

<sup>18.1</sup> After this trial, Paul left Athens and went west to Corinth. Corinth was one of the wealthiest cities in the Roman Empire and it was known for its luxurious and immoral lifestyle. <sup>2</sup> Arriving in the city in 51 AD, Paul found an Israelite husband and wife—Aquila and Priscilla. They had recently come from Rome after Emperor Claudius ordered all Israelites to leave the city. This happened in 50 AD after a disturbance arose over claims that Jesus was the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth. <sup>3</sup> Because all three of them had the same skill as tentmakers, Paul began working and staying with them. <sup>4</sup> Every Sabbath, Paul addressed the people in the synagogue, trying to persuade both Hebrew and Greek Israelites to follow the Way of Jesus. <sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy arrived from the province of Macedonia, Paul was energized. The word of Jesus drove Paul to even more intensely proclaim to those devoted to the Jerusalem temple that Jesus was the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth.

<sup>6</sup> When they persistently opposed and spoke against him, Paul obeyed Jesus’s teachings by shaking the dust off his clothes. He said 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.”

<sup>7</sup> Paul then began staying with a Roman man named Titius Justus, who worshiped the Creator and whose house was next door to the synagogue.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> One night the Lord Jesus came to Paul in a dream and said,

“Do not fear! Speak the truth and do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> I am with you and nothing will harm you in this city because of my people here.”

<sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed in Corinth for one year and six months, teaching the Creator's word. <sup>12</sup> While Gallio was the Roman governor of southern Greece, those devoted to the Jerusalem temple collectively opposed Paul and dragged him before the governor. <sup>13</sup> They said,

“This man is persuading people to follow the Creator without obeying the law!”

<sup>14</sup> Before Paul could respond, Gallio said to them,

“If this was about some sort of injustice against Roman law, then I would listen to you. <sup>15</sup> 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!”

<sup>16</sup> Then Gallio drove them out of his court. <sup>17</sup> But they grabbed Sosthenes, who was the new leader of the synagogue. They started beating him in the governor's sight because of his sympathy to the Way of Jesus. But Gallio walked away and ignored them all.

<sup>18</sup> After staying a significant time longer with the Body of Christ in Corinth, Paul finally said goodbye in 53 AD. He sailed away with Priscilla and Aquila. Preparing to return to Jerusalem, Paul cut his hair. He did this to ritually cleanse himself of his time among the nations. He also did it to give thanks to the Creator for his protection during the mission work. <sup>19</sup> The boat stopped in Ephesus on the western coast of Asia Minor. Priscilla and Aquila stayed behind in Ephesus to do the work of the Lord Jesus. During this stop, Paul went into the synagogue to address those devoted to the Jerusalem temple. <sup>20</sup> They asked Paul to stay for a long time, but he refused. <sup>21</sup> He 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. <sup>22</sup> After the boat docked in Caesarea, he traveled to Jerusalem. After embracing the Body of Christ in Jerusalem, he returned to Syrian Antioch where his journey had begun.

### Upsetting Civilization † Acts 18:23—20:1

<sup>23</sup> After spending some time in Syrian Antioch, Paul returned to the province of Galatia. He wanted to help support those communities of the Body of Christ in their spiritual growth. <sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, a well-spoken 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. <sup>25</sup> After hearing about the Way of the Lord Jesus, Apollos began passionately teaching about Jesus in Ephesus. However, Apollos was only 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. <sup>26</sup> After listening to him confidently teach in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and corrected his misunderstanding of the Creator's Way. <sup>27</sup> Apollos then wanted to go to Greece, so the brothers and sisters sent him there along with a letter of recommendation. Arriving in Corinth, Apollos gathered with many who had embraced the Creator's generosity and left Civilization's Way to follow Jesus's Way. <sup>28</sup> Apollos then began intensely correcting those devoted to the Jerusalem

temple. He was showing everyone through the Scriptures that Jesus was indeed the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth.

<sup>19</sup><sup>1</sup> In 54 AD, while Apollos was teaching in Corinth, Paul traveled from central Asia Minor to its western coast to visit the disciples in Ephesus. <sup>2</sup> Paul said to them,

“Were you filled with the Creator’s Spirit when you started trusting in Jesus?”

They said to Paul,

“No. What is the Creator’s Spirit?”

<sup>3</sup> Paul responded,

“Then what baptism did you receive?”

They answered,

“John the Baptist’s baptism.”

<sup>4</sup> Paul replied,

“John the Baptist’s baptism was about changing one’s way of thinking to be prepared for the arrival of the Creator’s Rule through trust in Jesus.”

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> When Paul physically embraced and welcomed them into the Body of Christ, the Creator’s Spirit filled them. Then they began speaking the truth of the Creator without any cultural or language constraints. <sup>7</sup> As Jesus had begun his new community with twelve representatives, there were twelve men who were the start of this new community of the Body of Christ in Ephesus. <sup>8</sup> Entering the synagogue, Paul then began confidently teaching the Israelites for three months about the Creator’s Rule. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For two years Paul taught the disciples 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.

<sup>11</sup> During this time, the Creator began doing miraculous things through the hands of Paul. <sup>12</sup> Paul’s fame became so great that anything which even touched him was brought to those who were in need of healing. They hoped that they would experience the Creator’s power through Paul and be rescued from their physical, social, and spiritual slavery. <sup>13</sup> 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 slavery. They were saying,

“I take control of you through Jesus, the one Paul is proclaiming!”

<sup>14</sup> These exorcists were the seven sons of Sceva, who was one of the Roman-chosen leaders of the temple-caretakers. <sup>15</sup> 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?!”

<sup>16</sup> Then this possessed man attacked and overpowered all seven of them. He beat them, stripped them naked, and exposed them as powerless frauds. <sup>17</sup> This incident became known to everyone living in Ephesus. Fear and respect for the power and name of the Lord Jesus spread everywhere. <sup>18</sup> Many also started trusting the Creator and leaving the Way of Civilization behind to declare loyalty to Jesus. <sup>19</sup> One group that had been pursuing the Way of Civilization brought forward their treasured books. The books were worth over 150 years' pay and they publicly burned them for all to see. <sup>20</sup> In ways like this, the word of the Lord Jesus was growing and spreading throughout the region surrounding Ephesus. <sup>21</sup> Having completed his task in this region, Paul was instructed by the Creator's Spirit to travel back through Greece and then finally to Jerusalem. Paul began saying,

“After I have been to Jerusalem, it is necessary for me to go to Rome.”

<sup>22</sup> But after sending two of his coworkers, Timothy and Erastus, into Greece, Paul spent a little more time in Ephesus.

<sup>23</sup> During Paul's final stretch of time in Ephesus, a great disturbance and riot over the Way of Jesus occurred. <sup>24</sup> It all started with a successful businessman named Demetrius. Demetrius fueled the economy of the whole region. He employed a great number of people to make silver dwelling places for Artemis, who was the goddess of child-bearing, abundance, and provision. <sup>25</sup> Demetrius gathered all those involved in this highly successful business. He said to them,

“Men! You are well aware that all of our wealth and success in life is because of our business! <sup>26</sup> 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. He is pulling people out of our way of life and teaching them that the gods and powers of Civilization and technology are nothing. <sup>27</sup> 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 worshiped throughout all Civilization, is being attacked and torn down by the Way of Jesus!”

<sup>28</sup> Hearing that their economic security and patriotic identity were being threatened by Jesus, these businessmen and workers became agitated. They began shouting,

“Artemis of Ephesus is great!”

<sup>29</sup> This stirred up the whole city and thousands of them charged into the theater. They dragged with them Gaius and Aristarchus, who were outsiders traveling with Paul. <sup>30</sup> Paul wanted to confront the crowd in the theater, but the other disciples of Jesus would not allow him. <sup>31</sup> Even some of the leaders of the province were begging Paul not to give himself over to the angry crowd in the theater. <sup>32</sup> Those in the theater then began shouting and arguing with one another, because they were confused and disturbed at the rumors they were hearing. <sup>33</sup> Some 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. <sup>34</sup> But the crowd

recognized that he was an Israelite and not one of their own. Filled with patriotic passion, they shouted in unison for about two hours,

“Artemis of Ephesus is great!”

<sup>35</sup> The city’s spokesman showed up. After quieting the angry crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus! Everyone in Civilization knows 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. <sup>36</sup> Because of these facts it is necessary for you to calm down before you do something embarrassing that you will regret. <sup>37</sup> These men you are upset at have not been robbing our temples nor are they attacking our god. <sup>38</sup> If Demetrius and his business partners and workers have a complaint against someone, then they need to go through the proper channels. <sup>39</sup> If you are seeking some sort of justice, then you must go through the legal community and the Roman governors. <sup>40</sup> We need to stop this, for we are in danger of getting in trouble with the Roman Empire for rioting today. We have no legal reason for assembling like this!”

<sup>41</sup> After saying these things, he ordered everyone to return to their homes.

<sup>20.1</sup> When the riot was over, Paul gathered with the disciples of Jesus to speak with them. He embraced them and departed for northern Greece in 57 AD.

### Death & New Life † Acts 20:2—21:16

<sup>2</sup> Paul went through northern Greece encouraging the communities of the Body of Christ to stand firm in their faithfulness to the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Then he went 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. He went back to Philippi in northern Greece where I, the author, rejoined him. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> This group of seven men continued on alone to Troas where they waited for the rest of us to join them. <sup>6</sup> 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. There we reunited with the other group and then stayed for seven days.

<sup>7</sup> 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 disciples in Troas one last time because he was going to leave the next day. <sup>8</sup> Paul continued teaching all night since there were adequate lamps in the room where we had gathered. <sup>9</sup> At midnight, a young man named Eutychus, meaning “fortunate,” was sitting in the window. Paul’s teachings about Jesus caused him to start falling into a deep sleep. After the words put Eutychus to sleep, he fell out of the window and down three floors and died.

<sup>10</sup> Paul ran down and embraced Eutychus. He said,

“Do not be disturbed! There is still life in him!”

<sup>11</sup> So they went back upstairs, shared bread together, and Paul kept teaching them about Jesus until dawn. <sup>12</sup> They were all deeply encouraged because the



teachings of Jesus had killed Eutychus but then had brought him back to new life.

<sup>13</sup> At dawn we went 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 to be alone in prayer. <sup>14</sup> When Paul joined us in Assos, we picked him up and sailed south. <sup>15</sup> Over the next two days we continued to sail south and then southeast. <sup>16</sup> Paul decided to sail past Ephesus on the western coast of Asia Minor, so as not to be delayed there. He was trying his best to get to Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost in 58 AD. That would be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the pouring out of the Creator's Spirit. <sup>17</sup> So from Miletus, Paul summoned the elders from the Body of Christ in Ephesus. <sup>18</sup> When they came to him, Paul said,

“From the first day that I came into your land, you yourselves have seen how I lived among you. <sup>19</sup> I was a poor and lowly servant for the Lord Jesus. My life was filled with tears because those who are devoted to the Jerusalem temple constantly plotted against me. <sup>20</sup> I held back nothing as I trained you in the Way of Jesus in your homes and in public places. <sup>21</sup> I was a living witness to the Creator's Way of trust in our Lord Jesus. I was a witness to all people, regardless of nationality or culture.

<sup>22</sup> Look! The Creator's Spirit compels me to go to Jerusalem. I do not know what lies ahead of me. <sup>23</sup> I only know that the Creator's Spirit is warning me that I will find imprisonment and suffering in the city. <sup>24</sup> I have let go of my dreams and plans for my life. My only purpose is to faithfully complete the journey 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.

<sup>25</sup> Look! I poured out my life teaching you about the Creator's Rule. But you will never see my face again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, know that I have no blood on my hands. I have done no physical or spiritual violence to you. <sup>27</sup> I did not hold back in any way from boldly teaching you the full and hard truth of the Creator. <sup>28</sup> Be attentive to yourselves and to the Body of Christ around you. The Creator's Spirit has placed you as caretakers and guides of the Body of Christ in Ephesus. He will watch over you and is keeping you safe through your connection with Jesus. <sup>29</sup> I sense that opportunistic and greedy men will come forward after I leave, trying to destroy this community of the Body of Christ. <sup>30</sup> Men will stand up from among you, teaching things distorted by the Way of Civilization to get the disciples to follow them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, stay awake! Every day and night, remember what I taught you for three years as I shed my tears for you.

<sup>32</sup> Now I am placing and entrusting you into the Father's hands. Stay faithful to his generous Way and teachings, which are able to completely change you, build you up, and give you the fullness of his inheritance. <sup>33</sup> You saw how I lived and how I wanted nothing—no money or clothes. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that my own hands worked to support my needs and those with me. <sup>35</sup> 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.'"

<sup>36</sup> After saying this, Paul kneeled with all of them and prayed. <sup>37</sup> With tears in their eyes, they all hugged and embraced Paul. <sup>38</sup> They were especially distressed that they would never see him again. After their goodbyes, they sent Paul back to the boat.

<sup>21.1</sup> After leaving them, we sailed southeast along the coast of Asia Minor for a couple days. <sup>2</sup> After finding a different boat with cargo going to Tyre, we boarded it and sailed into the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>3</sup> We sailed south of the island of Cyprus and made our way east to Tyre. <sup>4</sup> After finding the disciples of Jesus there, we stayed with them in Tyre for seven days. During that week the disciples were led by the Creator's Spirit to test Paul's faith. They said,

"Do not go into Jerusalem!"

<sup>5</sup> When the week ended, we sent everyone, including women and children, ahead of us to the beach. There we kneeled and prayed together. <sup>6</sup> After embracing and hugging each other, we got into the boat and the disciples returned to Tyre. <sup>7</sup> The boat took us south to Ptolemais. There we embraced our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ and stayed with them one day.

<sup>8</sup> The next day we went south to Caesarea where we stayed in the house of Philip. Philip had been one of the seven helpers set aside in Jerusalem, but now he was a teacher of the Gospel. <sup>9</sup> Philip had four daughters who were prophets and spoke the truth of the Creator. <sup>10</sup> While we were staying in Caesarea for many days, the prophet Agabus, who had foretold the famine in 44 AD, arrived from Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup> He came to us, found Paul's belt, and then used it to tie up his own feet and hands. He said,

"The Creator's Spirit is saying that this belt belongs to the man who will be tied up like this in Jerusalem. He will be given over to the judgment of the nations."

<sup>12</sup> When we heard this, we all began begging Paul to change his mind and not go to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> 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!"

<sup>14</sup> Since Paul would not be persuaded by us, we stopped our begging. We said, "Let the Lord's desires be done!"

<sup>15</sup> After our days in Caesarea, we packed up and went south to Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us and took us to stay as guests in the house of Mason from Cyprus. Mason had been a disciple of Jesus from the beginning.

### Rejected by Civilization † Acts 21:17—22:22

<sup>17</sup> When we arrived in Jerusalem at the end of spring in 58 AD, the brothers and sisters welcomed us with great joy. <sup>18</sup> Paul was with us as we met with Jacob the brother of Jesus and all the elders of the Body of Christ in Jerusalem.

<sup>19</sup> Paul hugged and embraced them all. Then he began explaining everything the Creator had done among the nations through his hands. <sup>20</sup> After listening to his report, they began praising the work of the Creator. They said to Paul,

“Brother, you can see that there are now thousands and thousands in our city who are living by faith in the Way of Jesus. They are also intensely devoted to the temple and to following all the commands of Moses’s Law. <sup>21</sup> Rumors have spread through all Jerusalem. They claim that you teach all Israelites to stop following Moses. They say you teach Israelites to not circumcise their children and to not walk according to the cultural customs of our people. <sup>22</sup> What then might the people of this city do when they hear that you have come here to Jerusalem?!

<sup>23</sup> Therefore, we have a plan you need to follow. We have four men among us that are completing a time of dedicated prayer. <sup>24</sup> Take these men and go through ritual cleansing with them. Pay for their offerings and make sure they also shave their heads. Then, hopefully everyone will see that there is nothing to the rumors they have heard. They will see that you are following and guarding the Law of Moses, exactly like they are. <sup>25</sup> Do not forget, however, that we fully support you. We ourselves wrote the letter to the trusting disciples from the nations. We told them that they only needed to keep away from these practices of Civilization—trusting in money, violence, and technology, using others for sexual pleasure and social gain, and eating meat from the empire’s abusive food industry.”

<sup>26</sup> So that same 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 disciples of Jesus and the rest of the Israelites in Jerusalem. When the seven days of cleansing were completed, Paul entered the temple to present the offerings on behalf of himself and the four other men. <sup>27</sup> But when Paul was about to complete the process, some unfaithful Israelites from the region around Ephesus saw him. They began stirring up the crowd against Paul and grabbed him. <sup>28</sup> They shouted,

“Men! Israelites! Help us! This man is 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!”

<sup>29</sup> They said this because they had previously seen a Greek man from Ephesus with Paul in the city. They assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

<sup>30</sup> 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 to keep it from being further defiled. Then the doors were slammed shut. <sup>31</sup> While they were getting ready to kill Paul, news of this large riot quickly made its way to the commanding officer of the local Roman soldiers. <sup>32</sup> He immediately gathered his soldiers and military officers and charged toward the riot. When the crowd saw the commanding officer and his soldiers coming, they immediately stopped beating Paul. <sup>33</sup> The Roman commanding officer

grabbed Paul and instructed him to be bound with two chains. Then he began angrily asking who Paul was and what he had done. <sup>34</sup> The people in the crowd began shouting answers and arguing with each other over what had happened. The Roman commanding officer was unable to get a consistent and clear answer from the angry crowd. So he ordered Paul to be taken back to the Roman military compound. <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> The crowd would not leave them alone. They were shouting,

“Take him away!”

<sup>37</sup> Right as he was about to be taken into the Roman military compound, Paul spoke to the Roman commanding officer. He said,

“May I speak to you?”

Startled, the Roman commanding officer replied,

“You know Greek?! <sup>38</sup> I thought you were the revolutionary from Egypt who refuses to have anything to do with Rome or the Greek language! Have you not been hiding out with 4,000 Daggersmen in the wilderness after leading an uprising?!”

<sup>39</sup> Paul said,

“I am an Israelite from the city of Tarsus. I am begging you, allow me to speak to the people.”

<sup>40</sup> 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. He said,

<sup>22.1</sup> “Men! Israelites! Listen to what I have to say to you.”

<sup>2</sup> Hearing that he began speaking to them in their own treasured language of Hebrew, they began paying more attention. Paul then said to them,

<sup>3</sup> “I am an Israelite who was born in Tarsus but was raised in this city with a strong 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 intensely devoted to the Creator’s love for our nation, like all of you!

<sup>4</sup> Because of this devotion I hunted down and even killed the followers of the Way of Jesus. I threw men and even women into prison. <sup>5</sup> The leader of the temple-caretakers and all the leaders of the rich and powerful families witnessed this about me. After receiving letters from them, I began a journey to Damascus in Syria. I went there to arrest the disciples of Jesus and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

<sup>6</sup> But when I got close to Damascus at about noon, a great light from heaven suddenly covered me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground. I heard a voice saying to me,

‘Saul! Saul! Why are you hunting me down?!’

<sup>8</sup> I answered,

‘Who are you, Lord?!’

He said to me,

‘I am Jesus of Nazareth. I am present within my followers and therefore you are hunting me down.’

<sup>9</sup> Those with me saw the light. But they could not understand the voice that was speaking to me. <sup>10</sup> 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.’

<sup>11</sup> Because the great light of Jesus blinded me, my traveling companions led me by the hand into Damascus. <sup>12</sup> In Damascus there was a man named Ananias, who was well known by all the local Israelites for his devotion to the Law of Moses. <sup>13</sup> He came to me and said,

‘Brother Saul! May your eyes be opened again.’

At that moment I was able to see once again. <sup>14</sup> Ananias then said to me,

‘The Creator, whom our ancestors worshiped, has hand-picked you to know his desires, to see Jesus raised from the dead, and to listen to his voice. <sup>15</sup> On his behalf you will be a living witness to all humanity of what you have seen and heard from Jesus. <sup>16</sup> So what must you do now? Get up and be baptized into the Way of Jesus. Wash away the disobedience of the Way of Civilization and call upon his name.’

<sup>17</sup> After returning to Jerusalem, I had a vision while I was praying. <sup>18</sup> I saw Jesus saying to me,

‘Quickly leave Jerusalem because they will not listen to your words about me.’

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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 power to completely change a person!’

<sup>21</sup> But Jesus said to me,

‘Leave Jerusalem. I will send you as a witness of my truth to the nations.’”

<sup>22</sup> The crowd was attentively listening to Paul until he said this. Then they immediately started shouting,

“Remove this man from the earth! He is not fit to live!”

## X. The Spirit Cannot Be Stopped † Acts 22:23—28:31

### True Citizenship † Acts 22:23—23:32

<sup>23</sup> The people in the crowd began shouting. They took off their coats and threw dust into the air in preparation to kill Paul. <sup>24</sup> Seeing the crowd even more angry, the Roman commanding officer shouted for Paul to be brought into the Roman military compound. He was frustrated that Paul had not calmed the crowd and instead had made the situation worse. So he told his soldiers to whip and torture Paul to get some answers to what was going on. <sup>25</sup> The soldiers tied up Paul and stretched him out for his beating. Paul then calmly said to the Roman military officer,

“Is it lawful for you to whip a Roman citizen without a trial?”

<sup>26</sup> Horrified at hearing this, the Roman military officer ran to the commanding officer to report this. He said,

“What are you doing?! This man is a Roman citizen!”

<sup>27</sup> The commanding officer went to Paul and said,

“Speak to me! Are you a Roman citizen?”

Paul answered,

“Yes.”

<sup>28</sup> The Roman commanding officer answered,

“How is that possible?! Do you have any idea how much money it cost me to acquire my citizenship?!”

Paul responded,

“I am sure it cost more money than I will ever have. But I simply happened to be born a Roman citizen.”

<sup>29</sup> Hearing this, the soldiers about to beat Paul immediately stepped away from him. The Roman commanding officer was terrified that he had arrested and almost whipped a Roman citizen without a trial.

<sup>30</sup> On the next day, the Roman commanding officer ordered the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the whole Sanhedrin Council to come together. He wanted to figure out why they were angry with Paul. After unchaining Paul, he brought him before the Council. <sup>23:1</sup> 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.”

<sup>2</sup> The Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers, Ananias, was deeply offended. He believed the Creator’s Rule was carried out by the authorities of Civilization that Paul was subverting—the Jerusalem temple and the Roman Empire. So he commanded Paul to be hit in the mouth. <sup>3</sup> 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.”

<sup>4</sup> Those standing by said,

“How dare you attack the leader of the temple-caretakers!”

<sup>5</sup> Paul responded,

“Brothers, do you really think I cannot see that he is the leader of the temple-caretakers?! It has been written in Exodus 22, *‘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!”

<sup>6</sup> Paul knew that the Sanhedrin Council was made up of two opposing political parties, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. So he quickly raised a divisive issue to turn 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!”

<sup>7</sup> After Paul said this, a great argument broke out among the Pharisees and Sadducees, causing the Council to turn against itself. <sup>8</sup> This happened because the political party of Sadducees say there is no resurrection of the dead, no interaction of the Creator with the earth, and no spiritual dimension. On the other hand, the political party of the Pharisees trust in all of them. <sup>9</sup> As this great argument broke out, some of the Scriptural scholars from the political party of the Pharisees stood up. They began shouting,

“We find nothing harmful in this man! What if a spirit or messenger from the Creator spoke to him?!”

<sup>10</sup> When the argument got even more intense, 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. <sup>11</sup> That night the Lord Jesus stood over Paul. Jesus said,

“Have courage! As you have been a living witness to my Way in Jerusalem, you must also be a living witness for me in Rome.”

<sup>12</sup> When it became day, some of those who were devoted to the Jerusalem temple pledged not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup> There were more than forty men who made this pledge. <sup>14</sup> They approached the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the leaders of the rich and powerful families. They said,

“We have vowed not to eat or drink until we kill Paul. <sup>15</sup> You and the Sanhedrin Council need to request the Roman commanding officer to bring Paul to you again for a trial. Then we will kill him on the road!”

<sup>16</sup> After hearing about this planned ambush, the son of Paul’s sister went into the Roman military compound and reported it to Paul. <sup>17</sup> Paul called one of the military officers and said,

“Please take this young man to the commanding officer. He has something important to report.”

<sup>18</sup> 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 allowed to deliver you a message.”

<sup>19</sup> So the Roman commanding officer took the young man aside and asked, “What information do you have for me?”

<sup>20</sup> The young man said,

“Those devoted to the Jerusalem temple are requesting that Paul be brought to the Sanhedrin Council for a trial tomorrow. <sup>21</sup> But do not listen to them and fall into this trap! More than forty of them have pledged not to eat or drink until they ambush and kill Paul on his way to the trial. They are simply waiting for you to agree to move Paul.”

<sup>22</sup> After hearing this, the Roman commanding officer sent the young man home. He said to him,

“Tell no one anything of what you told me!”

<sup>23</sup> Then he called for two of his military officers and said,

“Prepare 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. <sup>24</sup> Then get a horse for Paul to ride so we can take him to Governor Felix. <sup>25</sup> Finally, write a letter saying this:

<sup>26</sup> ‘Greetings from commanding officer Claudius Lysias to mighty Governor Felix! <sup>27</sup> This man I have delivered to you is a Roman citizen. He was arrested by those devoted to the Jerusalem temple and was about to be killed by them. <sup>28</sup> Wanting to know why they were upset with him, I took him before their Sanhedrin Council. <sup>29</sup> There I learned that the uprising was about their Law of Moses. There was nothing this man had done against Roman law that was worthy of death or prison. <sup>30</sup> 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.’”

<sup>31</sup> Following their orders, the soldiers took Paul. They brought him through the night to Antipatris, which was forty miles northwest of Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> 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.

### On Trial for the Resurrection † Acts 23:33—25:12

<sup>33</sup> When they arrived in Caesarea they gave the letter to Governor Felix while bringing Paul before him. <sup>34</sup> After reading the letter, the governor asked what Roman authority Paul was under and whether Paul was from southeastern Asia Minor. <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>24.1</sup> After five days, Ananias, the Roman-chosen leader of the temple-caretakers, arrived in Caesarea with some leaders of the rich and powerful Israelite families. He also brought a lawyer named Tertullus to speak to the governor. <sup>2</sup> When he was called forward to speak, Tertullus began to present the case against Paul. He said,

“Because of your wisdom and guidance, our nation has lived with peace and has had great prosperity. <sup>3</sup> All of our people in all places give great thanks for you, mighty Felix. <sup>4</sup> 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.



<sup>5</sup> We found this man to be a disease. He was causing riots and uprisings throughout Civilization. He especially did this 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. <sup>6</sup> He tried to pollute and corrupt our temple and so we arrested him. <sup>8</sup> When you listen to him, you will certainly see for yourself why we are bringing him before you for judgment.”

<sup>9</sup> All those with Tertullus began collectively agreeing with this. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> You are more than capable of seeing for yourself that I went to worship in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago. <sup>12</sup> While I was there I was not causing arguments or riots of any kind in the temple, the synagogues, or anywhere in the city. <sup>13</sup> It is easy to prove that they are speaking lies against me.

<sup>14</sup> So as I stand before you, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance only to the Creator and Father of all. I do this according to the Way of Jesus. I trust in Jesus’s fulfillment of everything that has been written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets. <sup>15</sup> I live in the hope that the Creator is already raising the dead, both the just and the unjust, and bringing new creation to the earth. This is in fact the same thing that these men are hoping and waiting for. <sup>16</sup> Because this judgment and resurrection has already started, I am striving to always live with a clean conscience in the sight of the Creator and all people.

<sup>17</sup> So after many years away from Jerusalem, I returned with gifts for the poor of my people. <sup>18</sup> During my visit I was ritually cleansed and they found me in the temple with no gathered crowd or disturbance. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, you need to speak to the men from western Asia Minor who are spreading these lies against me. <sup>20</sup> Or you need to make these men gathered here speak before the Sanhedrin Council about what injustices they think I have done. <sup>21</sup> 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!’”

<sup>22</sup> Felix understood the Way of Jesus and how impossible it was to legally prosecute its claims of a new creation. So he postponed the trial. He sent them all away, saying,

“When Lysias, the Roman commanding officer in Jerusalem, arrives, then I will decide this case.”

<sup>23</sup> Then he ordered the Roman military officer to keep Paul under guard, while allowing his friends to take care of his needs. <sup>24</sup> After some time passed, Governor Felix and his wife, Drusilla, who was an Israelite devoted to the Jerusalem temple, summoned Paul. They wanted to listen to his teachings about trusting in Jesus as the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth. <sup>25</sup> While Paul was teaching them about the true justice of Jesus, a disciplined life of self-control, and the Creator’s coming judgment against Civilization, Felix became terrified. He said,

## The Spirit Cannot Be Stopped

“I cannot listen to any more of this, you must leave! Give me some time and then I will call for you again.”

<sup>26</sup> Felix was hoping the followers of Jesus would eventually give him a large amount of money to release Paul. So he kept Paul in prison while also trying to befriend him.

<sup>27</sup> But after two years, Felix was removed from office by the Roman Empire. He was replaced by Porcius Festus in 60 AD. Because Felix had angered the Israelites with his violence against them, he did them a favor by leaving Paul in prison. <sup>25.1</sup> Three days after being installed as governor, Festus traveled from Caesarea to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> There Festus gathered with the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the city officials so they could present their case against Paul. <sup>3</sup> 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 kill him for living the Way of Jesus. <sup>4</sup> Festus told them that Paul was still in prison in Caesarea and that he was going to return there soon.

<sup>5</sup> Then he said,

“Your authorities can come with me and there in Caesarea we can put Paul on trial. I want to see what the issues are myself before I hand him over to you.”

<sup>6</sup> After staying in Jerusalem about ten days, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day he had Paul brought in for a trial. <sup>7</sup> Many Israelites who were devoted to the Jerusalem temple gathered for the trial and began stating their case against Paul. But none of their accusations allowed Festus to prosecute Paul according to Roman law. <sup>8</sup> Paul then said to the court,

“I have not rebelled against the Law of Moses, against the temple, or against the Roman emperor.”

<sup>9</sup> Festus was unable to officially prosecute Paul and yet he still wanted to do a political favor for the Israelites. So Festus asked Paul,

“Are you willing to return to Jerusalem to stand trial before me for these things?”

<sup>10</sup> Knowing that he would be ambushed and killed 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. You yourself can plainly see this. <sup>11</sup> If I have done something worthy of death, then kill 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. I call upon the Roman emperor!”

<sup>12</sup> Then Festus, after speaking with his advisors, answered,

“Because you are a Roman citizen who has called upon the emperor, you will stand trial before the emperor himself!”

### Confusing Civilization † Acts 25:13—26:32

<sup>13</sup> 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 chosen by Emperor Claudius to rule the region, to choose the leader of the temple-caretakers, and to control the Jerusalem temple on behalf of Rome. <sup>14</sup> During

this long stay in Caesarea, Governor Festus talked to Marcus Agrippa about Paul's case. In frustration, he said,

“A man named Paul was left behind in prison by Felix. <sup>15</sup> When I was in Jerusalem, the leaders of the temple-caretakers and the leaders of the rich and powerful families asked me to hand this man over to them so they could kill him. <sup>16</sup> To this I answered,

‘Rome does not hand over a man as a political favor unless he has had a fair trial and judgment.’

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, I immediately called for a trial the next day and instructed the man to be brought in for questioning. <sup>18</sup> His accusers stood before me and presented nothing that was worthy of Roman punishment. <sup>19</sup> All their complaints were about some debate about their religion. It was about some man named Jesus, who had been killed, that Paul was claiming was back from the dead. <sup>20</sup> Because the investigation was going nowhere helpful, I asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there. <sup>21</sup> 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.”

<sup>22</sup> Marcus Agrippa said to Festus,

“Let me listen to the man and see if I can help you.”

Festus responded,

“Excellent! You will listen to him tomorrow.”

<sup>23</sup> So the next day, Marcus Agrippa and Bernice entered the courtroom. The Roman commanding officers and the rich and powerful city officials were with them. Festus then instructed for Paul to be brought in. <sup>24</sup> Festus spoke to the assembly, saying,

“Ruler Marcus Agrippa and all those present with us, this is the man with which all those devoted to the Jerusalem temple are angry. They are saying he must be put to death. <sup>25</sup> 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. As such, I have no choice but to send him to Rome for trial. <sup>26</sup> The problem is that I have nothing to write to the Lord Emperor about him, explaining why he deserves his time and energy. Therefore, I am bringing him before you all, especially before you, Ruler Marcus Agrippa. I want you to judge him and help me find a legal issue to present to the emperor. <sup>27</sup> It is political suicide if I send a man to the emperor for trial when there is no legal case against him!”

<sup>26.1</sup> 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,

<sup>2</sup> “Ruler Marcus Agrippa, it is a privilege to have our paths cross. I stand before you today to explain why those who are devoted to the Jerusalem temple are angry with me. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> From my youth I was trained in Jerusalem. All my people are familiar with my life and upbringing. <sup>5</sup> They saw it all firsthand. They can testify that I lived as a strict and faithful member of the political party of the Pharisees. <sup>6</sup> I am now a prisoner on trial because I am living my life based on the hope of the Creator's commitment to our ancestors. <sup>7</sup> 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 I trust that those promises are now fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. <sup>8</sup> How am I being unfaithful by trusting that the Creator is raising the dead?!

<sup>9</sup> Listen, I myself previously thought it was necessary to oppose and fight against the teachings and Way of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> After receiving permission from the leaders of the temple-caretakers, I did this in Jerusalem. I imprisoned and even supervised the killing of many of Jesus's followers. <sup>11</sup> I hunted them down in all the synagogues. I punished them and tried 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!

<sup>12</sup> During this time, I was journeying to Damascus in Syria. I had been given the authority and permission of the leaders of the temple-caretakers to imprison the followers of Jesus. <sup>13</sup> Marcus Agrippa, when I was on that road at midday we were suddenly struck with a light from heaven. It was much brighter than the sun itself. <sup>14</sup> 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!'

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Get up! Get on your feet! I am revealing myself to you and completely turning your life upside down. I am changing you into a living witness of what you are now seeing and all that you will see in the years ahead. <sup>17</sup> I am rescuing you from the self-destructive Way of Civilization that has led astray your people and all the nations of the earth. <sup>18</sup> 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 of my Way. I want them to turn away from the satanic desire for control and return to the Creator. If they return to me and trust my teachings, then they will be free from their disobedience and will share in the full inheritance of the Father.'

<sup>19</sup> Marcus Agrippa, this heavenly encounter with Jesus changed my life forever. <sup>20</sup> From then on, I began teaching all people to change their ways of thinking. I called them to turn to the Creator by faithfully obeying the Way of Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> But the Creator has saved me from this fate. I stand as a living witness to all people, both rich and poor, both weak and powerful. I proclaim exactly what the Prophets and Moses foretold. <sup>23</sup> Jesus, who is the Christ and Chosen Ruler of the earth, was killed by 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!"

<sup>24</sup> When Paul said this, Governor Festus shouted,

"Paul, you are insane! The Scriptures you read have made you crazy!"

<sup>25</sup> But Paul responded,

"I am not insane, Governor Festus. What I am saying is the serious and urgent truth. <sup>26</sup> In fact, Marcus Agrippa is well aware of what I am saying. I do not believe that anything I am saying is new to him. Everything that happened with Jesus is publicly well-known. <sup>27</sup> Marcus Agrippa, do you trust what the prophets say? I can sense that you trust their words."

<sup>28</sup> Marcus Agrippa said to Paul,

"Do you really think you can persuade me with this little speech to become a disciple of Jesus?"

<sup>29</sup> Paul replied,

"Whether it takes a little or a lot, I hope the Creator completely changes all of you who are listening to me today, exactly like he did me! Except I would not wish these chains on anyone."

<sup>30</sup> Then Marcus Agrippa, Governor Festus, Bernice, and all those sitting with them, stood up. <sup>31</sup> After they left, they spoke with each other, saying,

"This man is doing nothing that Roman law says is worthy of death or prison."

<sup>32</sup> Marcus Agrippa said to Festus,

"This man could have been released, but he called upon the emperor! There is nothing we can do to stop this."

### The Journey of Faith † Acts 27:1-44

<sup>27.1</sup> In August of 60 AD, I—the author—rejoined Paul when 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. Julius was part of the emperor's own company of soldiers. <sup>2</sup> We caught a ride on a boat that was returning to Asia Minor and we were joined by Aristarchus from Thessalonica.

<sup>3</sup> Our first stop was a little north on the coast in Sidon where Julius kindly allowed Paul to be taken care of by some friends. <sup>4</sup> From there, we sailed

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northwest while the winds were opposing us. <sup>5</sup> After sailing through the deep sea along the southern coast of Asia Minor, we arrived at its southwestern end. <sup>6</sup> There the Roman military officer got us a ride on another boat that was sailing from Egypt to Italy. <sup>7</sup> With the winds fighting against us, we slowly sailed west for many days before turning south to the island of Crete. <sup>8</sup> After slowly sailing west along Crete, we were forced to stop part way along the southern side of the island.

<sup>9</sup> After many days passed, the Day of Atonement in late September came and went. This put us in the heart of the dangerous and risky sailing season that lasted from mid-September to mid-November. <sup>10</sup> Seeing this, Paul spoke to the group,

“Men, we must not proceed any further! If we do, then this trip will bring great humiliation and destruction to the boat, its cargo, and even our lives!”

<sup>11</sup> But they ignored Paul’s warning. The Roman military officer was confident in the power of technology and human wisdom. So he convinced the captain of the boat to arrogantly proceed. <sup>12</sup> The ship’s crew had determined that the current harbor was undesirable for waiting out the stormy season. They wanted to get to a safer harbor on the far western end of the island of Crete. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> But then the winds suddenly shifted and a great wind from the east came upon us. <sup>15</sup> The boat was caught in the wind. It was too strong to oppose, so we gave in and began being uncontrollably pushed west. <sup>16</sup> While moving past a small island to the south of Crete, we were barely able to keep the small landing-boat from being ripped out to sea. <sup>17</sup> The landing-boat was secured to the ship with ropes and the crew began fixing its damage. The crew feared that we 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. <sup>18</sup> The next day, the storm intensified and the crew began to abandon even more cargo, realizing that all the possessions and wealth in the world would do us no good. <sup>19</sup> On the third day, everyone got involved as all the cargo was thrown into the sea by hand. <sup>20</sup> The storm raged on for many days and we could not see the sun or stars. All hope of being saved was lost. <sup>21</sup> Many had stopped eating because of their anxiety. So Paul stood in the midst of them and said,

“You did not listen to my word from the Creator and instead trusted in the technology and Way of Civilization. Because of this we are enduring humiliation and destruction. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> The Creator of all, to whom I pledge my full allegiance, sent a messenger to me last night. <sup>24</sup> He said,

‘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.’

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, trust in the Creator, as I am! His promise to me will be fulfilled! <sup>26</sup> But know that we will be shipwrecked on some island. We will lose everything we have and this boat you trust in will be completely destroyed.”

<sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> So they dropped a line and found the depth to be twenty wingspans. A little while later they dropped another line and found the depth to have gone down to fifteen wingspans. <sup>29</sup> Fearing that the boat would run into some rocks in the dark, they lowered four anchors and began praying for day to come. <sup>30</sup> Wanting to escape the ship, the sailors lowered the landing-boat to the sea. They were pretending to add more anchors to the front of the ship. <sup>31</sup> 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!”

<sup>32</sup> So the soldiers cut the cords of the landing-boat and our last safety measure fell away into the sea. <sup>33</sup> As the night was coming to a close, Paul began encouraging everyone to share food together. He said,

“Because of your anxiety over what is happening, today is the fourteenth day you have gone without food. <sup>34</sup> Therefore, I am encouraging you to share food with each other. You will be saved! Not a hair from your heads will be destroyed!”

<sup>35</sup> After he said this, Paul took a loaf of bread and openly thanked the Creator for it. Then he broke it into pieces and began to eat. <sup>36</sup> Being energized by his worry-free example, everyone else on the ship began to eat as well. <sup>37</sup> In all, there were 276 people on the ship. <sup>38</sup> After eating their fill, the crew emptied the ship of all its extra weight by throwing all the food into the sea. They realized saving anything for the next day was pointless. <sup>39</sup> When it finally became day, some unrecognizable land was seen in the distance. The crew began discussing whether they could get the ship onto the section with a beach. <sup>40</sup> 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. <sup>41</sup> But the wind drove the ship into a sandbar where its front end got stuck. The ship did not immediately tip over, but the force of the sea against the rear of the ship made it inevitable. <sup>42</sup> The Roman soldiers wanted to kill all their prisoners so that none of them could possibly escape. <sup>43</sup> But the Roman military officer wanted to keep Paul alive and so he stopped them. He quickly instructed all those who could swim to jump out of the ship and get to shore. <sup>44</sup> Then he instructed everyone else to grab a piece of wood to float on. So all 276 people abandoned the boat, a symbol of Civilization. By doing this, we all made it safely to shore.

### Into the Heart of Civilization † Acts 28:1-31

<sup>28:1</sup> Once we got to shore the crew figured out that we were on the wilderness island of Malta. <sup>2</sup> The Romans considered the native people of the island to be uncivilized barbarians and savages. These barbarians welcomed us and offered us extraordinary hospitality. They took us to their shelters and built a fire to

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get us out of the cold and rain. <sup>3</sup> Paul helped gather wood. As he put the logs on the fire a venomous snake jumped out and bit his hand. <sup>4</sup> When the native people saw the deadly snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another,

“This man must be a murderer! He survived the sea, but justice will not allow him to escape with his life!”

<sup>5</sup> Paul then pulled the snake, representing Civilization’s satanic desire for control, from his hand and threw it into the fire. <sup>6</sup> They all began watching Paul, expecting him to swell up and drop dead. But as the moments passed, nothing happened to him. He was unharmed, for he was under the protection of the Creator. This stunned the native people and they began wondering if Paul was a god. <sup>7</sup> One of the leaders of the island, named Publius, welcomed us with open arms into his home for three days. <sup>8</sup> The man’s father was stuck in bed with a great fever and with diarrhea. Paul went to his bedside and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands upon him and healed him. <sup>9</sup> After this happened, all those on the island who were in need of healing came to Paul and received his care. <sup>10</sup> The native people took care of us like their own family for months and shared with us everything that we needed.

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> We sailed north to the island of Sicily and stayed there for three days.

<sup>13</sup> 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 140 miles south of Rome. <sup>14</sup> We found some disciples of Jesus in that city. We stayed to teach them for seven days before moving on to Rome. <sup>15</sup> The brothers and sisters in Rome heard about our presence. They came south for thirty-three miles on the Appian Road to meet us and escort us into the city. When Paul saw these disciples of Jesus from Rome, he gave thanks to the Creator and was greatly encouraged.

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> After I stood trial, the Romans wanted to free me because they could find no legal reason to put me to death. <sup>19</sup> But, because those devoted to the Jerusalem temple were plotting to kill me, I called upon the emperor. But do not worry, I will say nothing bad about my people to him. <sup>20</sup> I called you together today so I could see you and speak to you myself. I want to let you know that I am a prisoner of Rome because of our people’s hope in the resurrection of the dead.”

<sup>21</sup> They replied to Paul,

“No one from Jerusalem has written us about you nor has any Israelite said anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup> Besides, we prefer to hear everything



directly from your own mouth. We are especially curious about the Way of Jesus, for it is being spoken against everywhere.”

<sup>23</sup> Then they set aside a day to meet again with Paul. On the chosen day they gathered from first light until evening. During that time Paul taught them many things. All of it revolved around the Creator’s Rule coming through the Way of Jesus as foretold by the Law of Moses and the Prophets. <sup>24</sup> Some began to be persuaded by Paul’s words, but many others were not. <sup>25</sup> While they were leaving, the people were arguing among themselves. Paul said to them,

“The Creator’s Spirit was right when speaking through Isaiah 6 to your ancestors. <sup>26</sup> He says,

*‘Go to the people and say, “You will try to listen, but you will not understand. You will see, but you will not perceive.”’* <sup>27</sup> *The hearts of the people have become hardened by the Way of Civilization. They listen with distracted ears or do not listen at all. They will not see with their eyes. They will not listen with their ears. They will not understand with their hearts. They will not turn back to my healing arms.’*

<sup>28</sup> You need to know that the Creator’s message of freedom has been sent to the other nations of the earth. And unlike you, they are listening!”

<sup>30</sup> Paul remained under guard in Rome for two years while having to pay for his own place to live. He was able to see all those who came to him. <sup>31</sup> Without hesitation and with all confidence, Paul was teaching the Way of Jesus in the heart of Civilization. He was proclaiming that the Creator’s Rule had arrived and that Jesus was the Christ and Lord of the whole earth.

# Maps

