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1. Adam and Eve

Genesis 2 #2

Imagine the earth when it was new—before the plants had come up. In those days, God hadn't yet allowed it to rain on the earth, but caused a mist to come each day to water the land.

During this time, God took some soil and shaped the first man. He breathed into his nostrils, and Adam was alive.

God planted a garden in a place called Eden. It had every kind of tree, and there was a river that flowed out from the garden.

In the middle, there were two special trees. One was called the Tree of Life and the other was called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God told Adam to take care of the garden. He said, "You may eat from every tree except the one in the middle, The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. You're not to eat from that tree. If you eat from it, you will die!"

God said, "It's not good that man is alone. I'll make a helper that's just right for him." He then brought all the animals to Adam and told him to name them. So Adam named all the animals, and whatever he named them, that was their name.

As he was naming them, he noticed that all the animals came in pairs, male and female. Yet, as he looked around, he noticed that there wasn't a female for him.

God caused a deep sleep to come down over Adam, and he slept deep and long. Then God opened up the flesh in Adam's side and took a rib. Carefully he closed up the flesh. From that rib, God made a woman.

When Adam awoke, God brought the woman to him. Adam said, "This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. She'll be called woman, because she was taken out of man." This is the reason why a man leaves his parents and forms a relationship with his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all people.

2 The Fall

Genesis 3 #3

God created Adam and Eve and provided all they needed in the Garden of Eden. Like the animals, they had no need of clothes, yet they were not ashamed.

The snake was the most clever of all the animals. One day he said to Eve, “Is it true God won’t let you eat from all the trees in the garden?”

“Oh, we can eat from all the trees. That is, except for the one in the middle. God said that we aren’t to eat that fruit...or even touch it. He says if we do, we’ll die.”

“It’s not true! You won’t die. God told you that because he knows if you eat that fruit, you’ll be like him—knowing good, as well as evil.”

The woman looked at the fruit. It was beautiful and looked delicious. She thought, “If I eat this fruit, it’ll make me wise.” So she took the fruit and ate it. She then gave some to Adam and he ate it as well. Suddenly they realized they were naked. So they sewed some fig leaves together to make coverings for themselves.

As evening approached, they heard God walking in the garden. Suddenly, they realized they were afraid of God, so they hid among the trees.

“Adam, where are you?”

Adam knew he had to answer. He said, “Lord, I heard you walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked. So, I hid.”

“Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I told you not to eat?”

“It was the woman you gave me. She gave me the fruit, and...yes, I ate it.”

God turned to Eve, “Why did you do this?”

“The snake! The snake tricked me into eating it!”

God turned to the snake and said, “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the animals. From now on, you’ll move about on your belly. There’ll be hostility between you and the woman, and there’ll be a battle between your offspring and hers. He’ll crush your head, while you’ll only bruise his heel.”

Looking back at the woman God said, “Your pain will be great when you give birth to children, and having babies will be associated with pain. You’ll want to control your husband, but from now on, men will dominate over you.”

God said to Adam, “I made it very clear that you were not to eat from that tree. Because you have disobeyed, the ground is cursed. From now on, you’ll work for your food, and the ground will fight against you. It’ll sprout thorns and weeds. Hard work will mark your life until you return to the soil from which you came.”

God dressed the man and his wife in clothes made out of animal skins. He then sent them out of the garden, where they worked the soil for their food.

God said, “People now know evil as well as good. They’ll try to get to the Tree of Life so they can live forever.” Therefore, God put a heavenly guard outside the garden. From that day on, people were separated from the Tree of Life.

3. Cain and Abel

Genesis 4 #4

Adam and Eve had a son and named him Cain. In time they had another son named Abel.

Abel became a herdsman—working with animals. Cain became a farmer, tilling the soil.

One day, when it was time to bring a sacrifice to the Lord, Cain decided to bring fruits and vegetables, instead of a lamb. Abel also brought an offering, but it was the best lamb from his flock. The Lord was pleased with Abel's offering, but he wasn't happy with Cain's.

Cain became angry when he saw that God didn't accept his sacrifice. He started to pout. God said, "Cain, why are you angry? If you simply do what's right, you'll be accepted and happy. But if you don't, sin is waiting for you. It's crouched by your door, ready to pounce and become your master. Instead, you need to take control of it!"

A few days later, Cain and Abel were talking out in a field. Cain turned and attacked his brother and killed him.

Later that day, God asked Cain, "Where's your brother?"

"I don't know! Am I supposed to watch over him all the time?"

"Oh Cain, what have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood is crying to me from the soil. You've loved this ground, but from now on it's cursed because it contains your brother's blood. Oh, you'll continue to work the field, but it'll no longer respond to you and give you its best. You'll become a restless wanderer."

Cain fell down and cried out. "Oh God, your punishment is too severe! You're taking away my land and your presence! I'll be aimless and separated from everyone else. Eventually they'll hunt me down and kill me."

So God put a mark on Cain and said, "Anyone who kills Cain will suffer for it seven times over!"

With that, Cain went away from the presence of the Lord.

4. Call of Abraham

Genesis 12 # 7

When Abram was seventy-five years old, the LORD said, “Abram, I want you to leave your family and country and go to a place I have selected for you. I’ll make you into a nation and your name will be great. I’ll bless you, and I’ll also bless everyone else who blesses you. And I’ll curse anyone who curses you. All the families of the earth will be blessed because of you.”

So Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and left Haran. When they came to a place called Canaan, God said, “I’m giving this land to you and your children.” Abram believed God, even though he didn’t have any children. He knew God would keep his promise. So he built an altar there and worshiped the Lord.

Sometime later, a severe famine hit the land. So Abram took all he had and went to Egypt. He said to Sarai, “The Egyptians will see you’re a beautiful woman. They’ll kill me in order to get you. So tell them you’re my sister.”

He was right. The Egyptians saw that Sarai was beautiful. When Pharaoh found out that she wasn’t married, he took her into his house. He treated Abram well, thinking the man was her brother.

Abram became rich in Egypt. His wealth included sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and servants.

God was angry with Pharaoh because he had Sarai in his house. Plagues hit his family, and everyone got seriously sick. Finally, Pharaoh said to Abram, “Why did you do this to me? You said she was your sister. Now I find out she’s your wife! Take her and get out of here!”

So Abram took Sarai and Lot and went back to Canaan. They settled near a place called Bethel. There, he worshiped the Lord.

5. The God Who Sees Me

Genesis 16 # 9

After Abram had lived in Canaan for ten years, Sarai became concerned that she hadn't yet had a child like the Lord promised. She said to her husband, "I have a solution to this problem. Go to bed with my slave Hagar. When she delivers a child, it'll be the same as if I had the child.

Abram agreed and did as she said. But as soon as Hagar became pregnant, she started acting like she was better than Sarai.

This made Sarai angry. She said to Abram. "You're the one who has caused all my problems! You got my slave pregnant, and now she thinks she's better than me.

Abram said, "She's your slave. Do whatever you want with her."

So Sarai started beating Hagar and humiliating her in any way she could. Finally, the slave ran away. She came to a spring of water and collapsed next to it.

The Angel of the Lord said to her, "Hagar, where are you going?"

"Oh Lord. I'm running away from Sarai, my mistress."

"No, no, you shouldn't do that. God has heard your crying out in pain. Go back and submit to Sarai, even if she beats you. You'll have a son, and you're to call him Ishmael. He'll be a fighting man, and be at odds with everyone. I'll multiply your descendants so much that you wouldn't be able to count them."

Hagar was amazed and said, "I have seen the God who sees me. So she named the spring, "The Well of the Living God who Sees Me."

She then went back and submitted herself to Sarai. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to her son. He named the child Ishmael, which means "God Hears."

6. God Hears

Genesis 21 #15

When Abraham was a hundred years old, Sarah gave birth to a son. They called him Isaac, which means “laughter.”

When Ishmael was a young man, Sarah saw him mocking Isaac. She was furious and said to Abraham, “Send that woman away, as well as her son. I don’t want them to inherit anything that belongs to Isaac.”

Abraham didn’t want to do this because he loved Ishmael. But God told him, “Do what Sarah wants. My promises to you will be passed down through Isaac. And don’t be concerned about Ishmael and his mother. Because he’s your son, I’ll make a nation of him as well.”

So, early the next morning, Abraham gave Hagar bread and water, and sent her and her son away. They wandered into the wilderness, where they stayed until their water was gone. Soon Hagar lost all hope of living. She couldn’t bear to watch her son die, so she left him under a bush and walked a short distance away. She then fell to the ground and sobbed.

Ishmael called out and God heard his voice. The Angel of the Lord said to Hagar, “Don’t be afraid. God has heard your son’s voice. Get up and go to him. He needs your help. Take care of him because he’ll be the father of a great nation.”

With that, God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water nearby. She rushed over and filled her container with water and took it to her son.

So Ishmael grew and God was with him. He became a great archer and settled in the wilderness. In time, Hagar went to Egypt and got a wife for him.

7. Trial of Abraham

Genesis 22 #16

When Isaac was a young man, God came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, take Isaac, the son you love so dearly, and go to a place I’ll show you. There, you’re to sacrifice him as a burnt offering.”

So the next morning, Abraham got up early and cut wood for the sacrifice. He saddled a donkey, took two servants, and started on the journey.

Three days later, Abraham saw the place God had selected. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey. Isaac and I will go and worship the Lord. We’ll come back after the sacrifice.”

He told Isaac to carry the wood. Abraham took the hot coals and the knife. Isaac looked around and asked: “Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where’s the lamb for sacrifice?” Abraham looked at his son and finally said, “God will provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice.”

When they got to the place God had selected, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on top. Next, he tied up his son and put him on top of the wood. He then reached for the knife to kill his son.

With that, the Angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven. “Abraham, Abraham! Don’t kill your son! Don’t do anything to him! For now I know you fear God, since you were willing to give me your son!”

Abraham looked off to the side and saw a ram with his horns caught in a bush. He took the ram and used him as the sacrifice instead of his son. Abraham named the place “The Lord Will Provide”.

Afterwards, God said to Abraham, “Because you have obeyed me, I’ll bless you and your descendants. I’ll make your descendants as hard to count as the stars. They’ll be as hard to count as the sand on the seashore. On top of that, I’ll make them prominent, even in the cities of their enemies! And the whole earth will be blessed because of them.”

Then Abraham and Isaac went back to where the servants were waiting, and together they went home.

8 Rebekah

Genesis 24 #18

When Sarah died, Abraham realized he needed to find a wife for his son Isaac. He said to his servant, "I'm sending you back to my homeland so you can find a wife for my son. Promise me you won't choose a woman from the people around here. Make sure she's from among my relatives."

The servant was concerned. "What if I find a woman, and she's not willing to leave her home and come here? Perhaps I should take Isaac back there to marry her."

"Absolutely not! You're not to take Isaac back to that country! Listen, the Lord will send his angel before you. He'll prepare the way. But if the woman isn't willing to come back with you, then you're released from this assignment."

After a long journey, the servant reached the town where Abraham's relatives lived. He stopped at a well on the outskirts of town and prayed, "Oh God, help me find the right woman for Isaac."

Suddenly he had an idea. "Lord, I'll ask a woman for a drink of water. I'll know she's the right one if she gives me a drink, and then offers to draw water for all ten of these camels!"

Soon a young woman named Rebekah came to the well. She was beautiful ... and virtuous ... and ... she wasn't married.

She filled her jar and started to walk away. The servant stepped forward and asked for a drink of water. She gave him one, and then offered to draw water for all his camels.

While she was doing this, the servant asked God to help him know for sure that this was the woman for Isaac.

After Rebekah was done, the servant gave her several pieces of jewelry and asked, "Who's your family, and is there room at your father's house for my men and me to spend the night?" She told the servant the names of her father and grandfather, and the servant knew they were Abraham's relatives. Rebekah said that there was plenty of room for them to spend the night.

She then left the servant and ran home to tell her family about this conversation. Her brother was Laban, and when he saw the valuable jewelry, he hurried to the well to see who had given her these things. He asked the servant, "Come, we've prepared a place for you and your servants, as well as your camels!"

Once they got to the house, the servant was invited to sit down and eat a meal with them. But he said, "Before we eat this meal, I must tell you my story."

He told them about the assignment Abraham had given him. He then said, "I prayed and asked God to show me the right woman for Isaac. As a sign, I asked that she'd be willing to give me a drink of water and also draw water for all the camels. Rebekah did exactly that. I believe she's the woman God has chosen to be Isaac's wife."

Laban and his father were amazed when they heard this story. They agreed with him and immediately gave their blessing. The next morning they asked Rebekah if she was willing to go with Abraham's servant and marry Isaac. She said she was willing to go. So, they blessed Rebekah and sent her with the servant.

Isaac was in the field when he saw, off in the distance, the servant's caravan of camels. So he started walking toward it. Rebekah saw him coming their way. She asked the servant, "Who is that man?"

"Oh, that is my master, Isaac." So Rebekah covered herself with a veil.

Then the servant told Isaac the whole story. So Isaac took Rebekah to be his wife, and the love between them was great.

9. Selling the Birthright

Genesis 25 #15

After twenty years of marriage, Isaac prayed for his wife because she was unable to have children. God answered his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant with twin boys.

Near the end of her term, she felt like there was fighting inside her womb. She was in so much pain that she prayed, “Oh God, what is happening to me?”

The Lord said, “You have two nations inside of you. Two people groups will come from your womb. One will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

At the time of birth, the oldest baby was red and covered with hair. They named him Esau, which means “hairy.”

His brother was born holding on to Esau’s heel. They named him Jacob, which means, “heel.” Isaac was sixty years old when the boys were born.

As a man, Esau became skilled as an outdoorsman, which included hunting. Jacob was quiet, and preferred to stay home. Rebekah loved Jacob, but Isaac loved the taste of wild game, so he favored Esau.

One day, Esau came home exhausted from a trip. He found Jacob cooking a pot of stew. He said, “I’m tired and hungry. Give me some of that red stew.”

Jacob said, “Let’s make a trade — my stew for your birthright.”

“That’s a deal! My birthright won’t do me any good if I die of hunger. Now give me the stew, I want the whole pot.”

Jacob said, “No. You must first swear an oath that you’re giving me your birthright.”

“I swear to you. The birthright is yours.”

With that, Jacob gave his brother an entire meal of bread, stew, and drink. Esau ate and drank heartily, and then got up and left.

From then on, it was said of Esau, “He despised his birthright.” Also, people referred to him as “Edom,” which means “Red.” This was because of the value he placed on that red stew.

10. Jacob's Ladder

Genesis 28 #23

Esau was angry when he learned that Jacob had deceived their father and received the family blessing. He said, "After my father dies, I'll kill Jacob!"

Rebekah heard this, and rushed to tell Jacob. "You must leave. Go to my brother's house! I'll send for you once Esau gets over his anger. Go quickly. I don't want to lose both of you in one day!"

She then got Isaac's permission for Jacob's trip. Isaac agreed that Jacob should go to Rebekah's country and find a wife.

Jacob started his journey to his mother's country. His father had said, "You're not to marry a Canaanite woman. Go back to your mother's family and find a wife there. May God give you the blessings he promised Abraham!"

Jacob traveled all day. That night, he slept on the ground, using a rock for a pillow.

During the night he dreamed he saw a ladder that went up to Heaven. There were angels going up and coming down! He saw the Lord standing above the ladder saying, "I Am the Lord God of Abraham and your father Isaac. I'm giving this land to you and your descendants. All the earth will be blessed because of them! I'm with you and will watch over you as you go. I'll bring you back to this land."

Suddenly Jacob woke up and was afraid. He said, "Oh... God is here and I didn't know it! This is the house of God and the doorway to Heaven!"

He took the rock he had used as a pillow and used it to build an altar. He poured oil on it and called the place Bethel, which means "the house of God." He said, "If God watches over me, and provides for me, and brings me back to this land, then he'll be my God, and I'll give him a tenth of all he gives to me."

11. Two Camps

Genesis 32 – 33 #26

Jacob and his family were going back to his homeland. Suddenly God's angels met him. With that, he knew he was not alone, so he called the place "Two Camps." From there he sent messengers to his brother Esau saying, "I'm coming home with all my possessions, and I'm hoping you'll accept me." The messengers came back and said, "Your brother is coming with four hundred men." This struck fear in Jacob's heart. He immediately divided everything into two camps, saying, "If Esau attacks one camp, the other can escape." He prayed, "Oh, God of Abraham and Isaac, You told me to come back to my country. You said I'd prosper here. I'm not worthy of the kindness you've shown me. I left this land with only my walking stick. Now I'm two camps. "Please rescue me from my brother. You said my descendants would be as hard to count as the sand on the seashore." He then prepared gifts for his brother, which included goats, sheep, camels, cows, and donkeys. He divided them into three groups and sent them ahead. He told his servants, "When Esau comes to the first group, say to him, 'Your slave Jacob is sending these to you. Look, you can see him back there.'" He told the second and third the same things. He was hoping these things would help Esau be more forgiving. He then spent the night waiting for his brother's arrival in the morning. Since he couldn't sleep, he went off to be by himself. Suddenly a man appeared and grabbed him. Jacob fought back, and the two of them wrestled all night. At daybreak the stranger saw that Jacob was determined not to lose this fight. So the man struck Jacob's side and dislocated his hip socket. He said, "I've got to go. It's daybreak." Jacob said, "I won't let you go until you bless me." The man said, "What's your name?" "I'm Jacob!" The man said, "No, that's no longer your name. You'll be called Israel, which means 'wrestled with God.' You've fought with God, and have lived to tell about it." Jacob said, "What's your name?" The man said, "I'm not telling you my name." With that, he blessed Jacob. Jacob called the place "God's Face." He said, "I've seen God's face and I'm still alive." Jacob limped back to his camp. Off in the distance he could see Esau and his four hundred men coming. He put each of his families into different groups, and then he went out front. He bowed seven times as he hobbled toward his brother. Esau ran up to him and gave him a hug. Both men cried. Esau then pointed to the people standing behind Jacob. "Who are these people with you?" After Esau met Jacob's family, he said, "Why did you put all those animals along the way?" "Oh, I gave those to you in hopes of winning your forgiveness." Esau said, "No, no. I have enough. You keep them." But Jacob insisted. "Please, accept my gifts. It would make me very happy." So Esau agreed. Then Esau and his men went home that same day. Jacob went to an area near a city called Shechem. There he built an altar and called it "God, the God of Israel."

12. The Birth of Moses

Exodus 1 – 2:10#33

The descendants of Jacob were treated well until a new Pharaoh came to power who didn't remember Joseph. This new Pharaoh felt he needed to do something about the Hebrews, since their population was growing, and they were becoming powerful.

First, he enslaved the people. Then he told the midwives, "When you help an Israelite woman deliver a child, kill all the baby boys as soon as they are born. Only the baby girls are allowed to live."

The midwives didn't obey Pharaoh. Instead they feared God and allowed the boys to live as well as the girls. They told Pharaoh, "The Hebrew women are much stronger than Egyptian women. They deliver their own children before we get to them." God blessed these women because they refused to kill the children.

The Israelite population continued to increase in number, so Pharaoh issued a new law for the nation. "Every Hebrew boy-child is to be thrown into the Nile River."

During this time of persecution, a boy was born to one of the Hebrew families. His mother hid him for three months, but it became more difficult with each passing week.

Finally, she realized she needed to do something different. So she made a waterproof basket, put the child inside, and placed it in the Nile River among the reeds near the banks. The boy's sister was Miriam. She hid nearby to see what would happen to her brother.

Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to take a bath. She saw the basket floating among the reeds and sent her servants to get it. When she opened the basket, the baby started to cry and she felt sorry for it. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrew children."

Miriam came out of her hiding place and spoke up. "Do you want me to go find a Hebrew mother who can nurse this child?"

"Yes. I'd like that. Go get a nursing mother."

So the girl went and got her own mother—the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Nurse this child for me and I'll pay you."

When the boy was old enough, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter and the boy became her son. She called him Moses (which means "pulled out") saying, "I pulled him out of the water."

13. The Call of Moses

Exodus 3 – 4:18# 35

After Moses married Zipporah, he became a shepherd for his father-in-law, Jethro. Forty years later, when Moses was 80 years old, he led his flock near a particular mountain.

Suddenly, off in the distance, he saw that a bush was on fire, but it wasn't being consumed. He went closer so he could see it better. When he was near, God called to him from out of the bush. "Moses, Moses."

He stepped back. "Yes, I'm here."

"Don't come any closer. Take off your shoes. You're standing on holy ground."

As Moses took off his sandals, the Lord said, "I'm the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

"My people are suffering in the land of Egypt. It's time to deliver them out of their slavery. I've selected you to lead them back to the land of Canaan. Therefore, go back to Egypt and talk to Pharaoh."

"Oh Lord, not me! I'm not the right one to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. I'm not able to talk to Pharaoh."

God was patient with Moses. "I'll be with you. When you think of this mountain, you'll remember that I sent you. Go to Egypt and bring my people back here to worship."

Moses said, "But if I stand before the people and say, 'the God of your fathers has sent me to you,' they'll say, 'What God? What's his name?' What should I tell them?"

God said, "I Am Who I Am! Tell them 'I AM' sent you to them. I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. I am the God of Jacob."

"The people will listen to you, but Pharaoh won't. Therefore I'll strike him with a hard blow. When I'm done, he'll finally let my people go."

Moses still hesitated. So God said to him, "What's in your hand?"

"Oh... it's a shepherd's staff."

"Throw it on the ground."

He threw it on the ground and it became a poisonous snake! Moses jumped back in fear. Then God said, "Reach out and pick up the snake by the tail." Moses grabbed the tail, and instantly the snake once again became a shepherd's staff.

God said, "Put your hand inside your shirt." Moses did, and when he pulled it out it was covered with leprosy. "Put your hand back in your shirt." He did, and when he pulled it out, the leprosy was gone.

God said, "Show the people these signs and they'll believe you."

"Oh, Lord, I've never been able to talk well. I have a speech problem."

"Moses, who made your mouth? I'm the one who causes a person to be deaf, mute, blind or seeing! Go, and do as I say. I'll help you talk, and teach you what you're to say."

Moses bowed his head. "Lord, I just don't want to go. Please send someone else."

With this, the Lord became angry. "Your brother Aaron is coming to meet you. He speaks fluently. Take him and go to Egypt!"

So Moses went to Jethro and asked permission to return to Egypt.

14. Crossing the Red Sea

Exodus 13:17 – 15:21 #40

God led the Israelites out of Egypt by what appeared to be a pillar of fire. The fire became a pillar of cloud during the day. God didn't lead them straight to Canaan along the most direct route, but took them out into the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

He told Moses to have the people camp at a certain location next to the Sea. He said, "I'm going to make Pharaoh stubborn one more time, and he'll chase after you. After that, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."

Pharaoh saw that the Hebrews had gone to the Red Sea, and were hemmed in and vulnerable. He said to his servants, "Why did we let our slaves go? They should be here, serving us." So he took his army and chased after them.

The people of Israel saw this and yelled at Moses. "Why have you brought us here to die? If we were still serving the Egyptians, they would let us live. But now, because of you, we're about to die."

Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid! Watch and see what God is about to do. He'll fight your battle for you. Look at the Egyptians! You'll never see them again after today."

God said to Moses, "Lift your shepherd's staff into the air, and point your hand out over the sea. The people of Israel are going to the other side – on dry ground."

Then the pillar of cloud that was in front of the Israelites moved behind them—between them and the Egyptians. It stayed there the rest of the day and into the night.

Moses pointed his hand toward the sea. And when he did, God caused a strong wind to sweep back the waters, so they formed a wall on the right side and on the left. And then the wind blew on the path between the two walls for the rest of that day and into the night—until the ground became dry.

That night, God told Moses and the Israelites to cross over to the other side, using the path between the walls of water. The people moved across the sea throughout the night.

Once they were across, God allowed the Egyptians to chase after them, using the same path. When they were in the middle of the sea, God caused them to be totally confused, and their chariot wheels started to break.

Suddenly, the Egyptian army saw the seriousness of their situation. They shouted, "Run! The Lord is fighting for the Israelites!" They turned and tried to run for safety.

God said to Moses, "Point your hand out over the water." So Moses pointed his hand toward the sea just as the sun was about to come up. Suddenly the walls of water crashed together, covering the entire Egyptian army. Not one of them survived!

The Israelites watched the power of God from the other side of the sea. And as the sun rose that morning, they saw the dead bodies washed up on the shore. Then the people worshiped the Lord with singing. They had seen the power of God and believed in Him, and they believed in His servant Moses.

15. Rahab

Joshua 1:1 – 3:6 #55

Joshua started organizing the people for their campaign into Canaan. He started by sending two men across the river to spy on the land. They entered the city of Jericho and stayed at the house of a prostitute named Rahab.

The king of Jericho found out that they were in the city, so he sent a message to Rahab. “Bring out those men who are staying in your house. They’re spies from the people of Israel.”

The men were on her roof, where she had hidden them under bundles of flax. She told the king, “Yes, they were here, but I didn’t know where they came from. Just before dark, they left before the city gates were closed. They didn’t tell me which way they were going, but you should be able to catch them if you hurry.” So the king sent men to chase after them.

Rahab said to the spies, “Everyone here is afraid of you because we know God has given you this land! We heard how the Lord opened up the Red Sea when you left Egypt.

“Your God is the God of heaven above and the earth below. He’s done great things for you.

“I protected you! Now swear by your God that you’ll show kindness to my family. Spare our lives!”

So the spies said, “We’ll spare you when the Lord gives us your city, but only if you don’t tell the king about us. Tie this scarlet cord in your window. Your family will be safe if they’re in your house. If anyone leaves the house, we’re not responsible for what happens to them.”

Rahab’s house was on the city wall, so she put a rope out of her window and helped the men escape. They hid in the hills until the men of Jericho stopped looking for them.

Once it was safe, they went back across the river. They told Joshua everything that had happened. They said, “It’s true! God has given us the land. The people are afraid of us.”

16. Sun Standing Still

Joshua 9 – 10 # 59

The new of the army of Israel destroying Jericho and Ai spread throughout Canaan. Many of the cities formed alliances in order to protect themselves from Israel. But one city decided to do something different.

A group of men from the city of Gibeon dressed up in old clothes and worn-out sandals. They put old sacks on their donkeys, packed stale dry bread, and carried old wineskins.

They went to Joshua and said, “We live far away, but we heard what the Lord your God has done for you. Our elders sent us on this long journey. They said, ‘Go and make a treaty with them.’ Look, we took our bread right out of the oven. It is now dry and stale. The journey was so long that our clothes and sandals have become worn and old.”

The men of Israel looked at their provisions, but didn’t seek guidance from the Lord. So Joshua made a treaty with them. The elders of Israel vowed that the two nations would be allies.

Three days after the treaty, Israel found out that the Gibeonites lived in Canaan, close by. Joshua sent for them and said, “Why did you deceive us?”

They said, “We heard God gave you all of this land. He told Moses to kill everyone who lives here. We feared for our lives, so we deceived you. Now you can do whatever seems right to you. We will accept it.”

Joshua said, “You’ll live because of our promise to you. We can’t touch you, but from now on, you’re our slaves. You’ll cut wood and carry water for us and you’ll serve the House of the Lord.”

The other kings of the land heard that the people of Gibeon had made peace with Israel. They joined together and marched against their city. The men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua saying, “We’re your slaves. Come quickly and help us!”

So Joshua marched his army through the night and surprised those fighting again Gibeon. They tried to fight back, but the Israelite army was too strong for them. The Lord also sent large hailstones on them, and more people were killed by hail than by the sword.

Joshua needed more time, so he looked up and said, “Sun, stand still over Gibeon!” The Lord heard his command and honored it. The sun stopped moving across the sky. Never in the past, nor since, has there been a day like that.

Five kings ran and hid in a cave, but someone told Joshua. He said, “Roll a stone across the entrance of the cave.” He then stationed men to guard it. Once Israel had sealed their victory, Joshua brought the kings out of the cave. He told his commanders to put their feet on the necks of the kings. He said, “Be strong and courageous. The Lord will do this to all your enemies.” He then executed the five kings.

Joshua led his army from city to city, and the Lord gave him victory wherever he went.

17. Deborah & Barak

Judges 4 – 5 #63

Israel sinned against God. So the Lord sold them to a Canaanite king from Hazor. This king ruled over them for twenty years. He was harsh and cruel. His army had 900 iron chariots, and his commander's name was Sisera. Finally, the people of Israel prayed to God for deliverance.

The person who judged Israel at the time was a prophet named Deborah. One day she called for a man named Barak and said to him, "The Lord has a message for you. He says, 'Take 10,000 men and go to Mount Tabor. I'll cause Sisera to come to you with his chariots and his army. He'll come to fight you, but I'll give him to you.' "

Barak said to Deborah, "I'll go and do as the Lord says, but only if you go with me. If you don't go, I won't go."

She said, "I'll go with you, but if I do, you won't get the credit for killing Sisera. The Lord will give that honor to a woman." Barak agreed, so Deborah went with him.

Barak gathered 10,000 men and went up Mount Tabor. Sisera heard about this, so he took his 900 chariots and his army and headed toward Mount Tabor. Deborah said to Barak, "Now's the time! Take your men and attack Sisera."

So Barak moved his men down the mountain and attacked the Canaanite army. The Lord was with him, and caused Sisera's men to be confused. They turned and ran. When Sisera saw this, he left his chariot and tried to escape on foot. Barak chased the army until every man was killed.

Sisera ran until he came to the tent of Jael. Her husband was in alliance with the Canaanite king. She saw Sisera coming, so she went out and said, "Come in here, and you'll be safe."

He went in and she hid him under a rug. He said, "Please, give me water to drink." She gave him milk, and he sat up and drank it. He said, "Stand at the door of the tent. If anyone asks if there is a man in here, tell them 'No.'"

She then covered him again, and since he was exhausted, he fell into a deep sleep.

Jael went and got a tent peg and a hammer. She quietly knelt down next to Sisera and put the tent peg on the temple of his head. Then with solid blows, she nailed it through his head and into the ground.

Soon Barak came by her tent in search of Sisera. She went out and said, "Come and I'll show you the man you're looking for." Barak went into her tent and saw Sisera lying dead on the floor with a tent peg through his temple.

Israel continued to fight the Canaanite king until they were victorious. Then they lived in peace.

18. King of the Trees

Judges 9 #66

Gideon and his many wives produced seventy sons. He also had a son by a concubine in the town of Shechem. His name was Abimelech.

After the death of Gideon, Abimelech went to his uncles in Shechem. He said, “Talk to the officials of the city and say, ‘Do you want the seventy sons of Gideon to rule over you? Instead of them, select me. I’m a son of Gideon, but I’m also your blood relative.’ ”

The men of Shechem agreed to make him king of Israel. They gave him seventy silver coins from the Temple of Baal.

With this, he hired a gang of thugs as his private army. The first thing they did was to kill the seventy sons of Gideon. But they missed one—the youngest—a man named Jotham.

The men of Shechem had a celebration to honor Abimelech. Suddenly they heard yelling off in the distance. It was Jotham. “Listen to me! The trees decided to have a king. They went to the olive tree and said, ‘Be our king.’ The olive tree said, ‘I don’t have time for such foolishness. I produce precious oil that honors God and man.’

“So, they went to the fig tree and said, ‘Be our king.’ The fig tree said, ‘I don’t have time for such foolishness. I produce sweet fruit that’s enjoyed by everyone.’

“They went to the grapevine and said, ‘Be our king.’ The grapevine said, ‘I don’t have time for such foolishness. I produce wine that brings happiness to people.’

“Finally, the trees went to the thorn bush. They said, ‘Be our king.’ The thorn bush said, ‘Yes, I’ll be your king. But from now on, you’re under my shade of protection. If any of you rebel, fire will come from my thorns and burn you to ashes.’

“My father risked his life for you. And how did you reward him? You killed his sons! Now you’ve made the son of a slave girl your king.

“If this is right, I wish you well. But if it’s wrong, I ask that fire come from Abimelech and burn you up.” He then ran for his life because he knew his half-brother would try to hunt him down.

Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years. Then God put a bad spirit between him and the men of Shechem. This was to bring justice for what they did to the sons of Gideon.

The men started a rebellion against the king they had set up. Abimelech took his men and attacked the city. The battle lasted several days. Finally, the city was captured, and the people escaped to a tower. Abimelech and his men put tree branches around the tower and burned it down. Over 1,000 men and women died there that day. Jotham’s curse on the men of Shechem had come true.

Abimelech completely destroyed the city and tore it down. He spread salt over it so nothing could grow there.

When that was done, he and his men went to destroy another rebellious city. Again the people escaped to a tower. Abimelech and his men went and got wood so they could set it on fire. As they were putting it in place, a woman looked down and saw Abimelech directly beneath her. So she dropped a piece of a millstone down on his head.

Abimelech called for one of his soldiers. “Quick, kill me with your sword! I don’t want to be known as the man who was killed by a woman!”

19. Mice & Tumors

1 Samuel 5-6:18

#79

After the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they put it in the temple of their god. The next morning, they found their idol face down in front of the Ark. They set the idol back up, but the next morning it was on the ground again. This time, the head and hands were broken off.

Suddenly the city was overrun with mice, and the people had large tumors covering their bodies. The men said, "This is caused by the Ark of Israel's God." So they moved it to another city.

Immediately, God's judgment hit that city. They were overrun with mice and the people developed large painful tumors. This caused the people to panic. The men sent the Ark of God to yet another city, but the people there yelled at them. "You're trying to kill us! We don't want that Ark in our city!"

They moved the Ark from city to city for seven months. Fear and death followed it wherever it went. Finally the Philistines asked their priests, "How can we send the Ark of the Lord back to Israel?"

They said, "If you send the Ark back to Israel, you must send a guilt offering with it. Then God will remove his hand of judgment, and you'll be healed. Make five gold images of your tumors and five gold images of the mice that are destroying the land. Give glory to the God of Israel, and he'll stop crushing you. But if you become stubborn, you'll be like Pharaoh when these people left Egypt. He'll send more plagues upon you until you send the Ark back to Israel.

"Here's what to do. Prepare a new cart and place the Ark of God on it. Put the gold objects in a box beside it. Select two milk cows that have never been in a yoke, and hitch them to the cart. Take the calves away from the cows and put them in a pen nearby. Then stand back and see what the cows do. If they ignore their calves and go up the road toward Israel, you'll know it was the Lord who tormented us for seven months. But, if the cows go toward their calves, we'll know that all of this was just something that happened by chance. It wasn't God's judgment."

The men did exactly as they were instructed. They got two milk cows and separated them from their calves. They hitched the cows to a cart, even though they had never been in a yoke before. They put the Ark on a new cart, along with the five gold images of their tumors and the mice.

When all was ready, they stood back and watched. The cows went straight up the road toward Israel. They stayed on that road with their heads down, lowing as they went. The Philistine rulers walked behind them all the way to the territory of Israel.

The people of Israel were harvesting wheat when they saw the Ark coming toward them. They shouted for joy. As they watched, the cows pulled the cart to a field near a large rock and stopped. The people of Israel put the Ark on the rock. They then used the wood from the cart to offer the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. When the Philistine rulers saw this, they returned to their country.

20 The Birth of Samson

Judges 13 #68

There was a man from the tribe of Dan whose wife couldn't have children. This was during the time when the Philistines had taken control of Israel. The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said, "Soon you'll become pregnant. The child you'll be carrying is going to have the vow of a Nazirite from the time he's born. So be careful. Don't drink alcohol or eat anything that is against the Law of Moses. And never cut your son's hair. He will save Israel from the Philistines."

The woman didn't realize she was talking to the angel of the Lord. She ran to her husband and said, "A man of God came and told me that you and I are going to have a baby. He told me not to drink any alcohol or eat anything that is against the Law of Moses. I'm not to cut his hair because our son is going to keep the Nazirite vow from birth."

Her husband immediately prayed and asked God if he would once again send the man of God to them. He wanted more instruction on exactly what they were to do when the child was born.

Later, the woman was sitting in the field, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to her again. She quickly ran and got her husband. She said, "That same man of God is out in the field."

The husband ran to meet him. He said, "Are you the man who talked to my wife?"

"Yes, I am."

The angel then gave him the same instructions he had given the woman. The man said, "Please stay here as we prepare a meal for you."

The angel said, "I'll stay, but I won't eat a meal with you. Instead, present a burnt offering to God."

The man and his wife still didn't know they were talking to the angel of the Lord. The man said, "What's your name? We want to honor you when all you say comes true."

The angel said, "I'm not going to tell you my name. It is too wonderful for you."

So the man prepared a burnt offering and sacrificed it on a rock. The flames rose up into the sky. Suddenly, as the man and his wife watched, the angel of the Lord went up into the flames.

The couple immediately fell to the ground. The man said, "We're going to die! We've seen God!!"

The woman said, "I don't think we're going to die. He accepted our burnt offering. Besides he said we were going to have a baby."

The woman followed the instructions she was given, and at the appointed time, she gave birth to a baby boy. They named him Samson.

21. Samson & Delilah

Judges 16 # 71

In time, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. When the Philistines found out about this, a group of their leaders met with her. They said, “Each of us will pay you 1,100 pieces of silver if you can find out the secret of his strength. Once we know that, we’ll be able to kill him.”

So she asked Samson, “How can someone tie you up in a way that makes you powerless?”

“Oh,” he said, “I’ll be like any other man if someone ties me up with seven brand new bowstrings.”

The Philistines gave her seven fresh bowstrings, and hid some guards in her room. She tied Samson up with the bowstrings, and then shouted, “Samson, the Philistines are here!” He jumped up and snapped the bowstrings as if they were pieces of yarn touched by a fire.

Delilah said, “You lied to me! Why would you make fun of me like that? Please tell me how you can be tied up.”

He said, “The key is new ropes, but only ones that haven’t been used for anything else. If I’m tied up with new ropes, I’ll be like other people.”

So she took some new ropes and tied him up. Guards were still in their hiding place. She yelled, “Samson, quick! The Philistines are here!” He jumped up and snapped the ropes like they were pieces of threads.

She said, “I’m nothing but a joke to you. Why do you keep lying to me? Now tell me how you can be tied up.”

He said, “It’s my hair. If you weave my seven braids with the web of a loom, I’ll be as weak as any other man.”

So she waited until he was asleep and carefully wove his seven braids into the loom. Then she yelled, “Samson! The Philistines are here.” He woke up and pulled his hair away from the loom.

Delilah said, “How can you say you love me when you don’t trust me? Three times now you’ve laughed at me by telling me a lie. Why can’t you trust me with the secret of your strength?”

She kept this up day after day. She begged and nagged him until she wore him down. Finally, he told her the truth. He said, “I’m what our people call a Nazirite. I’ve been one since birth. My hair has never been cut, and that’s the secret of my strength. If someone shaves my head, I’ll be like any other man.”

Delilah realized that he had finally told her the truth. She sent for the Philistine rulers. “Come. I finally got the truth out of him. Be sure to bring my money with you.” So they came with her money.

That night, he fell asleep with his head on her lap. A man came out of hiding and cut off his seven braids. As he did, Samson’s strength left him. Then she yelled, “Samson, the Philistines are here!”

He jumped up to defend himself, but he didn’t know the Lord wasn’t with him.

The Philistines grabbed him and he couldn’t break loose. They held him down on the ground and poked out his eyes. They then took him to prison, where he was forced to push a grain millstone.

22 Prayer of Hanna

I Samuel 1 – 3 # 77

Hannah couldn't have children. This tormented her so much that she went to the Tabernacle and begged God for a child. She said, "Oh Lord, if you'll give me a son, I'll give him back to you and he'll serve you for the rest of his life."

Eli, the high priest, noticed that Hannah was moving her mouth but she wasn't saying anything. He thought she was drunk. "Woman, put away your wine!"

"Oh sir! I'm not drunk. I'm praying to God."

"Oh, well ... uh ... go your way. The Lord will answer your prayer."

Sure enough, the Lord answered her prayer. In less than a year, she gave birth to a baby boy and named him "Samuel," which means "God heard me."

When the boy was old enough, his mother took him back to the Tabernacle and presented him to Eli. She said, "I prayed for a child, and the Lord answered me. Now I'll give my son to the Lord, and he'll serve Him for the rest of his life."

Every year Hannah came to visit and brought new clothes for Samuel. The priest prayed that God would give Hannah more children. After that she had three sons and two daughters.

23 Call of Samuel

I Samuel 1 – 3 #77

One night, while Samuel was sleeping, the Lord called out, “Samuel, Samuel.”

He woke up and ran to where Eli was sleeping. He said, “Yes, I’m here!”

Eli woke up and looked at the boy. “I didn’t call you, Samuel. Go back to your bed.”

Samuel went back and lay down. As he was going to sleep, the Lord called him again. “Samuel, Samuel.”

This time he knew he wasn’t dreaming. He got up and ran to Eli. “Here I am!”

Eli once again said, “Son, I didn’t call you. Now, go back to sleep.” So Samuel went back and lay down.

Once again, the Lord called to him, “Samuel, Samuel.”

At this point in his life, Samuel didn’t know God, and the Lord hadn’t talked to him. So, the boy did the only thing he knew to do. For the third time, he ran to Eli. “I’m here because you called me.”

This time, Eli realized what was happening. He knew the Lord was calling Samuel, so he said, “Go back and lie down. If you hear someone calling you again, say, ‘Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.’”

Samuel went back to his bed and lay down. The Lord called him once again, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Quietly Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

God said, “I’m not pleased with how Eli allows his sons to do evil in my house. I’m going to judge him and his sons.”

Samuel lay back in his bed. In the morning, Eli called him, “Samuel, what did the Lord say to you?”

The boy was afraid to tell him the message from God. Eli said, “Son, don’t hide it from me.” So Samuel told him everything.

Eli said, “He’s Lord! Let Him do what is good in His eyes.”

The Lord was with Samuel from that day on, and God continued to reveal His words to him. Samuel obeyed the Lord, and everything he said came true. All of Israel recognized that he was a prophet of the Lord.

24. Anointing David

I Samuel 16 #86

The Lord said to Samuel, “Take some anointing oil and go to the home of Jesse at Bethlehem. I’ve selected one of his sons to become king.”

Samuel said, “Lord, King Saul will kill me if he finds out.”

The Lord said, “Take a calf to Bethlehem and say you’re coming to sacrifice to the Lord. Invite Jesse and his sons to join you. I’ll show you which one to anoint.”

So Samuel went to Bethlehem and invited Jesse and his sons to join him in sacrificing to the Lord. When they came, Samuel was immediately impressed with Jesse’s oldest son. “Ah,” he thought. “This is the one the Lord will choose.”

God said, “Samuel, don’t look at outward appearance. It doesn’t matter how tall a man is or how strong. I see things you can’t see. He’s not the one.”

Jesse then introduced his second son to Samuel. Again, he wasn’t the Lord’s choice. Jesse introduced seven of his sons to the prophet. As he met each of them, the Lord said, “He’s not the one.”

Finally, Samuel said to Jesse, “Don’t you have any other children?”

“Oh, well yes. I do have one more – my youngest. He’s out watching the sheep.”

“Send for him. I’ll not eat with you until I see him.”

As soon as David walked into the room, Samuel could see that he was a striking young man – healthy and handsome. The Lord said, “This is the one. Get up and anoint him.” So Samuel anointed him with oil. After that the Spirit of God departed from King Saul and came upon David in a mighty way.

25. Corner of the Robe

1 Samuel 24 #92

King Saul started chasing David from place to place. At one point, David moved his men to the canyons of En-gedi. The king heard that David was at En-gedi, so he took 3,000 of his best soldiers and went there.

Along the way, Saul stopped, and went into a cave to relieve himself. He didn't know David and his army were in the back of that cave. His men were thrilled that the Lord had given Saul to David. They whispered, "Kill him!"

Instead, David quietly got close and cut off the corner of Saul's robe. Instantly, he felt guilty for doing this. He said to his men, "Hear what I'm saying. God anointed Saul to be king over Israel. Even my little finger won't hurt him." He held his men back so Saul could leave the cave peacefully.

As the king was walking away, David came out and yelled, "My lord the king!" Saul stopped and looked back. David was standing there. He said, "Who are you listening to? Who told you I wanted to hurt you? Look at the corner of your robe.

"It's missing because I'm holding it in my hand. God gave your life to me when you came into this cave. My men told me to kill you, but I didn't because you're my king. You're the Lord's anointed, and I would never hurt you.

"Listen to what I'm saying. I haven't sinned against you. Still you're trying to kill me. I'm asking the Lord to judge between us, and I know he will make things right. But I will never hurt you."

When Saul heard this, he broke down and cried. He said, "Oh my son David, you're more righteous than I. You have only returned good for all the bad I've done to you. How is it that the Lord gave me to you, and you didn't kill me? Who's heard of such a thing?

"Now I know it's true. You'll be king over Israel. Oh David my son, swear to me by the Lord. When you're king, don't kill my descendants. Don't eliminate my father's name from our tribe." So David made that vow to Saul.

The king then took his men and returned back home. David went back to the Stronghold.

26. Elijah & the Widow

1 Kings 17 #124

The prophet Elijah stood before an evil king named Ahab. He said, "I have a message from God. There will be no dew or rain until I say so!"

The Lord said to Elijah, "Leave here and go to a certain brook. It will provide you water, and I have already told the ravens to bring you food."

So Elijah went and lived next to that brook. And just as the Lord said, the ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and every evening. But in time, the brook dried up because there hadn't been any rain.

The Lord said, "Go to a Gentile town called Zarephath. I have selected a widow to provide for you there." When Elijah entered the village, he saw a woman gathering wood. He said to her, "Please bring me a little water." As she went to get it, he said, "And also bring me some bread."

She turned and looked at him. "I don't have any bread. All I have is a handful of flour in the jar, and a bit of oil in the jug. I was gathering these sticks so I could make it into bread for my son and myself. We were going to eat it and then die."

The prophet said, "Don't be afraid to do what I say. Go and make your bread, but when it's done, give some to me first. The Lord God of Israel has said, 'The jar will always have flour, and the jug will always have oil until the day God sends rain.'"

Again, she looked at him, and then went and did as he asked. She made the bread, and gave some to him first. Sure enough, from that day on, the jar always had some flour, and the jug of oil never ran dry.

She prepared a place for the prophet in the upper room of her house. It had a bed, a table, and a chair.

Some time later, the woman's son got sick. Soon his illness was severe, and finally he died. The woman went to Elijah and said, "Man of God, why did you come in to my house? Was it to expose my guilt, so you could kill my son?"

Elijah said, "Give me your son." He took the boy to the upper room where he was staying. He laid him on the bed and then prayed, "Oh Lord God, why did you bring me into this woman's home, and then kill her son?"

He then stretched out over the boy and prayed, "Oh Lord my God, please bring life back into this boy!"

He stretched out over the boy a second time. "Oh Lord my God, please bring life back into this boy!"

He stretched out over the boy a third time. "Oh Lord my God, please bring life back into this boy!"

Suddenly the boy started breathing. Elijah took him back down into the house, and gave him to his mother. He said, "Here is your son. He's alive."

The woman fell down before the prophet and said, "Now I know you are a man of God, and his word is in your mouth!"

27. Captain of 50

II Kings 1

50

At one point, the king of Israel broke through a wooden rail and fell to the ground from the second floor of his house. He was seriously injured, so he said to his servants. "Go ask the god Baal-zebul if I'll recover from this."

Elijah stopped the servants along the road and said, "There is a God in Israel. So why are you taking this question to Baal-zebul? Here is the Lord's answer for the king. You won't get up from your sickbed. Instead, you're going to die."

The servants went back and gave the king this message. The king said, "What did the man look like who told you this?"

"He was a hairy man with a leather belt around his waist."

"Oh, I know who he is. That's Elijah."

So the king sent 50 soldiers to go get Elijah. When they got to where he was staying, the prophet was sitting at the top of an embankment. The captain of the men yelled up at him. "Man of God, come down! I have orders to take you to the king."

Elijah said, "If I'm a man of God, fire will come out of the sky and kill you and your 50 men." Suddenly a fireball fell from the sky and killed the captain and his men.

So the king sent another 50 soldiers to get Elijah. When they got to where he was staying, the prophet was still sitting at the top of the embankment. The captain of the men yelled up at him. "Man of God, come down! I have orders to take you to the king."

Elijah said, "If I'm a man of God, fire will come out of the sky and kill you and your 50 men." Another fireball fell from the sky and killed the captain and his men.

Once again, the king sent 50 soldiers to go get Elijah. When they got to where he was staying, the captain of the men fell on his knees in front of Elijah. He said, "Man of God, please show compassion on us. Spare my life and the lives of these 50 servants of yours."

The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go with them. You'll be safe." So he got up and went with them.

When he saw the king, he said, "This is a message from the Lord. 'You could have asked me anything you wanted and I would have answered. But no! You sent your messengers to Baal-zebul. Therefore, you'll not get up from you sickbed. Instead, you'll die.'"

It happened just like Elijah said. The king died before having any children. His brother became king of Israel.

28. Blind Soldiers

II Kings 6:8-23 # 138

The king of Syria invaded the land of Israel. He brought in his military leaders and told them his plans—where he was going to set up camp and how he was going to attack the Israelites. As soon as he spoke the words, Elisha went and told the king of Israel exactly what the Syrians were planning. The army of Israel made preparations and won the battle.

This happened several times until the king of Syria finally realized that the Israelites always knew exactly what he was planning. He said to his commanders, “Which one of you is a spy for Israel?”

One of them said. “My lord, we’re all loyal to you. It’s Elisha, the prophet. He is the one telling his king about your plans. He knows what you say, even when you’re in your bedroom.”

“Where does this prophet live?”

“He lives in Dothan, my lord.”

So the king sent a large army with horses and chariots to Dothan. They arrived at night and surrounded the city.

Elisha’s servant got up early and stepped outside. Suddenly he saw this massive army. Running back inside, he yelled, “The Syrian army has surrounded the city. What are we going to do?”

Elisha was surprised. “Why are you afraid? Our army is much bigger than theirs.”

Then he prayed, “Lord, open this man’s eyes so he can see.” So the Lord opened his eyes. He looked out and saw that the mountain was covered with horses and chariots of fire. All of them were for Elisha.

At that point, the Syrians started moving in on the city. The prophet prayed, “Lord, please make all these men blind.” Suddenly the Lord struck them with blindness.

The prophet walked up to them and said, “Somehow you’ve gotten on the wrong road. You’re at the wrong city. I’ll guide you and take you to the right place.”

He then led them to Samaria, the capital of Israel. Once they were inside the gate, he prayed, “Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see.” The men looked around and realized they were in Samaria.

The king of Israel saw this and said to Elisha, “Should I kill them? ”

“No. You can’t kill these men. You didn’t capture them in battle. They’re your guests. Give them food and drink, and let them go back to their master.”

So the king prepared a great feast for his guests. When everyone had had enough to eat and drink, they went back to the king of Syria. It was a long time before Syria invaded Israel again.

29. A Book is found

II Kings 22 & II Chronicles 34:1-32 #157

Josiah was eight years old when he became king of Judah. He walked with the Lord from the day he became king until the day he died 31 years later. He was the last great king before the people of Judah went into captivity.

When he was 26 years old, he hired men to restore the Temple. Money had been given for that purpose, so he gave it to the workmen and said, "You have proven yourselves to be men of integrity. Therefore you don't have to keep an account of this money."

One day, a workman found the Book of the Law, written by Moses. He sent it to the king, who had it read out loud. When Josiah heard what was written in the book, he ripped his clothes and said, "Surely the Lord's anger is great against us! Our ancestors made a contract with God and then broke it over and over. His judgment on us must be close at hand. Go and find someone who can ask the Lord about this."

The priest went to a certain section of the city to the home of Huldah, a woman prophet. They asked her about what was written in the book. She said, "I have a message from God to the man who sent you here.

"God says, 'The people of this land have totally turned against me. They serve idols and false gods. I'm about to fulfill the judgment written in the book you found. Disaster will soon fall on this place and everyone who lives here. Nothing can turn away the judgment that is coming.' "

Huldah then said, "I have another message to the king of Judah. The Lord says, 'When you heard the words of this book, your heart was sad and you ripped your clothes and cried. You have sought me with humility, and I heard you. Therefore, you will not see the disaster I'm bringing on this place. I will wait until you die and are buried.' "

The priest took these words back to Josiah. When he heard them, he gathered together all the elders of Jerusalem and Judah. They in turn went and got the rest of the people. Everyone went to the Temple, where they heard the king read the Law of Moses. They heard about the agreements their nation had with God.

Once the reading of the Law was done, Josiah stood in the place reserved for the king. In front of everyone, he made those same commitments to the Lord. He vowed that he would follow God's commandments with all of his energies and power. All the people agreed to do the same.

30. Two Baskets of Figs

Jeremiah 24, II Kings 24:8-17, II Chronicles 36 #161

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah and destroyed Jerusalem. He did this over three separate times.

The first time, he took things from the Temple to put into the temples of his gods. He also took the best young men to serve as advisors. Among them was Daniel.

Three months later, the people rebelled again. Jeremiah warned them not to do this, but they didn't listen.

Nebuchadnezzar's army came back, and this time they took all the treasures and gold from the Temple. They stripped the city of everything of value, including the craftsmen, military men, and scholars. 10,000 people were marched off to Babylon. Among them was Ezekiel.

Only the poor were left to oversee the land. In time, they also rebelled and the city was completely destroyed. But before that happened, God gave Jeremiah a vision. The Lord said, "What do you see?"

The prophet said, "I see two baskets filled with figs. One is full of the most delicious fruit I've ever seen. The other has rotten figs that smell awful."

The Lord said, "The people in captivity are like the good figs. I'll watch over them and care for them. Their children will come back to this land, and they'll have a desire in their hearts to know me. I'll be their God and they'll be my people."

"But these people here in Judah are like the rotten figs. They're corrupt and rotten, and I'll treat them that way. I'll send heartache, plague, and famine. When I'm done, I'll throw the king and his people into the garbage."

The Lord had Jeremiah send a letter to those in exile. He said, "Build houses in Babylon and plant gardens. Get married, have children, and help your children get married. Get involved with your community and help your city to prosper. Don't believe anyone who tells you that you won't be there long. It's not true. You'll be in exile for 70 years, so make yourselves at home.

"I'll care for you. You can call on me whenever you want—and I'll listen. When the time of your exile is over, I'll bring you back here and restore to you all you left behind.

31. Judah Goes to Egypt

Jeremiah 40 – 44, 52:31-34 II Kings 25:22-30 #164

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, totally destroyed Jerusalem. He left a few people to care for the land and made Gedaliah governor of Judah.

Rebel soldiers still lived in the hills of Judah. Gedaliah met with them and said, “The king of Babylon wants to have peace with you. So stop fighting. Look at what the people left behind when they went into exile. You can harvest their grapes and olives and summer fruit. Select a town and go live there. I’ll represent you with the Babylonians.”

The soldiers followed this advice and lived in the land. Jews who lived in other countries came back and accepted Gedaliah as their governor. Altogether, they had a great harvest that year.

The king of Ammon hired ten Jews to kill Gedaliah. The people of Judah warned the governor about this plot. They said, “We have it good here. We don’t want these traitors to ruin it for the rest of us.” But Gedaliah didn’t believe them. He thought they were simply trying to get an advantage over their fellow countrymen.

Gedaliah invited the ten traitors to have a meal with him. During the meal, the men drew their swords and killed the governor. After throwing his body down a large well, they headed back to Ammon. The men of Judah chased after them. There was a battle, but most of the traitors got away.

The people of Judah knew what Nebuchadnezzar would do once he found out his governor had been killed. They made plans to escape to Egypt. They went to Jeremiah and said, “Ask the Lord what we should do. We promise we’ll do whatever he says.”

Ten days later, Jeremiah gave them a message from the Lord. “Don’t move to Egypt, but stay in Judah. I’ll be with you and protect you from the king of Babylon. If you stay, I’ll build you up and establish you here.

“I know you’re afraid, but listen to me. Your fears are waiting for you in Egypt. You won’t find war, hunger, and disease in Judah. No, they’re waiting for you in Egypt.”

The people yelled at Jeremiah, “You’re lying to us. The Lord didn’t tell you that. You want us to stay here so Babylon will kill us.”

The people left Judah and went to Egypt. They took the prophet and Baruch with them. Jeremiah finished his book in Egypt, and then he died.

32. Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37 #165

One day the Lord took the spirit of Ezekiel to a valley. He saw that it was filled with bones. They were so dry, they would turn to powder if you touched them.

The Lord said, “Son of man, can these bones become alive again?”

“Oh Lord, only you can give the answer to that.”

God said, “Stand among them and say, ‘Dry bones, hear what God says to you. Yes, the Lord is talking to you. He’s telling you he’s going to put breath back into you, and you’ll once again be alive. You’ll have flesh, and muscle, and skin ... and life. Then, you’ll know he’s the Lord.’ ”

So Ezekiel stood and told this to the bones. Suddenly he heard the sound of rattling all across the valley. The bones had become solid, and were reconnecting themselves. Soon there were complete skeletons lying all over the ground.

As the prophet watched, tendons and muscles formed on the skeletons. And then skin stretched over the flesh. They were like dead bodies lying on the ground, all across the valley. But even with all of this, they didn’t have life.

The Lord said to Ezekiel, “Son of man, preach to breath. Say, ‘Hear what God says to you. Yes, the Lord is talking to you. He’s telling you to ride on the four winds and come and enter into these dead bodies.’ ”

So Ezekiel said this to breath. Suddenly the wind blew and breath entered into all the dead bodies, and they became alive! They sat up ... and then got up. It was then Ezekiel realized they were a vast army.

The Lord said, “Son of man, these bones represent all twelve tribes of Israel. Right now they’re saying, ‘We’re no longer a nation. There’s no hope for us. Our bones are dried up.’

“Preach to them! Say, ‘Hear what God says to you. Yes, the Lord is talking to you. He is telling you that he’s going to open your graves of exile and bring you back to the land of Israel. He’ll put his Spirit in you, and you’ll live again. Then you’ll know that he is the Lord.’ ”

33. Gifts for the King

Matthew 2 # 179

While Jesus was still a young child, some men came from the east. Their research revealed that a royal redeemer would one day come to Israel. They studied the stars and saw signs that indicated this king had finally been born.

They went to Jerusalem and talked to Herod, the king who was appointed by the Romans to rule over Israel. They said, “Where’s the child who has been born King of the Jews? We see his star, and we’ve come to worship him.”

Herod was evil and cruel. He became angry when he heard the news of a different king born in his domain. Still, he controlled himself and told the men he’d look into the matter. He called for the priests and teachers and asked, “Where does your Scripture say Messiah is to be born?”

They were quick to answer. “He’s to be born in Bethlehem.”

Herod went back to his visitors and asked to hear more about the heavenly signs and exactly when the royal star first appeared. He then told them, “Go to Bethlehem. Once you have found the child, report back to me. I’d like to go... uh... worship him as well.”

The men traveled the few miles to Bethlehem and went right to the house where Joseph, Mary, and the young child lived. They bowed down before Jesus and worshiped him. They gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

God warned these men that they were not to return to Herod, so they avoided Jerusalem and traveled home a different way. That night, an angel appeared to Joseph. “Get up! Herod will send soldiers to kill the child. Go to Egypt and stay there until I tell you to return.” So Joseph got up in the night and took his family to Egypt.

Herod was angry when he realized the men from the east had disobeyed him. He sent soldiers to Bethlehem and had all the young boys killed—those under the age of two.

In time, Herod died, and the angel told Joseph it was safe to return to Israel. Still, he decided to move his family to Nazareth instead of going back to Bethlehem.

Jesus grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

34. Temptation of Jesus

Matthew 3:16 – 4:11, Luke 4:13 # 181

John baptized Jesus in front of all the people. When he came up out of the water, the sky suddenly opened and the Spirit of God, like a dove, came down on him. Then a voice said, “You’re my Son! I’m pleased with you.”

After the baptism, the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights. After that, hunger gripped his entire body.

Suddenly the tempter was by his side, “If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread so you can have something to eat.”

Jesus said, “God’s word says ‘Man is not to live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of mouth of God.’ ”

The devil took him to Jerusalem—onto the highest point of the temple wall. Jesus looked down at the rocks far below. The devil said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down off of this wall. God’s word says there are angels taking care of you. They’ll keep you from hitting those rocks below. You won’t even stub your toe on them.”

Jesus said, “Yes, but God’s word also says, ‘You’re not to tempt God and put him to the test!’ ”

The devil then took Jesus to a very high mountain. He caused the kingdoms of the earth, in all their glory, to appear before them. He turned to Jesus and said, “I’ll give you everything you see. All you have to do is bow down and worship me.”

Jesus turned and looked at him. “Leave me, Satan! God’s word says, ‘He’s the only one to be worshiped. God is the only one to be served.’ ”

With that, the devil left him. Soon angels came to Jesus and cared for his needs.

35. Call of Three Disciples

*Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:22-38,
Luke 4:31-44, Luke 5:1-11 #186*

One day he went to the shores of the Sea of Galilee to teach the people. They crowded around him to hear the word of God.

There were two fishing boats on the shore, and the fishermen were washing their nets nearby. Jesus got into the boat that was owned by Simon Peter, and asked him to push off a little from shore. Once this was done, he sat down and taught the people.

After he finished, he said to Peter, “Go into deeper water and let out the nets.”

Peter said, “Lord, we fished all night and didn’t catch anything. Still, if that’s what you want, I’ll cast out a net.”

He then took the boat into deeper water. When he cast out his net, he immediately caught a large school of fish – so many fish that the net started to rip apart. Peter yelled to his partners, “James, John!” They rushed out and helped gather in the fish. They filled both boats ... until they were in danger of sinking.

Peter was totally overcome by this miracle. He fell to his knees and said to Jesus, “Go away! I’m a sinful man!”

Jesus said, “Simon, don’t be afraid. In the past you caught fish. From now on, you’ll catch people.”

The fishermen brought their boats to shore, where they left everything and followed Jesus.

36. Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42 #184

One time Jesus took his disciples through Samaria as he traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee. This was unusual since Jews avoided any contact with Samaritans.

Around noon, they came to a well near one of the Samaritan villages. Jesus was tired, so he sat down while his disciples went into the town to buy food.

A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Please give me some water to drink."

The woman was surprised. "Jews usually don't talk to Samaritans. So, why did you ask me for a drink, since I'm a Samaritan woman?"

Jesus said, "If you knew who I am, you would ask me to give you living water."

She said, "Sir, the well is deep, and you have no bucket. How can you get 'living water'? Are you greater than Jacob who dug this well?"

Jesus said, "Those who drink from this well will get thirsty again. But those who drink my water will have a living well inside them that continually springs up to eternal life."

The woman was amazed. "Oh please, give me this water so I'll never get thirsty again. Then I won't have to come back to this well."

"Go get your husband and bring him here."

She looked away. "I don't have a husband."

"I know you don't. You've had five husbands, and the one you are living with now is not your husband."

Her eyes snapped back. "Uh, sir, I can tell you're a prophet. Please settle this age-old argument. We Samaritans say that this mountain is the place to worship God. The Jews say a person has to go to Jerusalem to worship. Who's right?"

"Woman, listen carefully. The time has now come when God is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and truth."

She was almost speechless! "I know that some day the Messiah is coming, and he'll explain all these things."

Jesus smiled. "The person speaking to you is the Messiah."

The woman left her water jug, and rushed back to the village just as the disciples were returning with the food. They were amazed that Jesus had been talking with her, but no one said anything about it.

When the woman got to the town, she told everyone about the man she had met at the well. "Come and see someone who told me everything I've ever done in my life. Surely he's the Christ." The men were curious, so they went out to see what she was talking about.

Meanwhile, the disciples were trying to get Jesus to eat the food they had brought from town. He said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

They looked at one another. "Did someone bring him something to eat?"

Jesus shook his head. "No, my food is to do the will of God."

"You think we still have four months until harvest." He pointed to the men coming out from the town. "Look over there. It's time to harvest right now."

The men came and talked with Jesus, and finally asked him to stay with them for a while. He stayed for two days, and many believed on him as their Lord and Savior.

37. Visitor from the Roof

Mark 2:1-12 & Matthew 9:9-13 #188

Jesus went into a house to teach. As soon as word got around, the house filled up with people. Among them were Pharisees and teachers of the law. The crowd went out through the doorway, with people standing outside.

Four men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a cot. They quickly realized they had no way of getting close to Jesus. So they carried the man and his cot up the outside stairs onto the roof. There, they made an opening by removing the tiles. When it was big enough, they lowered the man into the middle of the crowd and in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw the faith of the four men, he turned to the man on the cot, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

The religious rulers were shocked when they heard this. They thought, “How dare he say that! This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins.”

Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said, “Why are you so troubled? It would’ve been easy for me to say, ‘Get up and walk.’ But you needed to know that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins.”

He then said to the man, “Get up! Pick up your cot, and go home.”

Immediately the man got up, picked up his cot, and walked out in front of everyone. People were amazed and glorified God. They said, “We’ve never seen anything like this before.”

38. 2000 Pigs

Mark 4:35-5:20; Matthew 8:23-33

& Luke 8:22-39 #194

Their boat came to shore near a place where a wild man lived in the tombs. No one was able to control him. Many times they tried to put chains on him, but he easily snapped them off. He roamed the hills naked, and lived in tombs. He cried and yelled, and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus and his disciples get out of their boat, he ran and knelt down before him. He shouted, "I know who you are. You're Jesus, the Son of the Most High God! Leave me alone. Don't torture me."

Jesus said, "What's your name?"

"We're called Legion because we're many. Please, don't send us into the abyss. Look, there are pigs over on that hill. Send us there."

Jesus looked at the pigs, and said, "Yes, you may go there."

With that, the demons left the man and entered the pigs. All 2,000 of them went wild and rushed down the hill and off the steep bank. They plunged into the sea and were drowned.

The men who were tending the pigs ran into the town and told the people what happened. A crowd came out to see for themselves. When they got to Jesus, they saw the man who had been demon possessed. He was sitting quietly, fully clothed, and listening to Jesus.

Again the men told what had happened. Everyone was afraid, so they asked Jesus to leave.

As he got into the boat, the man who was healed said, "Please, may I go with you?" Jesus turned to him and said, "Go back to your people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them about God's mercy on your life."

So Jesus and his disciples left the shore and returned to the Jewish side of the lake. The man went to his hometown and started telling everyone what Jesus had done for him. The people who heard this were amazed.

39. Feeding 5000

John 6:1-10

& Matthew 14:14-33 #198

Jesus went up a mountain where he taught his disciples. A large crowd went with them so they could hear him teach.

Soon it became apparent that they were hungry, and there was no food. Jesus knew what he was going to do, but still he asked Philip, “Where can we get food for these people?”

“Lord, even eight months' salary couldn't buy enough food for all these people.” The other disciples said, “Send them into the villages so they can buy food for themselves.”

Jesus said, “No, I want you to feed them.”

“Lord, we don't have enough money to feed such a large crowd.”

Jesus said, “Go and see how much food we have.”

Andrew came back with a young boy. “Lord, this lad has five barley loaves and two small fish. But how can that help us with such a large crowd?”

Jesus said, “Give them to me.”

He took the bread and fish and blessed them. He then divided them among the disciples and said, “Give this to the people and tell them they can have as much as they want.”

They served the food to the people, who ate until they were satisfied. There were over 5,000 people there. Then Jesus said, “Go and pick up the remains.” When they did, they had twelve baskets full of bread and fish.

The people said, “This is the one the Scripture talks about – ‘the great prophet like Moses.’ ” They started talking among themselves about making him king.

Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he sent them away and told his disciples to go back by way of the sea. And he went up the mountain and prayed.

40. Seventy Times Seven

Matthew 18:21-35 #203

Peter asked Jesus a question. “Lord, what if someone wrongs me and I forgive him, but he wrongs me again? How many times should I continue to forgive him—seven times?”

Jesus said, “Peter, listen carefully. You’re to forgive him seventy times seven!

“Think of it this way. A king decided to settle the accounts with those who owed him money. So he brought in a man who owed him a million dollars. The king realized there was no way this man could pay him back. So he said to his accountant, ‘Take this man, his wife, and his children, and sell them. And then sell everything he owns. Get as much as you can, and apply it to his debt.’

“The man fell to the ground and yelled, ‘Oh king, please be patient with me and I’ll pay you everything I owe.’

“The king knew this was an empty promise, but he was sympathetic. He said, ‘Release this man. I’ll forgive his entire debt.’ The man could hardly believe his ears. His entire debt was gone, and he was free.

“A few days later, this same man found a friend who owed him 5,000 dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. ‘You owe me 5,000 dollars, and I want it now.’

“The friend fell down and yelled, ‘Oh please, be patient with me and I’ll pay you everything I owe.’

“ ‘No, I’ve lost my patience with you! I’m going to throw you into a work prison, and you’ll stay there until I get all my money.’

“The king was shocked when he heard what happened. He had the man brought before him. ‘You ungrateful wretch! I forgave your debt of one million dollars because I had pity on you. How could you treat your friend like this, and for 5,000 dollars!? Guard, take this man and throw him into prison.’ ”

Jesus then said to Peter. “My heavenly Father has been generous with you when he forgave all of your sins. Therefore, you are to be generous in forgiving others.”

41. Pool of Bethesda

John 5

#196

Jesus went to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival. There was a pool near the Sheep Gate called Bethesda. Local people believed that occasionally an angel would stir the waters of the pool. They felt a sick person would be healed if he or she were the first to get into the water after it was stirred. Therefore a large group stayed near the pool, waiting for the angel.

Jesus went there and saw a man who had been sick for 38 years. The Lord said, “Do you want to be healed?”

The man said, “Yes, but when I see the stirring of the waters, someone always gets into the pool before me.”

Jesus said, “Stand up! Pick up your bedroll and walk.” Immediately the man was healed and got up. Jesus slipped away into the crowd as the man was picking up his bedroll.

Some of the Jewish leaders saw the man carrying his bedroll. They said, “How dare you! This is the Sabbath. It’s not legal to carry bedrolls on the Sabbath.”

The man said, “But...but...a man healed me and then told me to pick up my bedroll and go home.”

“Who told you to do this work on a Sabbath?”

“I don’t know. He healed me and then disappeared into the crowd.”

Later, Jesus saw this man in the temple. The Lord said, “You’ve been healed, but you must stop sinning. If you don’t, something worse will happen to you.” The man now knew who had healed him. So he rushed to the Jewish leaders and told them that it was Jesus.

Hearing this made them more determined to end the influence Jesus had with the people. They felt his actions on the Sabbath were totally unacceptable.

Jesus said to them, “My Father works on the Sabbath, so I will too.”

Hearing this, the leaders started talking about killing him. They said, “He breaks the rules about the Sabbath. Now he calls God his father. He thinks he’s equal with God!”

42. Caught in Immorality

John 7:1 – 8:12

#204

At a Jewish festival, Jesus went to the temple and started teaching the crowd. Everyone was amazed at what he said.

The religious leaders sent guards to get him. They went, but they weren't able to grab him because it wasn't time for him to die. Soon, the guards were spellbound by his teaching. They finally returned to the religious leaders. The leaders said, "Where is he? Why didn't you bring him?"

The guards said, "We've never heard anyone talk like this man."

The next morning, Jesus was once again teaching at the temple. The religious leaders went to him with a woman they had caught in immorality. They thought they could use her to trap Jesus and get evidence against him.

They said, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. The law of Moses says we should stone her. But we want you to tell us what we should do."

He acted like he didn't hear them. He stooped down and used his finger to write in the dust. They didn't allow him to ignore them. They kept asking about this situation. Finally, he stood up and faced them. "Go ahead and stone her. But have the one without sin throw the first stone." He then stooped down and started writing on the ground again.

The men stood there without saying anything. Finally, they started leaving one by one, starting with the older men. Then Jesus stood up and looked around. He and the woman were the only ones standing in the middle of the crowd. He said to her, "Woman, where are those who were accusing you? Didn't they condemn you to death?"

She said, "No, they didn't, Lord."

He said, "Well, I won't condemn you to death either. Go, and don't sin anymore."

43. The Rich & the Poor

Mark 10:46-52

Luke 19:1-10

#212

A chief tax collector lived in Jericho, whose name was Zacchaeus. He wanted to see Jesus as he passed through town, but he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd.

So he ran down the path ahead of the people, and climbed up in a sycamore tree. He knew he'd be able to see Jesus when he passed under the tree.

When the Lord got to that spot, he stopped! He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down from that tree. I'm staying at your house today."

Zacchaeus quickly got down from the tree and welcomed Jesus into his house. People started to murmur, "How could he even think about staying in the house of that great sinner?"

But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, "I'm going to give half of everything I own to the poor. And where I've cheated people, I'll pay them back four times the amount I took from them."

Jesus said, "Today, salvation has come to this house. I came to seek and to save those who are lost."

As Jesus left Jericho, he passed a blind man named Bartimaeus. He was begging on the side of the road. He heard the crowd and said, "What's going on?"

"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

When he heard this, he yelled, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

People nearby told him to be quiet. But he yelled even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped and looked in his direction, "Go, bring him to me."

They went to Bartimaeus and said, "Jesus is calling for you. Hurry, get up and go to him."

Bartimaeus got up, threw down his beggar's coat, and went to Jesus. The Lord said, "What do you want me to do for you?"

"Teacher, I want to see!"

The Lord said, "Go. Your faith has healed you." Immediately, Bartimaeus could see, and he started following Jesus

44. Triumphal Entry

John 12:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:39-40

#213

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. He told two of his disciples, “Go into the village, and there you’ll find a donkey with her colt. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you’re doing, tell them ‘the Lord has need of them.’”

The two went into the village and found the donkey and colt. The men untied them and started walking away. The owners said, “What are you doing?” They replied, “The Lord has need of them,” so he allowed them to go. So the disciples brought the donkey and colt to Jesus.

No one had ever ridden the colt before that day, yet the disciples put their robes on it and helped Jesus get on. As he rode along the path, people spread their robes in front of him. The crowds grew as he rode down the Mount of Olives. They got palm branches and laid them on the path.

People shouted for joy, and praised God for all the miracles they had seen. “Blessed is the King who is coming in the name of the Lord!” As Jesus continued on, they shouted, “Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!”

Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Do you hear what your followers are saying? Make them stop!”

Jesus said, “If they stop, the stones will start shouting.”

As he was about to enter the city, he stopped and started to cry. He said, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! If you had only known! This was a special day for you, a day that would bring you peace. But now your eyes will be covered so you won’t be able to see. A mighty army will destroy you – all because you didn’t recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

He and the crowd continued into Jerusalem. The entire city was shaken by the event. Visitors from other countries asked, “Who is this?” The people said, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth.”

45. Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-45 #221

In the afternoon of the day Jesus rose from the dead, two disciples left Jerusalem and started walking to Emmaus. They were discussing the events of the previous few days. Suddenly they noticed someone walking near them. They didn't realize it was Jesus.

He said, "What are you talking about?"

They turned and looked at him. "Are you a stranger here? Don't you know about the things that happened in the last few days?"

"What things?"

"We're talking about Jesus of Nazareth, the one who spoke the words of God. Our leaders had him crucified three days ago.

"This morning, some women went to the tomb. They came and told us that the body was missing. A couple of men went, and sure enough, it was missing. Now the women are saying they saw angels and have actually seen the Lord alive."

Jesus spoke up. "Why are you so slow to understand? The prophets clearly said Messiah had to suffer these things." Then he started at the beginning of Scripture and explained the parts that were about him.

As they came near Emmaus, they said to him. "It's too dark to continue on. Please, stay with us." So, he went into the house with them.

At the evening meal, Jesus took bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Immediately they knew who he was. And then—he disappeared!

They looked at one another in amazement. Finally one of them said, "Our hearts were on fire as he explained the Scripture to us!"

They quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples what happened. They were in a room that was securely locked because they feared the Jewish leaders.

When the two men arrived, they said, "It's true! The Lord has risen. He walked with us explaining the Scripture. We didn't recognize him until he broke bread with us." The disciples couldn't believe it.

Suddenly the Lord stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Still, the disciples couldn't believe that what they saw was really Jesus. They thought it was a spirit.

He said, "Look at the scars in my hands and feet. Here, touch them. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bone like this."

They still couldn't believe because of their joy. He said, "Do you have something to eat?" They gave him some fish and honeycomb, and he ate it.

Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

46. Philip in Samaria

Acts 8:4 – 8:40 #229

When the persecution started in Jerusalem, believers were scattered throughout the region. Wherever they went, they told people about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ. The Holy Spirit allowed him to perform miracles among the people. Unclean spirits were cast out – screaming. The paralyzed were healed as well as the lame. The people of the city were amazed at what they saw, so they listened carefully to his preaching. They were filled with joy at what they heard.

The people there had been following the witchcraft of a man named Simon. But when they heard the gospel of Christ, they received it with joy. Simon also believed, and was baptized with the others.

The apostles heard that the people of Samaria welcomed the gospel, so they sent Peter and John to meet with them. After they arrived, they prayed for the believers, asking God to give them the Holy Spirit. The two men then laid their hands on the people, and the people immediately received the Holy Spirit.

Simon watched this with amazement. He offered Peter and John money and said, “Give me this power, so I can lay my hands on people and they’ll receive the Holy Spirit.”

Peter said, “You’ll be destroyed along with your money. You’re still holding on to your old ways. Evil lives inside of you. Pray and ask God to get rid of it.”

Simon cried out, “Please, pray for me. I don’t want these things to happen.”

After Peter and John went back to Jerusalem, God sent an angel to Philip. “Go to the road that leads south from Jerusalem.”

47. Healing of Dorcas

Acts 9:32-43 #231

Peter traveled from place to place, preaching the Gospel of Christ and encouraging fellow believers. At one place, he found a paralyzed man who had been lying on his bed for eight years.

Peter said to him, “The Lord Jesus has healed you, so get up.” Immediately the man was healed and got up. People in that area saw the man and heard what happened, and many of them put their faith in Christ.

There was a woman named Dorcas who lived nearby in the city of Joppa. As a disciple of Jesus, she loved people and did good works for them. She became sick and died.

Her friends prepared her body for burial and placed it in an upstairs room. The disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in the area, so they sent two men to him. They said, “Please come with us right away.” Peter agreed and went with them.

When he arrived in Joppa, they took him to the house where they had laid the body of Dorcas. He went upstairs and found women weeping for her. When they saw him, they showed him the various robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was alive.

Peter sent them out of the room and knelt down and prayed. Turning to the body, he said, “Dorcas, get up!”

With that, she opened her eyes and saw Peter. So, she sat up. He helped her up from the bed, and then called for the other women. He presented Dorcas to them—alive.

The news of this spread throughout Joppa, and many put their faith in Jesus.

48. Jail Break

Acts 12 #234

To please the Jews, King Herod arrested Peter and had him put in prison. Sixteen soldiers guarded him. The church began praying for Peter and didn't stop.

The night before he was to be executed, Peter was sleeping between two guards. His hands and feet were in chains. The other guards were standing next to various doors in the prison.

Suddenly, an angel appeared and filled the prison cell with light. Peter didn't wake up; so the angel poked him. "Wake up and get dressed." Peter looked up and saw the angel, but he didn't believe this was really happening. He thought he was seeing a vision. Still, he got up, and his chains dropped to the floor.

The angel said, "Follow me." Peter followed him through several guard posts until they came to the iron gate that led out into the city. Peter watched as it opened by itself.

They went along a city street when suddenly the angel disappeared. Peter stood alone in the night air, and finally realized he wasn't dreaming.

He went to where believers were praying for him and knocked on the gate. A servant girl came to answer. She was surprised to hear Peter's voice through the door. She ran back into the house and yelled, "Peter is standing at the door."

They didn't believe her, but she kept saying, "I know what I heard. Peter is at the door."

They said, "That's impossible! Peter is in prison. You probably heard his angel."

Peter continued knocking at the door, so they finally opened it. They were shocked when they saw him standing there, and they all started talking at the same time. Peter said, "Please, let me tell you what happened."

He then told them exactly how the Lord sent an angel to deliver him. They all gave praise to God for what he had done.

The next morning, the guards were horrified to find that Peter was missing! When Herod found out, he had all sixteen men executed.

Herod then went to a resort on the coast and delivered a speech to a crowd of people. After he was done, they shouted, "This is the voice of a god!" Herod was filled with pride. Suddenly, an angel struck him, and he was infested with worms and died.

49. Worship to Stoning

Acts 14 #236

Paul and Barnabas went to town called Lystra, and Paul preached the gospel of Christ. A man was sitting nearby who had been crippled since birth. He listened carefully to everything that was being said. Paul looked at the man and realized that God had put faith in his heart. So he said to him, “Stand up!” Immediately the man got up and started walking.

The people saw this and were amazed. They started yelling, “The gods have come to visit us!” People crowded around to see the gods who looked like men. Soon a pagan priest ran up with some animals. He and the people started sacrificing to Paul and Barnabas.

The apostles were horrified and ran out among the people, “What are you doing? We are men just like you. We’re here to bring you good news. God wants you to leave such foolishness and turn to him. He created all things, and he’s the one who provides for your daily needs.” Still the people wanted to sacrifice animals to them.

During this commotion, Jews arrived from the other cities where Paul and Barnabas had been. It didn’t take them long to turn the crowd into an angry mob. They picked up large rocks to kill Paul. Surrounding him, they threw the stones until he fell beneath the blows. This continued until they thought he was dead. His body was dragged out of the city and thrown onto a trash heap.

The believers of Christ gathered around the body of Paul to mourn his death. Suddenly he stood up—and walked back into the city!

The next day he and Barnabas went to another city, where many people put their faith in Christ. At this point, they revisited the various places they had been. They encouraged the believers and appointed elders for the churches. All of these towns were in a region called Galatia.

50. Singing in Jail

Acts 15:36 – 16:40 #239

In Philippi, there was a demon-possessed slave girl who made money for her owners by predicting the future. She started following Paul and Silas through the streets of Philippi. Suddenly she yelled out, “These men are here to tell us about salvation.”

She did this for several days. Finally Paul turned and said to the spirit within her, “Leave that girl! By the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her.” Immediately the spirit left her.

Her owners were furious! They knew the slave girl was no longer profitable to them. So they gathered a mob who took Paul and Silas to the city officials. They said, “These Jews came to Philippi and started teaching the citizens of Rome about their God. It’s not right!”

The city officials agreed and had the two men beaten publicly. They were then taken to jail, where the jailer put them in chains.

Around midnight, Paul and Silas started praying, singing, and giving praise to God. Suddenly an earthquake shook the foundations of the jail. The doors flew open and the chains fell off the prisoners.

The jailer woke up and saw that the doors were open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he pulled out his sword to kill himself. Paul shouted, “Wait! Don’t do that! We’re all here.”

The jailer grabbed a torch and rushed into the cell. He fell down and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

“Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you’ll be saved—you and your family.”

The jailer took them to his home and Paul explained the message of Christ. The entire family believed and was baptized. The jailer then washed the wounds of the men and served them a meal.

The next morning the city officials sent guards to the jailer. They said, “You may release those men and let them go their way.”

Paul sent a message back to the city officials. “We’re not leaving! We’re Roman citizens, and you had us beaten publicly and thrown into jail without a trial. Now you want us leave quietly. We’re not going. If you want us to leave, you’ll have to come and personally release us.”

The city officials were shocked when they heard that these men were Roman citizens. They rushed to the jail and quickly apologized. They personally brought them out of the jail and asked them to please leave the city.

Paul and Silas didn’t leave right away. They went back to the home of Lydia and encouraged the believers in Christ. Then they left.