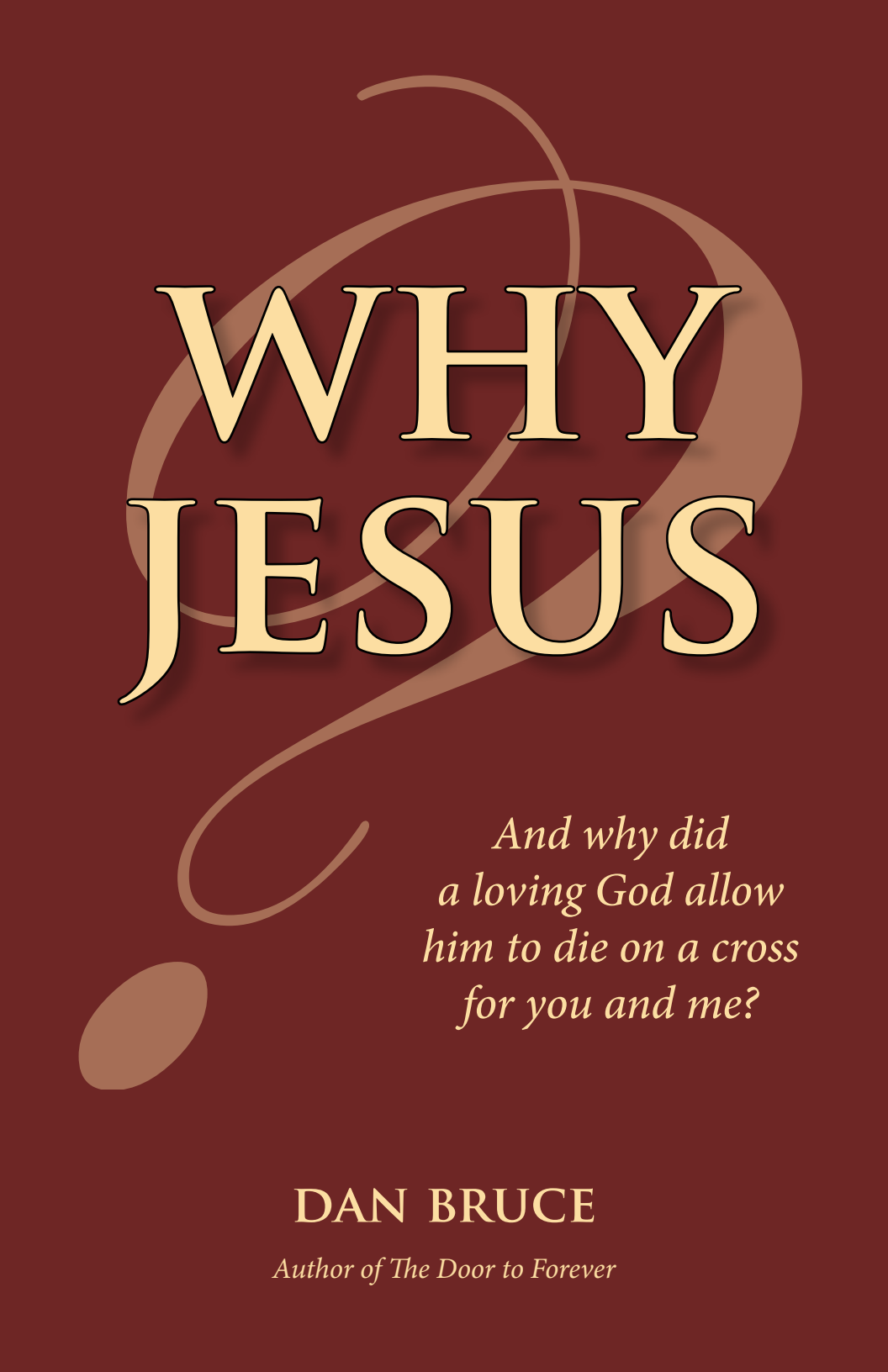


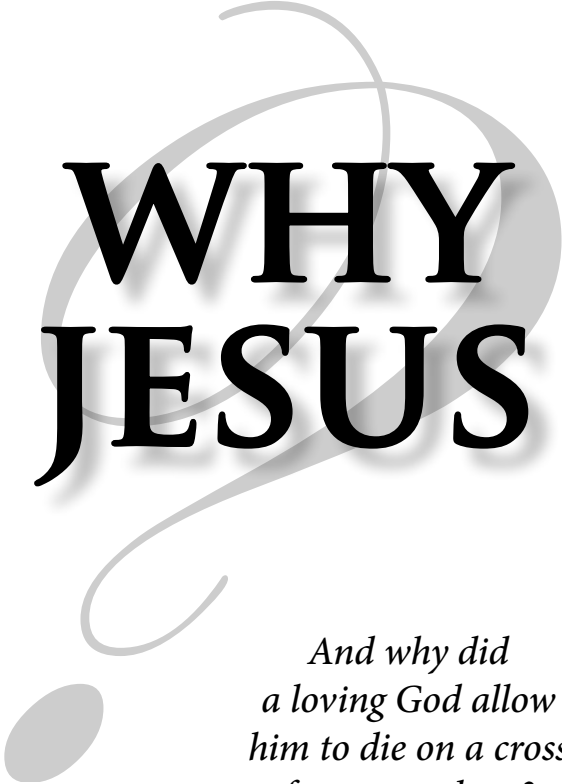


WHY JESUS

*And why did
a loving God allow
him to die on a cross
for you and me?*

DAN BRUCE

Author of The Door to Forever



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DAN BRUCE
THE PROPHECY SOCIETY
ATLANTA

WHY JESUS?

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INTRODUCTION

A Door to Forever

Why Jesus? Why does the Bible spend so much time telling his story? Born in obscurity two thousand years ago in Bethlehem, why did he become the central figure of human history? Why has the faith that carries his name shaped civilizations, inspired millions, and transformed countless lives? And how is it that all of this came about through an abbreviated life that ended on a Roman cross?

The story that gives answers to those questions does not begin with the physical birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. It starts farther back in the Book of Genesis, with the revelation that the world was created as a place for intimacy between man and God. It then tells the history of that communion—how it was created, broken, pursued, and restored.

In the beginning, human beings—a unique blend of temporal body and transcendent spirit—were created with one purpose: to love God and be loved by him.¹ Yet early on, that relationship was fractured by disobedience. Trust in God was forsaken, guilt and fear entered the human heart, shame took root, and the door to fellowship with God was slammed shut. But the story did not end with estrangement. It continued forward to embrace forgiveness and reconciliation.

From the Garden of Eden onward, Scripture reveals a God who seeks to heal people rather than punish them—a God who promises salvation rather than leaving them without hope. Again and again, human failure is met with mercy. Redemption is not humanity trying to restore connection to God; it is God reaching out to man.

This pattern finds its fulfillment in Jesus. God the Father did not merely promise restoration—the promise was made manifest in the person of his Son. Not as a ruler but as a servant with compassion. Not

distant from human suffering, but present within it. Jesus is not just another chapter in the biblical story; he is its culmination. He is not a solution to sin's power over man; he is God's answer to man's bondage to it. The cross stands at the center of that answer, not as an example of divine wrath but for us as proof of divine love.

Scripture teaches that sin is rebellion that causes relational destruction. It corrupts the mind, wounds the spirit, and separates man from God. That separation is not arbitrary—it is the consequence of holiness encountering corruption, of the Creator confronting what destroys. Because he is good and holy and omnipotent, God cannot ignore what opposes his very being, and that confrontation brings righteous judgment and spiritual isolation. The cross is the cosmic event where justice meets God's mercy, where his holiness confronts sin, and where his love pays the cost of our liberation from it.

The Bible tells the story of redemption, healing, and restoration initiated by a loving God. It reveals why Jesus stands at the center of history and human hope, and why his life on earth, death on the cross, and resurrection have made open the way into eternity.

Ultimately, it answers the question beneath all the others: Why was the death of Jesus necessary? The answer is simple: Because there was no other way for broken and powerless humanity to reconcile itself to God—not through religion, morality, ritual performance, or good works. It could only come through the grace of God—holy and powerful enough to nullify the sin within us, and merciful enough to bear the cost of doing so by offering himself in our place.

The story of Jesus is not simply about a good man who walked among us dispensing miracles and wisdom. It is the story of God himself entering space and time to call his children back to oneness. It is the story of how Jesus opened the door to an everlasting fellowship with the divine Father who *“gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*²

CHAPTER ONE

Love in the Beginning

The story of love begins in Genesis, with narratives that reveal the purpose of human life and how our relationship with the God who created us began. The narrative is not written to explain how the world was built, but to show how life with God was meant to be lived.³

Before there were laws, rituals, or institutions, there was a single reality: human beings were created for communion with their Creator. The Garden of Eden is not presented as a laboratory or a blueprint, but as a place of belonging, intimacy, and shared life. In the earliest pages of Scripture, we are given a relational portrait of who we are, who God is, and what existed before trust and fellowship were broken.

Genesis presents the beginning of human existence not as survival or struggle, but as shared life. Humanity enters the story already in communion with God. There is no fear, no alienation, no striving for identity. Adam and Eve do not search for meaning; they live within it. Their life is defined not by achievement but by presence. God walks with them. He speaks with them. He shares life with them in the cool of the day. The Garden is not merely a location; it is a relational environment where love permeates every aspect of existence.

Nothing in the sacred text suggests distance between Creator and creature in the Garden. There is no need to perform for acceptance. Life is received as a gift, not earned as status. Human identity is grounded in being created, known, and loved by God. Work exists, but not as burden. Authority exists, but not as domination. Freedom exists, but not as autonomy. Everything flows from trust and love.

The fracture of that idyllic world did not begin with violence or open rebellion. It began with distrust. The serpent's strategy was subtle:

it did not deny God's existence; it questioned the goodness of God's authority. Thus, the issue was not knowledge or action but trust. The temptation was not merely disobedience, but suspicion that God was withholding something good—that his commands were not protective, but restrictive. They started asking, "Did God really say?"

This was the decisive fracture: the movement from trust to self-interpretation. Reality was no longer perceived as it relates to God; it was evaluated apart from him. What was once trusted was now tested. What was once given as truth was now measured. This is why the fall was not only a moral failure—it was a relational collapse. Love cannot survive without trust. The act of eating forbidden fruit was not the root problem; it was the outward expression of a deeper rupture: the decision to live independently of God's authority.

The change was immediate. The effects appeared at once. The first consequence was not divine punishment, it was human distortion. Adam and Eve did not become free; they became fragmented. They gained knowledge of evil that prevented peace of mind, awareness of vulnerability without security, and self-consciousness without an anchored center. What was unified became divided within them.

With distrust, their fractured relationship traveled beyond self. The relationship of Adam and Eve with God broke first. Then their relationship with each other changed. Deflection and blame entered the story. Self-protection replaced mutual trust. Even their relationship with creation shifted from harmony to tension. This foreshadowed the biblical pattern of sin thereafter: one that damages relationship before it produces consequences. It isolates before it destroys. It divides before it corrupts. Sin is not primarily legal—it is foremost relational.

The human heart, is designed to be focused on God, but when infected by doubt it becomes focused inwardly. Love, once outward-looking, mutual, reciprocal, and relational, becomes self-preserving and defensive. The center of gravity shifted from God to self.

This inward turn reshaped the inner world. One of the most revealing details in the Genesis account is not what Adam and Eve did, but what they felt. For the first time, they experienced guilt and fear. Fear did not exist in the Garden before the fall. It arose from broken trust. And guilt and fear produced hiding. Instead of running toward God, they retreated from him. Instead of openness, there was hiding. Instead of relationship, distance. Today, fallen humanity's instinct is still concealment from God rather than communion.

Spiritual alienation began in the Garden. God did not change, but human perception of him did. Divine love was interpreted as threat rather than protection. His presence was now experienced as danger. The loving God who once walked with Adam and Eve was now someone to avoid. This pattern did not end in the Garden. It continues throughout human history. Guilt and fear follow broken trust. Fear produces hiding—emotionally, relationally, spiritually.

Separation as a result of disobedience is not God's desire, nor is it his design; it is the natural outcome of communion broken by man's distrust. God is not the one who abandons humanity—it is humanity that uses the gift of free will to withdraw from him. Yet even in separation, God responds first. He seeks to restore. He calls humanity to return. Grace enters the story as the answer to estrangement.

This pursuit of restoration by God is critical to understanding the nature of God. This is evident by the fact that the biblical story does not begin with judgment—it begins with grace. God's first response to human failure is not condemnation but compassion. Redemption is not a later idea; it is present from the beginning.

Sin produces separation from God, and separation introduces death—not physical death, but relational death: a disconnection from the source of life. Once sin corrupts the soul, humanity remains biologically alive but spiritually fractured. This condition, when Adam and Eve sinned and were banished from walking and talking with

God in the Garden, came to define the human condition from that point forward in time. People made for communion were instead living estranged from God, longing for restoration even when they did not understand what they were missing—or why.

From Genesis forward, the rest of Scripture unfolds as the story of reversing this separation. Covenant, sacrifice, law, prophecy, incarnation, and redemption all exist for one purpose: restoring communion—not merely moral obedience or religious performance, but a loving relationship.

The fall is not simply about sin—it is about love disrupted. Humanity was created for love, by love, and as an expression of love. When trust breaks, love fractures. When love fractures, life collapses inward. Every form of human brokenness we see in the world traces back to this original rupture.

Yet embedded within the fall is the promise of redemption. This is why Jesus matters. He is not introduced first as a moral teacher, but as the promised relational restorer. He came to heal separation at its root, not merely to correct its symptoms. He came to restore communion, not simply to enforce obedience.

This chapter begins in the Garden because the story of redemption begins there. Before sin, before law, before religion, before institutions—there was the communion of love between God and man. And the entire story of Scripture is about God’s faithful work to bring humanity back into that love.

God’s love is not merely the motivation for Creation; it is the foundation that defines the purpose of life for humanity. Everything that follows from the act of creation flows from this truth: human beings were created for communion with God, and nothing less will ever satisfy either God or the human soul.

CHAPTER TWO

Separation from God

Once distrust leading to disbelief and disobedience entered the human condition, the story of humanity's estrangement from God moved from the Garden into the life of every individual who has lived since Adam and Eve. What began as a relational rupture for them became the enduring pattern of human existence. The loss of communion was not a single event confined to the past—it became a continuing condition that reshapes every generation. What began as a broken relationship became a broken sense of wholeness. Something in the human story has felt unfinished ever since, as though life itself has been carrying the weight of an unresolved separation.

We see the evidence all around us. People live full lives, build families, create cultures, achieve success, and accumulate knowledge, yet beneath all of it runs a quiet unease—a restlessness that does not go away, a longing that does not resolve, a sense that life is meant to feel whole but does not. Humanity carries an undefined awareness of loss, not the loss of a person, a place, or a memory, but the loss of belonging itself. The world feels familiar yet foreign, active yet unsettled, full yet incomplete. People are present in life, but not fully at home in it, as if they are living in a world that feels recognizable but no longer relationally rooted.

This discontent is not merely emotional or circumstantial. It is the result of spiritual fracture. It is seen in the human heart—in the quiet spaces of thought, in unanswered questions, in the persistent search for meaning, identity, peace, and purpose. Human beings live with a sense that something essential is missing, even when everything appears present. Life functions, but it does not feel whole. Existence

continues, but it does not feel anchored, as though life is being lived without an identifiable center.

This lack of centeredness produces a search for fullness outside the self. People look for meaning in achievement, for identity in belonging, for security in exercising control, for peace in stability—especially financial stability—for worth in success, and for fulfillment in pleasure pursued even to the point of dissipation. These pursuits organize lives, structure societies, and shape identities. They give form to human civilization and direction to human ambition. Yet they do not satisfy the deeper hunger that drives them, because they are addressing symptoms without restoring communion.

Life becomes functional rather than whole, ordered rather than peaceful, connected rather than complete. People learn to cope with their inner discomfort rather than look for the root cause that would allow them to alleviate it. They manage anxiety instead of resolving it. They regulate desire instead of understanding it. They suppress guilt instead of repairing what is broken. They control environments, curate identity, and protect vulnerability. The inner world becomes guarded, and trust is replaced by caution, openness by self-protection, dependence by independence, and vulnerability by control, creating lives that appear stable but remain inwardly unsettled.

The self turns inward. Identity becomes something to construct rather than something innate. Worth becomes something to prove rather than something that is unalienable. The search for meaning becomes something directionless rather than something lived. Life shifts from relationship to management, from communion to domination, from trust to self-reliance. Personhood becomes a project to be maintained rather than a soul to be formed, and life becomes something to manage rather than a relationship to live within.

Gradually, fear becomes the quiet governor of behavior—fear of rejection, fear of loss, fear of insignificance, fear of abandonment, and

fear of death. Beneath much of human striving lies the desire to avoid these fears rather than to address their cause. And all too often, shame reshapes identity, not simply as the sense of doing wrong, but as the feeling that one's very being is wrong. The question shifts from "What have I done?" to "What is wrong with me?" Identity itself becomes burdened with self-condemnation.

This produces hiding: hiding from others, hiding from truth, hiding from vulnerability, hiding from self, and hiding from God. The human heart learns concealment as a survival strategy. Transparency becomes dangerous. Openness becomes risky. Dependence becomes weakness. Relationship becomes exposure, and isolation becomes a form of emotional safety.

The individual becomes divided inside. Longing and fear pull in opposite directions. Desire and conscience compete. Love and self-protection conflict. The inner life becomes fragmented, unstable, and internally strained. People experience themselves as divided beings, torn between what they want to be and what they feel able to be, between who they are and who they wish they were, living with a persistent sense of internal contradiction.

This condition is universal. It crosses cultures, transcends history, and exists in every society. A look at history shows that every civilization has organized around it, and every system attempts to manage it. Education seeks to correct it. Law seeks to restrain it. Religion seeks to regulate it. Psychology seeks to interpret it. Politics seeks to control it. Culture seeks to normalize it. But management is not healing, and structure is not restoration.

Thus, the human story becomes the story of people learning how to live functional lives with fractured souls. They succeed while remaining restless for success, belong while lonely for fellowship, prosper while anxious about loss of prosperity, achieve while accumulating empty rewards, and live without wholeness. They learn

how to survive, but not how to be whole. They learn how to function, but not how to be restored, and they adapt to brokenness rather than recognizing that God has provided a way to escape it.

At some point in life, each human being becomes a person searching for a home they can't quite name, a belonging they can't quite find, a wholeness they never quite attain, and a contentment they never seem to enjoy for long. Beneath the noise and activity of daily life, questions keep surfacing: Why do I have this longing for connection? Is what I'm hearing the echo of separation from God? Is my restless soul experiencing a genuine hunger for reunion with the divine?

Usually left unspoken and often repressed, the inner questioning never really goes away on its own. The hunger for wholeness stays. The desire for meaning stays. The search for something beyond oneself stays. The awareness of the need for connection with something greater than self remains. And trying to ignore the longing doesn't erase the ache; it deepens it, because a broken spirit still yearns for healing, and the awareness of separation from God continually gives rise to the desire for communion.

Fortunately, this is where the story of humanity's separation from God—documented in Genesis—continues through Scripture with the progressive revelation of the one pathway that leads to restoration. The reconciliation needed for that to happen doesn't come through good works, striving for personal perfection, or the practice of religion. No—it comes only through the way God himself has provided. The separation from God that began in the Garden is made impermanent by God's continual reaching out to us with forgiveness and love.

That part of the story is told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Promise of Restoration

The promise of restoration to oneness with God did not appear suddenly or fully formed. It unfolded gradually in the *Tanakh*,⁴ woven into the story of humanity across centuries. Long before the name of Jesus was spoken, the Hebrew Scriptures were already telling a story of loss and longing, of separation and hope, and of a future restoration that would come through a promised deliverer. Redemption in the Bible is not an afterthought; it is the central thread of history.

The first hint of restoration appears at the moment humanity's relationship with God fractures. In the aftermath of disobedience in the Garden, God speaks words that hold both judgment and hope. Evil will not have the final word. A future offspring —unnamed and unexplained— who will one day confront and defeat the power that brought separation into the world is promised (Genesis 3:15). From the beginning, God reveals that what has been broken will not remain broken forever. Before humanity understands the depth of its loss, God announces his intention to restore.

As generations pass, the promise narrows and takes on shape. God chooses Abraham, not because of greatness or virtue, but by grace. Through him, God declares that all the families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:1–3; 22:17–18).⁵ The promise of restoration is global from the start. What was lost in Eden is not meant to be recovered for one people alone, but for humanity itself. That promise survives famine, fear, and failure as it is reaffirmed to Isaac and then to Jacob (Genesis 26:3–5; 28:13–15). The story makes one truth unmistakable: redemption does not depend on human faithfulness, but on the faithfulness of God to keep his promise.

When Jacob is renamed Israel, the promise deepens. Near the end of Israel's life, he gives his blessing to his sons. To one son, Judah, it is revealed that kingship will arise from his line, and the obedience of the nations will one day belong to a ruler from among his descendants (Genesis 49:10). Thus, restoration will come through a king—but his kingship and the blessing will not be confined to the children of Israel. The promise of God's restoration is already worldwide.

The promise of blessing through Judah is clarified when God establishes his covenant with King David, who is promised a son whose throne will endure forever (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Earthly kingdoms rise and fall, but this promise reaches beyond ordinary succession. It points to a rule sustained by God himself. The Psalms echo this hope, speaking of God's anointed king, installed by divine decree, ruling with authority while inviting the nations to seek refuge in him (Psalm 2:2–12; Psalm 89:3–4). Kingship and mercy stand side by side.

The promise is further clarified by the prophets of Israel. Isaiah describes a ruler from David's line who will govern not by force, but with wisdom, righteousness, and peace (Isaiah 9:6–7; 11:1–10). Under his reign, justice replaces oppression, and harmony returns not only to society, but to creation itself. Yet the same prophet introduces a startling tension. Alongside the vision of a triumphant king stands another figure—a servant who does not conquer, but suffers. He is rejected and misunderstood. He bears the guilt of others and is wounded so that healing may come (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). His suffering is not a failure of the promise, but the means by which restoration is fulfilled.

Here the story takes an unexpected turn. The seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, Judah, and David will not only be a king; he will also be a servant. Through suffering, not kingly glory, Isaiah reveals that he will bring the blessing of salvation to the world.

A thousand years later, when the nation of Israel is expelled from the promised land to live in exile in Babylon because of disobedience,

the prophets of Israel must confront a deeper problem. The issue is not merely political defeat or moral decline. Instead, it is a manifestation of the ancient fracture caused by unbelief that resides in the human heart—once again reflecting the original sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden.

In response to the exile, God sends a message of hope through the prophet Jeremiah. He reveals that God will make a new covenant with Israel that will replace the covenant given to Moses at Sinai—one in which God's law will be written on the heart, sin will be forgiven, and knowledge of God will become personal rather than institutional (Jeremiah 31:31–34). Restoration to communion with God must begin from within the heart of each individual.

Ezekiel carries the promise even further. He reveals that God will cleanse his people, give them a new heart, and place his Spirit within them so that obedience flows from transformation rather than fear (Ezekiel 36:25–27). Yet even here, the promise remains anchored in a shepherd from David's line—a ruler who gathers, leads, and brings reconciliation and peace with God (Ezekiel 37:24–28). Under his care, God's presence will dwell among his people once more. Restoration is ultimately relational. God will live within the hearts of those he redeems.

Subsequent prophets add a sobering note. Zechariah speaks of a day when the people of Israel will look upon one who has been pierced and mourn (Zechariah 12:10). Recognition will come with seeing his suffering. Understanding will come after his loss. The promised redeemer will not be immediately understood; he will first be recognized through the suffering he endures.

Isaiah echoes this pattern when he declares that a redeemer will come to Zion for those who turn from transgression, securing a lasting covenant through God's Spirit (Isaiah 59:20–21). Restoration is offered freely, but it is received through repentance and humility.

Finally, Daniel records a vision that lifts the story beyond national borders and historical limits. A figure described as one like a son of man is brought before God and given authority, glory, and an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13–14). His dominion will not pass away. All nations will serve him. He is unmistakably human, yet invested with divine authority. His kingdom is not sustained by force, but by the will of God.

By the time the Hebrew Scriptures reach their close, these promises were no longer abstract ideas, but living expectations. They were read aloud in synagogues, debated by teachers, and carried quietly in the hopes of ordinary people. Some awaited a king who would restore justice. Others longed for deliverance from suffering, exile, and sin. All shared the sense that history was moving somewhere—that God had spoken, and that what he had promised was still unfinished. The Scriptures did not invite speculation so much as watchfulness. They taught Israel not merely what to believe, but what to await.

Taken together, the pattern of those promises is clear. The promised redeemer would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, Judah, and David. He would rule, yet serve. He would bring justice, yet suffer. He would restore Israel, yet bear the sins of many to become a blessing to all nations. His work would reach into the human heart and confront death itself.

The *Tanakh* does not resolve the tension created by this unfulfilled promise of restoration. It leaves the story open, cultivating expectation rather than conclusion. Yet it does prepare the reader for recognition—so that when the Promised One appears, he will not arrive as a stranger to the story, but at its center. How the promises revealed over centuries will finally find fulfillment in a single life sent by God is the story that is told in the *Berit Hadashah*.⁶

CHAPTER FOUR

Arrival of the Promise

The Jewish people in Israel did not enter the first century as a people without hope. The promises of redemption recorded in their Scriptures were still believed by many, read weekly in synagogues and remembered in prayers, but the world in which those promises would have to be fulfilled was changing rapidly.

Rome ruled the promised land with military might and political calculation. Herod ruled by favor and fear, rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem as he tightened his grip on power. The Temple still stood, sacrifices were still offered, and the rhythms of worship continued—but beneath them lay a growing sense of tension. Faith endured, yet freedom seemed delayed. If restoration to chosen status was coming, it would have to come into a Roman world, not as Israel wished it to be.

Into that world, a child was born in Bethlehem, without official announcement or ceremony, recognized only by angels and by foreign wise men guided by cryptic signs they dared to believe (Luke 2:8–14; Matthew 2:1–12). His arrival did not register in royal courts or imperial records. No decree marked his birth. No celebration followed. He was born into an ordinary family, in a small backwater town, among people accustomed to oppression and hardship. Yet from the beginning, his life was framed by expectation. His birth was not presented as the start of something new, but as the continuation of something ancient—a promise long carried now entering history (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14).

The circumstances surrounding his birth hinted at both danger and destiny. Herod's fear revealed how fragile earthly power can be when confronted by the possibility of a true king (Matthew 2:3–18). The child's family fled, to return quietly, passing through ancient history in

obscurity rather than triumph. Nothing about these early years suggested a political deliverer or national hero. Instead, the pattern was humility, preservation, and silence. God was at work, but not in ways that demanded attention.

As the child grew, Israel continued to yearn for deliverance. Years passed with no public sign that anything had changed. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, known to his neighbors not as a figure of mystery, but as the son of a carpenter, living within the ordinary day-to-day patterns of village life (Luke 2:40, 52). The silence itself reflected the nature of the promise: However, God was not absent. Restoration would assuredly arrive but with divine timing. The future Redeemer would not step onto the stage of history before the moment was right.

When that moment came, it was announced not by a king or high priest, but by a prophet. John the Baptist emerged in the wilderness of Judea, clothed in the simplicity of a prophet's calling (Matthew 3:1–4). His message did not call for revolt against Rome or resistance against Herod. Instead, it cut deeper. He called Israel to repentance outside the authority of the Temple's sacrificial system. The kingdom of heaven, he declared, was near—not because armies were assembling, but because God was at last acting as foretold (Matthew 3:2).

John's voice echoed the teachings of the ancient prophets of Israel. He spoke of preparing the way of the Lord, of straightening paths, of hearts that needed turning before restoration could come (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1). Crowds gathered, not because John offered solutions, but because he named the problem clearly. Israel's greatest need was not political liberation, but spiritual renewal. John did not point people to himself. He pointed to one greater than himself—to one who was already among them, though not yet revealed (John 1:26–27).

John stood as the final voice in a long prophetic line, closing one chapter of Israel's covenant story while opening another rooted in grace and faith. The era of Mosaic law was drawing to a close.

When Jesus came to John to be baptized, there was nothing to distinguish him from the crowds. He did not arrive with followers or credentials. He came not as a ruler, but as a common man, stepping into the waters alongside those confessing their sins (Matthew 3:13–15). John hesitated, sensing the he was unworthy to preside over the transition to the new era that was taking place, but Jesus insisted on being baptized to announce that he himself was that mediator. The baptism of Jesus was not about repentance from wrongdoing; it was about his identification as the Promised One prescribed in Scripture.

His baptism of Jesus could not be for the forgiveness of sin, for he himself was sinless, but it marked the beginning of his public mission to bring God's forgiveness of transgressions and cleansing of God's memory from the sin. As Jesus emerged from the water, the Spirit descended and rested on him, and a voice from heaven affirmed him as the Son of promise—a declaration of identity and purpose first recognized by John (Matthew 3:16–17). With that act, the long-awaited promise of restoration to oneness with God entered time. What had been anticipated through Scripture now stepped into visible reality.

Yet this profound moment did not resolve the kingdom expectations of the Hebrew people. Jesus did not gather an army or claim authority over political or religious institutions. He withdrew instead into the Judean wilderness, to be tested (Matthew 4:1–11). There, he rejected every temptation to abandon his sacred mission. He refused to turn provision into spectacle, trust into presumption, and authority into domination. His choices revealed the kind of Promised One he would be—and the kind he would not.

When Jesus returned from the wilderness, his actions did not answer Israel's expectations. He did not rally followers with promises of power or announce a political program to bring about liberty and universal peace. Instead, he spoke of the kingdom of God, not as an earthly revolution but as a present reality residing quietly in open

hearts (Mark 1:14–15). He taught in the Temple, in synagogues, while walking dusty roads, often speaking in parables drawn from everyday events and the ordinary things of daily life. The kingdom he described did not resemble the kingdom Israel was expecting.

Although he had the authority as the Son acknowledged at his baptism by the voice of God as the expected Savior of Israel, Jesus did not try to seize authority; he already had all authority vested within himself by God. But, he did not demand allegiance; he simply invited voluntary submission and trust. Those who listened sensed that something was different. He spoke with a weight that did not rely on position or title (Matthew 7:28–29). His authority was made manifest through humility, compassion, and truth rather than command.

From that moment in history forward, the story for Israel—and for all mankind—would no longer be about waiting with hope. It would become a question of recognizing the actualization of that hope happening before their eyes. People began to ask who Jesus was. His words and actions were resonating with the promise of salvation they had cherished for generations. Some recognized in him the shepherd Israel had long awaited. Others saw a threat to established order. Still others were uncertain, caught between skepticism and expectation.

Nevertheless, the reality was that the promise had arrived, quietly, deliberately, and in the form of a humble man from the Galilee that few expected. For those who believed, what remained was not whether God had acted as foretold, but whether all Israel would embrace the one through whom God had chosen to act. The arrival of the Promised One did not force belief; it invited discernment and a heart open to the mystery that God had entered history as a person incarnate, not to condemn it, but to restore it from within.

The story now turns to how the life of the Promised One would unfold, and to what it would mean to have him walking and proclaiming the kingdom of God among his people.

CHAPTER FIVE

He Walked Among Us

The public ministry of Jesus did not begin with a sermon or a miracle. It began with a show of humility at his baptism in the Jordan River, where ordinary men and women were confessing their sins and longing for renewal. Jesus stepped into the water beside them (Matthew 3:13–15), although he had no sins to confess. Yet he chose to stand with those who did. In that simple act he revealed the heart of his mission to restore broken humanity to God. As soon as he rose from the water, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended like a dove and rested on him, and the Father’s voice declared, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:16–17). The door to restored communion with God had quietly opened.

After his baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tested for forty days and forty nights (Matthew 4:1). The temptations he faced were choices about the kind of Savior he would be. He declined to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger, choosing trust in God over self-provision (Matthew 4:3–4). He resisted the temptation to test God’s promise of protection, refusing a dramatic display (Matthew 4:5–7). And he rejected earthly power, even when offered all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8–10). Each refusal revealed the truth that the kingdom of God would not be built by coercion or domination. Restoration to the Father would come through obedience, love, and sacrifice. Jesus emerged from the wilderness committed to a path that would lift people up rather than rule over them.

When Jesus began to teach, his message was simple and direct: “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17). The call was not to join a movement but to return people to God. He invited

fishermen mending their nets, a tax collector counting coins, and ordinary laborers going about their day to follow him as disciples (Matthew 4:18–22; 9:9). There was no entrance exam, no demand for perfection—only the invitation to walk with him.

He spoke in parables drawn from everyday life: seeds scattered in fields, lamps placed on stands, a father watching the road for a wandering son. These stories were not puzzles to be solved but windows into the Father’s heart. Jesus described God not as distant judge but as a Father who runs to embrace a prodigal son (Luke 15:20), a shepherd who searches for one lost sheep (Luke 15:4–7), a host who invites the poor and forgotten to his table (Luke 14:21–23). The kingdom he proclaimed was not a political program. It was the restoration of relationship—God drawing near and calling them back to himself.

Early in his ministry Jesus gathered a multitude on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee and spoke words that turned the world’s values upside down. He called the poor in spirit blessed, promised comfort to those who mourned, and named the meek as heirs of the earth (Matthew 5:3–5). He spoke of a righteousness deeper than rule-keeping—a purity of heart that seeks the Father rather than applause. His teaching did not lower God’s standard; it revealed that the standard was love itself. To hear him was to realize that the kingdom he brought was meant to heal motives as well as actions, to restore the inner life so that communion with God could be genuine and free.

Wherever Jesus walked, compassion followed. In a Galilean village a leper knelt before him, daring to hope for the impossible. Society had declared the man untouchable, yet Jesus stretched out his hand and said, “*I am willing; be cleansed*” (Matthew 8:3). In Jericho a blind beggar cried out above the noise of the crowd, and Jesus stopped, asking, “*What do you want Me to do for you?*” (Mark 10:51). When the man received his sight, he followed Jesus along the road, a living testimony that mercy had come near.

One day a desperate father named Jairus fell at Jesus' feet, pleading for his dying daughter (Mark 5:22–23). Before they could reach the house, messengers arrived with the final word—she was gone. Jesus answered only, *“Do not be afraid; only believe”* (Mark 5:36). Taking the child by the hand he said, *“Little girl, I say to you, arise”* (Mark 5:41). Death yielded to his voice, and a family received back what sorrow had stolen. Moments like these revealed that the reunion Jesus offered reached further than illness or regret; it reached to the deepest human fear—the fear that life itself might be lost forever.

These were not merely displays of power; they were signs of reunion—previews of a world where separation from God would no longer wound the human soul. Most startling of all was his willingness to forgive. When a paralyzed man was lowered through a roof by desperate friends, Jesus looked past the broken body to the deeper need and said, *“Son, your sins are forgiven you”* (Mark 2:5). To a woman caught in public shame he spoke words she never expected to hear: *“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”* (John 8:11). Jesus treated sin as a barrier to communion, not a label to define a person. Forgiveness, in his hands, was the beginning of a new life.

Even his meals carried meaning. In Jericho he looked up into a sycamore tree and called a dishonest tax collector by name: *“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house”* (Luke 19:5). That evening a life changed course, and Jesus declared that salvation had come to that home (Luke 19:9). Again and again the table became a picture of the kingdom—God welcoming home those who never expected an invitation. Restoration was not a theory; it was a lived reality unfolding around shared bread and ordinary conversation.

At the center of everything Jesus taught was one revolutionary idea: God is Father. He told his followers to pray, *“Our Father in heaven”* (Matthew 6:9). He assured them that the Father knows their

needs before they ask (Matthew 6:8). Anxiety, he said, could be replaced with trust because the Father who cares for birds and flowers—cares far more for his children (Matthew 6:25–30). Love, not ritual, was the true fulfillment of the law. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus answered without hesitation: to love God with all the heart and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22:37–40). In the parable of the Good Samaritan he showed that mercy outweighs religious boundaries (Luke 10:36–37). Restoration to God would be measured not by outward performance but by transformed hearts.

The miracles of Jesus were not interruptions of nature but revelations of its intended future. One evening on the Sea of Galilee, terrified disciples shook him awake as waves crashed over their boat. Jesus rose and spoke to the storm, *"Peace, be still!"* and the sea obeyed (Mark 4:39). On a hillside he blessed a small boy's loaves and fish, and thousands ate until they were satisfied (John 6:11–13). At the tomb of Lazarus he called a dead man back to life (John 11:43–44). Each act declared the same message: the Creator had stepped into his creation to heal it from within. The powers that held humanity captive—disease, guilt, fear, even death—were being confronted by the presence of the Son of God.

Yet the closer Jesus came to the broken, the more distant he became from the powerful. The humble drew near; the proud grew uneasy. Religious leaders questioned his authority because he forgave sins (Mark 2:7), healed on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1–6), and welcomed those they had written off. Jesus exposed the difference between religion that protects image and faith that restores life. He warned against honoring God with lips while hearts remained far away (Matthew 15:8). Love, he insisted, must be greater than control.

Gradually he began to speak of himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). He would not force anyone to follow him; he would call them by name and invite trust.

Some turned back when his words grew difficult (John 6:66). Others clung to him because they sensed in him the words of eternal life (John 6:68). He knew where the path was leading. More than once he told his disciples that he would suffer, be rejected, and rise again (Mark 8:31). Restoration to the Father would require more than teaching and miracles—it would require the offering of his own life.

As Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, his steps carried the weight of purpose (Luke 9:51). Love would not turn back. The same hands that healed would soon be pierced; the same voice that called the weary to rest would cry out from a cross. Yet even on the road to suffering, he continued to gather the lost, comfort the grieving, and invite the burdened: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Rest was another word for restored communion—the return of the soul to the Father who created it.

By the time he entered Jerusalem, no one could remain neutral. Some waved palm branches and hoped for a king who would remake the world by power. Others feared the loss of the authority they had carefully built. But all sensed that God was doing something decisive in their midst. The life of Jesus walking among us was not simply the biography of a remarkable man; it was the account of God drawing near—touching wounds, forgiving sins, and calling estranged children home. Every healing, every parable, every meal, and every step toward the city pointed to one purpose: the restoration of oneness between God and humanity.

As Jesus walked among the people, teaching with authority and compassion, it became clear that his presence could not remain neutral. Those who were burdened by sin, sickness, and shame were drawn to him, while those whose power depended on control, fear, and appearances grew increasingly threatened. His words exposed hearts, his actions disrupted settled systems, and his refusal to compromise

truth made collision with a worldview in opposition to the teachings of God inevitable. Love, when it enters a broken world, does not merely comfort—it confronts. The question was no longer whether Jesus would be opposed, but how far that opposition would go. The path he walked among us was always leading somewhere, and it would end not in applause or acceptance, but on a cross.

The question that echoed through ancient Israel and Jerusalem still echoes all around the world today: Who is this man—and will we walk with him or reject his offer of reconciliation and forgiveness of sin? The answer to that question leads directly to the hill outside Jerusalem, where his mission would reach its climax and the door to communion with the Father would be opened forever.

CHAPTER SIX

Victory on the Cross

The road to the cross did not begin on the morning Jesus was arrested. It began the day after his baptism, when he began opening blind eyes, forgiving broken sinners, and speaking with an authority about the kingdom of God to come. Divine love had entered a proud and fearful world, and wherever he went, it disturbed what people preferred to keep hidden (John 3:19–20). Jesus would not flatter power, nor would he abandon the broken in spirit to ensure his own safety. Each step of his ministry would draw people either closer to God or deeper into resistance.

By the time Jesus reached Jerusalem for the final Passover of his life, the collision with the established religious order under the Mosaic covenant was unavoidable. Those who loved him hoped he would finally reveal his strength; those who feared him wanted only his silence. In Gethsemane he accepted the Father's will with trembling obedience: *"Not my will, but yours, be done"* (Luke 22:42). The question that lingers over that lonely night is the same question that follows us still: why would he go willingly toward such suffering for us?

The events that happened next looked nothing like the victory over Rome that the Jewish people had been expecting. Instead, Jesus was arrested. His trials were rushed and unjust (Mark 14:55–59). The crowd that had once listened with wonder to his teachings now shouted for his death, and even his closest followers scattered in fear and confusion (Matthew 26:56). The cross was not a symbol of deliverance in those days; it was Rome's instrument of humiliation, reserved for rebels and criminals. To the watching world, Jesus appeared defeated, another dreamer crushed beneath the machinery of empire (Isaiah 53:3).

Yet hidden within that cruelty was a purpose deeper than any human intention. What looked like the triumph of evil was becoming the means by which God would confront the oldest wound in the human story. The moment that seemed to prove humanity's power over God became the moment God revealed the extent of his love: *"while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

Beneath the crucifixion lay the reality the Bible names as the penalty of sin—our separation from God that no amount of human effort can repair (Isaiah 59:2). Humanity has always tried to climb toward God through moral improvement, religious devotion, acts of charity, or systems of law. These pursuits can encourage goodness, yet none has the power or authority to heal the broken relationship at the core of our being. We cannot atone for ourselves any more than a drowning man can lift himself from the sea. Scripture speaks plainly: *"By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified"* (Romans 3:20), and again, salvation is *"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy"* (Titus 3:5).

Restoration required something beyond us—a bridge built from God's side reaching to ours. The cross declares that reconciliation is not achieved by striving but received as grace (Ephesians 2:8–9). It is the meeting place where divine justice faces human failure without destroying the ones who failed. Why this particular way was chosen remains a mystery wrapped in love. Scripture does not present redemption as an equation but as the story of a Father who refused to abandon his children. In Jesus, God assumed the full weight of our distance from him: *"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). The nails in his hands were marks of compassion for us (John 10:18). What occurred in Jerusalem was not an accident of history but God's chosen path to bring his people home (Acts 2:23).

From the cross the last words spoken by Jesus echoed across the centuries: *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). They were not merely words of

surrender but a declaration of a mission completed. The promise that began in Eden and unfolded through prophets reached fulfillment in that hour. The Temple veil—the visible symbol of God’s separation from man because of sin—was torn from top to bottom, announcing that the way to oneness with God had been reopened (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19–20). Jesus entered death directly, transforming it from a prison into a doorway to eternity (Hebrews 2:14–15). What appeared to be the end of hope was the foundation of a new beginning.

The dawn after the darkness of the crucifixion confirmed what the cross had accomplished. Jesus was raised to life. The resurrection was God’s signature that the sacrifice of Jesus and his blood offered on the cross was acceptable for atonement (Romans 1:4). Jesus did not merely survive death; he defeated it, rising with a life no grave could hold (Acts 2:24). Forgiveness was joined to power—the power to create new hearts and new futures (2 Corinthians 5:17). The victory was not political or military; it was deeper, transcending creation itself. God had acted where we were helpless, doing for us what we could never do for ourselves (Romans 5:6).

The cross does more than describe an event; it speaks a message. It tells us that God knows the worst about humanity and loves us still (John 3:16). The gospel does not ask us to climb toward God; it announces that God has come down to us (Philippians 2:6–8). Every religion of human invention offers ladders of effort; the cross offers open arms: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Reconciliation cannot be earned; to imagine that our deeds could balance our estrangement misunderstands both God’s holiness and his compassion.

Standing before the cross, we discover that we are more loved than we dared to hope and more helpless than we cared to admit. God’s response to our failure was not abandonment but pursuit: *“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10).

The wounds of Christ are not relics of tragedy but signs of a divine commitment to restore what was lost (Zechariah 12:10; John 20:27).

The early followers of Jesus did not preach a philosophy; they told a story about something God had done for them as an act of love (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Their message spread because it offered mercy and forgiveness (Acts 13:38–39). In a world accustomed to proving its worth, the announcement that reconciliation was accomplished sounded almost too good to believe.

As this chapter closes, the reader who has begun to see how profoundly the love of God was demonstrated by the cross finds himself standing between its darkness and the light of the empty tomb that followed. If humanity could have healed itself, the cross would have been unnecessary. Because we could not, God chose to act with an act of love beyond understanding (Romans 8:3–4). What remains is a hand extended in grace—and a personal question each of us must answer: will I accept or reject the outstretched hand of the Promised One who gave his life for me?

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Simple Invitation

The story of the redemption of humanity can be examined from a distance, but one's personal redemptive history cannot. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were not performed to create a new religion; they were God's answer to the separation that began in Eden. The outstretched hand of Christ is offered to real people with real names and real histories. Every reader must eventually decide whether that hand will remain only an idea or become a relationship.

Faith in the atonement achieved by Jesus is not an achievement added to a résumé; it is a turning of the heart. The gospel does not ask us to repair ourselves and then approach God with the results. It asks us to come as we are and trust in what Christ has already done. To believe in Jesus is not merely to agree that certain events happened long ago, but to rely upon him as the One who restores what we could never restore. Scripture calls this receiving a gift rather than earning a wage (Ephesians 2:8–9). The first step toward communion with God is admitting that we need what only he can give.

Taking the outstretched hand of Christ means placing confidence in him instead of in ourselves. Life has taught us to depend on effort, reputation, or control, yet the heart knows how fragile those supports are. Jesus invites a different posture—trust instead of performance, honesty instead of pretense. When a person turns toward him, forgiveness is not delayed or rationed; it is granted freely because its cost has already been paid. The gospel of salvation is not a ladder climbed by effort but an open door of grace.

This turning involves more than words; it is a chosen change of direction. The Bible calls it repentance, a willingness to leave the path

of independence from God and walk the path of righteousness as revealed by God in his Word. Repentance is not groveling before an angry deity; it is the decision to come home to truth. The father in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son did not wait for his wandering son to become worthy before embracing him—he ran to meet him while he was still far away. In the same way, God meets those who turn toward him with mercy ready in advance.

With forgiveness comes a new beginning. Scripture speaks of becoming a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), not by erasing our past but by giving us a different future. The change is not merely a matter of being more moral; it is the restoration of communion. Where guilt once stood like a locked door, there is now access to God as Father. The Spirit of God begins to work within, shaping desires and teaching the heart to recognize his voice. Growth may be gradual, yet the relationship is real from the first moment of trust.

Communion with God is more than believing correct ideas about him. It is the daily experience of being known and loved. Prayer becomes conversation rather than ritual. Scripture becomes a letter from home rather than a rulebook. Obedience grows not from fear but from gratitude, as a child learns to please a parent who has already welcomed and loved him. The life of faith is not perfection achieved in a day; it is walking with God step by step into his goodness.

Many hesitate at this doorway because they fear they are not ready. Some carry memories they believe disqualify them. Others worry that doubts must disappear before faith can begin. Yet the invitation of Christ does not require flawless understanding. The disciples who first followed him were often confused, yet he received them patiently. God asks for honesty, not heroism. A trembling trust is still trust, and a whispered prayer is heard as clearly as a confident one.

There are also those who wonder whether accepting Christ as Lord means surrendering their individuality. The opposite is true. Sin

distorts identity; communion with God restores the self. Jesus did not come to erase personalities but to free them from the distortions that separation created. The hand he offers is not a chain but a welcome. To receive him is to begin becoming who we were meant to be.

How then does a person respond? The Bible gives no single formula, only examples of hearts turning toward God. Some prayed simple prayers, others spoke through tears, and some could manage only a few words. What mattered was not eloquence but sincerity. God hears the language of the heart. A person might say, in his own way, "I believe you are the Promised One. I cannot heal myself. Forgive me and teach me to walk with you." Such words are not a contract; they are the beginning of a conversation that can last a lifetime.

Communion restored does not mean life becomes effortless. Old habits may linger, and circumstances may remain difficult. Yet the burden is no longer carried alone. Christ promised to be with those who come to him, guiding them with patience. When they stumble, his mercy remains. The relationship does not depend on our perfect performance but on his faithful love.

The community of believers becomes part of this new life. God rarely restores a person in isolation. Others who have taken the same hand of forgiveness walk beside us, sharing encouragement and longing for truth. Together they learn to forgive as they have been forgiven and to serve as they have been served. The congregation of believers is a family learning to live in communion with God.

Still, the heart must choose to trust the promises. No one is carried across the threshold against his will. The cross has opened the way, but each person must decide whether to enter. To accept Christ is to say that his love is greater than our fears, his mercy stronger than our failures. To reject him is to remain where we are, trusting in the fragile scaffolding of self. The decision cannot be made by another; it belongs only to the one who hears the invitation.

Scripture also reminds us that the opportunity to respond belongs to this present life. The choice to believe is given to us in the span between birth and death, while the heart is still able to turn toward God (Hebrews 9:27). Beyond that boundary lies the settling of what we have chosen, not a second season for choosing. The invitation is therefore real and gracious, yet it is also timely.

Some will take time before they answer. God is patient with honest seekers, and he meets questions with kindness. Yet the invitation remains present, as near as breath. The same Jesus who walked the roads of Galilee now meets people in the quiet places of their lives. He does not shout from a distance; he stands close enough for a whisper. Communion restored begins not with thunder but with a simple turning of the heart.

Those who accept the outstretched hand discover that God was nearer than they imagined. The distance they felt was not on his side but on theirs. Forgiveness opens the door, and trust allows them to step through. Life with God begins where every relationship begins—with meeting, listening, and learning to walk together. Nothing more complicated is required, and nothing less will satisfy the soul.

This chapter has traced the path of restoration from the cross to the human heart. The events of long ago reach forward into the present moment, asking for a response. The love demonstrated by Jesus was not offered to the crowd in general but to each person in particular. The Promised One still stands with his hand extended, waiting to restore what was lost. The question therefore remains, not as theology but as life's central question: will I accept Jesus as my Savior?

CONCLUSION

In Paradise Forever

The Bible opens with a garden and closes with a garden. Between those two scenes stretches the long story of humanity's wandering and God's patient pursuit. What was lost in Eden—unbroken fellowship with the Creator—became the single thread running through every promise, every prophet, and finally the life of Jesus. The cross and the empty tomb were not the end of that story but the turning point, the moment when the path home was reopened. The invitation offered in Christ is therefore not merely about forgiveness of the past; it is about a future restored to the purpose for which humanity was first made.

From the beginning, people were created for communion with God. Work, creativity, friendship, and love were meant to be lived within the security of his presence. Sin did not destroy that design, but it distorted it, leaving the human heart restless and incomplete. The longing that follows us through life—the sense that something essential is missing—echoes the memory of a home we have never fully known. Scripture describes the work of redemption as the recovery of that home, the healing of a relationship rather than the construction of a system.

Jesus spoke of this future in simple images: a Father's house, a place prepared, a table where those once estranged would sit together in peace. He did not satisfy curiosity about every detail; instead, he assured his followers that life with God would be real, personal, and secure. The emphasis of his teaching was not on scenery but on presence—being with the One who made us and knows us by name. Paradise, in the language of Scripture, is not primarily a location but a relationship brought to completion.

This was the very hope Jesus voiced on the night before the cross when he prayed for those who would believe in him. He asked the Father *“that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us”* (John 17:21). He spoke of giving his followers the glory he had received, *“that they may be one just as We are one”* (verse 22), and he looked beyond the present age to the day when communion would be complete: *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am”* (verse 24). The heart of his prayer was not merely escape from sorrow but the restoration of fellowship—God and his children dwelling together in the unity for which humanity was first created.

The early believers understood this hope as the fulfillment of all that God had promised to Israel and, through Israel, to the world. They looked forward to a renewed creation in which sorrow and injustice would no longer have the last word. Yet even as they spoke of what was to come, their focus remained on Christ himself. The future was desirable because he would be there. Eternal life, Jesus said, is to know God and the One he has sent—a knowledge that begins now and matures without end.

This perspective guards us from two opposite errors. One is to imagine paradise only as a reward system, a collection of benefits detached from the Giver. The other is to think of it so vaguely that it loses its power to comfort. The biblical vision avoids both by keeping the center where it belongs: restored communion with God. Whatever beauty and joy the future holds will flow from that restored relationship, just as a healthy tree naturally bears good fruit.

For those who have taken the outstretched hand of Christ, a new story has already begun. Communion restored in the present is the first chapter of communion completed in the future. Prayer, worship, and the quiet guidance of the Spirit are not substitutes for paradise; they are its early notes. The same voice that calls us now will one day

call us fully home. The God who meets us in our ordinary days is preparing a life in which his nearness will no longer be interrupted by fear, weakness, or death.

This hope also reshapes how we live while the journey continues. Knowing that our destination is fellowship with God frees us from the tyranny of lesser goals. Success and failure, gain and loss, find their proper proportion when measured against eternity. We are able to love more generously because we have been loved first, and to forgive more readily because we have been forgiven much. The promise of paradise does not withdraw us from the world; it teaches us how to live within it as people already claimed by God's future.

Yet the conclusion of the story remains God's work, not ours. Just as redemption began with his initiative, so its completion rests in his faithfulness. Scripture portrays the final restoration as a gift prepared by the same grace that met us at the cross. Human effort cannot create it, and human failure cannot prevent it for those who belong to Christ. The assurance of paradise stands on the same foundation as forgiveness—the finished work of Jesus and the enduring love of the Father.

For many readers this book has been a journey from curiosity to consideration, perhaps even from doubt to trust. The evidence of God's purpose in history, the witness of Scripture, and the testimony of the cross all point in a single direction: God desires to bring his children home. The invitation extended through Jesus is therefore the most consequential invitation a person will ever hear. To receive it is to step into a story larger than one lifetime; to decline it is to remain outside the very relationship for which we were created.

The promise of forever with God does not erase the weight of present struggles. We still live in a world marked by loss and unanswered questions. But the horizon has changed. Suffering no longer defines the final meaning of our lives; it has been answered by

a greater love. The empty tomb stands as God's pledge that death itself will not have the last word. What began in a garden and was restored at a cross will reach its fulfillment when God makes all things new.

Each reader now stands where the story has led from the beginning—before the open door of communion with God. The path has been traced from Eden's loss to Calvary's gift and from Calvary to the heart's response. Nothing more is required than the willingness to receive what Christ has accomplished. The hand that created the world is the same hand extended in mercy.

May this book serve only as a signpost, pointing beyond itself to the Promised One. If its pages have helped even one person hear the invitation more clearly, they have fulfilled their purpose. The rest of the journey belongs not to an author but to God and to the reader who chooses to walk with him.

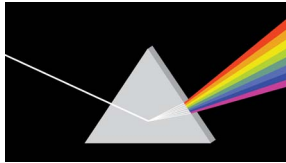
The story that began with separation ends with reunion. The reunion God offers is not temporary but forever—life in unending communion with him, at home in his loving presence, in the paradise for which every human heart was made.

Appendices

APPENDIX ONE

One God or Three?

One of the hardest things to grasp about the nature of God is the idea of his triune nature. It is a stumbling block, especially for my Jewish friends who often ask me, “Doesn’t the Shema clearly say, *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is ONE* (Hebrew: *echad*)? Then how can God be one and three at the same time?”



I respond with a question of my own: What happens to sunlight when it passes through a prism? Most people know the answer—that we see the spectrum of colors—and say so. Then I ask, Is the red light still light? They say yes. The orange light? Yes again. And so on through yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. As we explore this, it becomes clear that white light can appear to the eye as a unity or, when passed through a prism, as a diversity of colors. Yet it remains light.

In a similar way—though admittedly the comparison has its limits—the Scriptures serve as a kind of prism through which the God of Israel first revealed himself to Moses as One, and who, in the fullness of time under the New Covenant foretold in Jeremiah 31:31–34, has chosen to reveal Himself more fully as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The analogy is not perfect. Light is part of the created world, while God is the uncreated Creator. And the picture it paints does not come directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, although the *Berit Hadashah* does say metaphorically that “*God is light*” (1 John 1:5).

The Hebrew word *echad* can indicate both singularity and a unity made up of multiple parts, depending on the context. It is used in clearly singular ways, such as “the first day” of creation (Genesis 1:5). Yet it is also used to describe a compound unity, as when a man and woman become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), or when the many pieces of the tabernacle were joined so that it became “one” structure (Exodus 26:6). The word therefore does not demand absolute mathematical singularity; it can describe a oneness that includes plurality.

This is significant when we return to the Shema: “*Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.*” The statement clearly rejects polytheism, affirming that the God of Israel is not many competing deities. Yet the use of *echad* leaves room for a unity that can be experienced in more than one way as God chooses to progressively reveal himself over time. If the text had intended to stress indivisible singularity, the Hebrew word *yachid*—meaning “only one” or “solitary one”—would have been the more precise choice, as in Genesis 22:2 describing Isaac as Abraham’s “only” son. Instead, the Scriptures employ *echad*, a word flexible enough to encompass both the oneness of God and the fuller self-disclosure found in the *Berit Hadashah*.

With our human limitations, we cannot fully comprehend the nature of God’s being. Still, the analogy of light passing through a prism offers a glimpse—a way to think about how the unity of God and the tri-personal revelation of God are not necessarily in conflict. Just as light can be both white and composed of many colors, God can be One and yet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without contradiction.

As the *Berit Hadashah* expresses it: “*There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit—and these three are one*” (1 John 5:7). The mystery remains deeper than any illustration, yet the central truth stands: the God of Moses and the prophets is the same God who has drawn near to us in Jesus, inviting us into a personal relationship that is at once profoundly simple and unfathomably rich.

APPENDIX TWO

Messiah in Prophecy

This appendix gathers several voices from the Hebrew Scriptures and allows them to speak in a single stream, showing how the story of the Messiah was written long before the days of the New Testament. The quoted prophecies from the Old Testament follow the language of the Jewish Publication Society 1917 *Tanakh*, followed by fulfillments quoted from the New Testament. These passages demonstrate how the ancient words found their answer in the life of Jesus. The purpose is to hear how one testament reaches toward the other like two hands meeting across time. What follows is not a chain of isolated proof-texts, but a continuous witness that rises from many centuries and many authors, yet speaks with a remarkable unity of expectation.

The first hint of redemption appears immediately after the fall. In Genesis the Lord declares, *“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15). From the beginning there is promise of a coming descendant who would be wounded yet victorious over evil. The New Testament understands this as the mission of Christ: *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8), and again, *“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death”* (Hebrews 2:14). The entire drama of Scripture grows from this first assurance that God would not abandon his creation. Even at the moment of judgment, mercy was already preparing a path home.

The prophet Isaiah adds depth to that promise by portraying the Messiah as a suffering servant. *“He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions... and with*

his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3,5). Centuries later Peter wrote of Jesus in the same language: *“who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree... by whose stripes ye were healed”* (1 Peter 2:21–24). What Isaiah described as Israel’s future hope the apostles recognized as accomplished fact—innocent suffering that brings healing to others. Isaiah also spoke of the Messiah’s identity in royal and divine terms: *“For unto us a child is born... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6). The Gospels present Jesus as fulfilling this role of a king whose rule is established through humility and sacrifice. (This verse is also notable for describing the Messiah as the mighty God.)

The place of the Messiah’s birth was specified. Micah wrote, *“But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah... out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days”* (Micah 5:2). Matthew opens his Gospel with the simple announcement, *“Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea”* (Matthew 2:1). The child born in an obscure village was linked with a purpose older than the nation itself. Another prophet added that this child would enter the world in a unique manner: *“Behold, the young woman (the almah, a young unmarried virgin) shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew applies these words to the birth of Jesus, explaining that *“they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* (Matthew 1:23).

The prophet Daniel added the element of historical timing to the equation, declaring that from the decree to restore Jerusalem there would be seventy weeks until *“the anointed one... shall be cut off* (meaning to be set apart, consecrated)” (Daniel 9:25–26). When Jesus began his ministry, he proclaimed, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand”* (Mark 1:15). The Gospels present the start of his ministry as occurring within the framework Daniel outlined, as though history were keeping an appointment long scheduled.

The prophets also described the character of his coming. Zechariah wrote, *“Rejoice greatly... behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and victorious, lowly, and riding upon an ass”* (Zechariah 9:9), a scene the Gospels recount when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey with crowds crying *“Hosanna”* (Matthew 21:5–9).

The Psalms describe the personal sorrow of the righteous sufferer. David wrote, *“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted... Hath lifted up his heel against me”* (Psalm 41:10). At the Last Supper Jesus echoed those words: *“He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me”* (Matthew 26:23), and Mark records, *“Then Judas Iscariot... went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them”* (Mark 14:10). Betrayal would come not from a stranger but from a companion at the table, the disciple Judas Iscariot.

Zechariah even foresaw the price the Temple authorities paid for that betrayal: *“So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver... and I... cast them into the treasury, in the house of the Lord”* (Zechariah 11:12–13). Matthew relates, *“So they counted out for him thirty silver coins”* (Matthew 26:15), and later, *“he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple”* (Matthew 27:5). Details beyond human orchestration unfolded exactly as written.

Psalms 22 carries the reader to the foot of the cross. The psalmist cries, *“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”* (Psalm 22:2), the very words Jesus spoke in his final hours: *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”* (Matthew 27:46). The same psalm anticipates the scorn of the crowd—*“Let him commit himself unto the Lord! let Him rescue him”* (Psalm 22:8–9)—and Matthew records the identical taunt, *“He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now”* (Matthew 27:43). The psalmist’s description of thirst, *“My tongue cleaveth to my throat”* (Psalm 22:16), finds its echo when a sponge dipped in vinegar is offered to Jesus (Matthew 27:48). Even the dividing of Jesus’s garments was foreseen: *“They part my garments among them, And for my vesture do they cast*

lots” (Psalm 22:18–19), fulfilled as the soldiers cast lots for his seamless robe (John 19:23). Another psalm looked beyond death itself: *“For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to the nether-world; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy godly one to see the pit”* (Psalm 16:10), a passage Peter proclaimed as fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:31–32).

Zechariah completes the picture with a vision of national awakening: *“They shall look unto Me because they have thrust him through; And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son”* (Zechariah 12:10). John records that *“one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side”* (John 19:34), leaving the reader to sense that the mourning foreseen by the prophet has only begun. Hosea adds yet another thread, recalling Israel’s history and the Messiah’s identification with it: *“Out of Egypt have I called My son”* (Hosea 11:1), words Matthew applies to the childhood of Jesus when his family returned from exile in Egypt (Matthew 2:15).

When these passages and many others not mentioned in this appendix are heard together, they form a single melody. The Hebrew Scriptures speak of a Redeemer who would be born in Bethlehem, suffer for others, be betrayed by a friend, valued at thirty pieces of silver, mocked, pierced, and yet through his death become the source of healing. The New Testament does not replace that story; it completes it. The movement is from ancient promise to prophetic detail, from historical fulfillment to personal invitation.

The narrative arc of this book rests on that continuity—one voice carried across centuries, calling humanity back to oneness with God. To read these texts side by side is to realize that the hope of Israel and the message of the Gospel are not rival stories, but one unfolding testimony to the faithfulness of the God who keeps his promises.

APPENDIX THREE

Year Jesus was Born

The year in which Jesus was born can be approached from more than one direction, but the most reliable method begins not at Bethlehem, but at the start of his public ministry. The Gospel of Luke provides a crucial anchor: “*And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age*” (Luke 3:23). That statement connects the age of Jesus with the moment of his baptism by John the Baptist, the event that immediately preceded the beginning of his ministry. If the year of his baptism can be established, then the year of his birth can be determined by simply counting back approximately thirty years.

The prophecy in Daniel 9:24—understood as specifying the seventy Feasts of Weeks observed from 35 BCE to 28 CE—identifies the start of the public ministry of Jesus with the final “week” of that prophecy. According to this chronological framework, that concluding week began at Pentecost in 27 CE and ended at Pentecost in 28 CE. The baptism of Jesus, which marked the inauguration of his ministry, therefore would have occurred within that span of time. The question is whether the New Testament supports that conclusion. It does.

Luke’s description that Jesus was “about thirty years of age” fits precisely within those years. Herod the Great, during whose reign Jesus was born, died in March of 4 BCE. Counting forward from that date, a child born shortly before Herod’s death would indeed have been about thirty years old between Pentecost of 27 CE and Pentecost of 28 CE. The simple arithmetic aligns naturally with both the biblical narrative and the constraints of the prophecy in Daniel.

A second line of evidence comes from a historical reference to the construction of Herod’s Temple. The Jewish historian Josephus records

that work on the Temple began in the year when Augustus Caesar visited Syria. That visit is securely dated from the Roman historian Cassius Dio, who lists the consuls in office at the time, placing the event in the spring of 20 BCE. Josephus further notes that while the sanctuary itself was completed in one year and six months, construction on the larger Temple complex continued for many decades.

The Gospel of John preserves an incidental remark that links this construction chronology with the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Shortly after his baptism, during the Passover week soon thereafter, Jesus entered the Temple and drove out the money changers and those selling animals for sacrifice. When challenged to prove his authority, he replied, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* The crowd answered, *"Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"* (John 2:18–20).

That statement provides a chronological marker. If construction began after Passover in 20 BCE, then counting forward forty-six Passovers brings the timeline to Passover of 28 CE. The event described in John therefore occurred in the spring of 28 CE, only a few weeks after the baptism of Jesus. This confirms independently that his baptism and the commencement of his ministry took place within the period between Pentecost of 27 CE and Pentecost of 28 CE.

Once that date is established, the birth year follows naturally. If Jesus was about thirty years old at his baptism in the spring of 28 CE, his birth would have occurred around 4 BCE, shortly before the death of Herod the Great. The phrase "about thirty" allows a small range, and some have suggested a date as early as 6 BCE based on Herod's order to kill the infants of Bethlehem who were two years old and under. Yet the convergence of Luke's statement, the Daniel prophecy, and the forty-six-year Temple reference all point most convincingly to a birth in Bethlehem in the year 4 BCE.

APPENDIX FOUR

Chronology of Jesus

The *Tanakh* (Old Testament) and the *Berit Hadashah* (New Testament) both pinpoint 28 A.D. as the year when Jesus began his public ministry. Using the information given in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the ministry of Jesus continued for about twenty-seven months after his baptism, as follows:

28 CE (= A.D.)⁷				
<i>Events</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus baptized by John the Baptist.	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-28	---
Jesus tempted by Satan for forty days.	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	---
Jesus returns to Jordan R., Andrew hears John proclaim Jesus as the Lamb of God, two disciples follow him to Nazareth.	---	---	---	1:19-51
Jesus attends wedding at Cana, turns water to wine, the disciples believe.	---	---	---	2:1-11
Jesus visits Capernaum with his mother, brothers, and his (two) disciples.	---	---	---	2:12
← Sabbath year begins PASSOVER WEEK - March 28 to April 4				
Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, drives merchants and money changers out of Temple, challenged by Jewish leaders.	---	---	---	2:13-25
Nicodemus visits Jesus secretly at night and is told that he must be "born again."	---	---	---	3:1-21
Jesus and disciples baptize in Judea, John the Baptist continues to baptize at Aenon.	---	---	---	3:22-36
Day of Pentecost - May 17, 28				
Jesus hears that John the Baptist has been imprisoned, Jesus and his disciples decide to leave Judea, depart for Galilee.	4:12	1:14	4:14	4:1-3
Jesus passes through Samaria with his disciples, talks with woman at well, says the time to harvest (souls) is now.	---	---	---	4:4-42
Jesus passes through Samaria with his disciples, talks with woman at well, says the time to harvest (souls) is now.	---	---	---	4:43-45
Jesus moves to Capernaum, preaches in area synagogues, proclaims the kingdom, heals son of royal official back in Capernaum.	4:13-17	1:15	4:15	---

28 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus, while he is visiting Cana, heals son of royal official back in Capernaum.	---	---	---	4:46-54
← <i>Jubilee year begins</i> Day of Atonement - September 16				
Jesus reads from scroll at the synagogue in Nazareth on the sabbath, proclaims start of the jubilee ("acceptable") year, people take him to cliff to throw him down	---	---	4:16-30	---
Jesus returns to Capernaum, teaches in synagogue with authority, heals demoniac man, fame spreads throughout area.	---	1:21-28	4:31-37	---
Jesus visits Simon's house, cures Simon's mother-in-law of fever, heals many people.	8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41	---
Jesus calls Simon, Andrew, James, John.	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:1-11	---
Jesus preaches the kingdom and heals the sick in the synagogues of Galilee.	4:23-24	1:35-39	4:42-44	---
Jesus cleanses leper, crowds and reputation grow, often withdraws to wilderness to pray.	4:25 8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	---
Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7 - Jesus goes up a mountain, privately teaching his disciples about the kingdom and publicly preaching the kingdom to the multitudes coming to him to be healed, topics covered include: The Beatitudes, salt and light, fulfillment of the Law and prophets, anger and murder, adultery and divorce, swearing of oaths, "eye for eye" and love for enemies, giving in secret, praying in private, fasting with joy, laying up treasure in heaven, do not worry about tomorrow, do not judge, ask-seek-knock, the narrow gate, tree known by its fruit, not all will enter the kingdom, heed and do his words, house built on rock stands.				
Jesus forgives paralytic man let down through roof, then heals him to confirm his authority to forgive sins.	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	---
Jesus calls Matthew (aka Levi), dines with him, tells Pharisees that he is called to save sinners, God requires mercy not sacrifice, sick need physician, new wine put into new wineskins, he is bridegroom.	9:9-17	2:13-22	5:27-39	---
28/29 CE				
Jesus and his disciples walk through a field picking wheat on sabbath, he says that Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath.	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	---
Jesus heals man with withered hand in a synagogue on sabbath, Pharisees plot with Herodians about how they can kill him.	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	---
Feast of Dedication - November 29 to December 6				
Jesus attends feast in Jerusalem, heals paralytic man at Bethesda on sabbath, leaders scold the man for picking up mat.	---	---	---	5:1-15

28/29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus confirms his authority as the Son, says deeds and Moses testify about him, hostility of Jewish leaders increases.	---	---	---	5:16-47
Jesus leaves Jerusalem to avoid wrath of Jewish leaders and withdraws to the Sea of Galilee to preach and heal the people.	12:15-16	3:7-12	---	---
Jesus is presented by Matthew as the chosen servant who fulfills Isaiah 42:1-4, the one who will show judgment to the nations, and in whom they will trust.	12:17-21	---	---	---
Jesus ordains the Twelve Apostles to preach the kingdom and heal the sick.	---	3:13-19	6:12-16	---
Jesus delivers sermon (often called the Sermon on the Mount) on a coastal plain of Sea of Galilee at base of a mountain.	---	---	6:17-49	---
Jesus returns to Capernaum, heals centurion's servant, marvels at centurion's display of faith not seen so far in Israel.	8:5-13	---	7:1-10	---
Jesus raises widow's son at Nain, people declare Jesus a prophet, report circulates through Judea and surrounding country.	---	---	7:11-17	---
John the Baptist sends his disciples to question Jesus about his identity after hearing reports of Jesus' ministry, Jesus confirms John is the herald of Messiah.	11:2-24	---	7:18-35	---
Jesus gives thanks to God for revealing him to the children, and for hiding him from the wise, gives invitation to weary.	11:25-30	---	---	---
Jesus dines with Pharisee, sinful woman anoints his feet with tears, wipes them with her hair, Jesus rebukes his host.	---	---	7:36-50	---
Jesus and his disciples go through towns and villages in the Galilee preaching and healing, women provide for them.	---	---	8:1-3	---
Jesus heals blind and mute man, crowd asks if Jesus is the Son of David, Jesus' family says that he is deranged, Pharisees say Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul, Jesus warns about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.	12:22-37 12:46-50	3:20-35	8:19-21	---
Pharisees ask for a sign of authority, Jesus replies that the only sign they will get will be the "sign of the prophet Jonas," an allusion to his coming death on the cross, burial, and resurrection on the third day	12:38-45	---	---	---

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus teaches mysteries of the kingdom, speaks to crowd in parables, explains the mysteries to his disciples in private, including parable of the Sower, parable of the Tares, parable of the Mustard Seed, parable of the Yeast in Three Measures, parable of the Sickle and Harvest, parable of the Lamp on a Lampstand, parables of the Kingdom of Heaven.	13:1-9 13:18-33 13:36-52	4:1-9 4:13-32	8:4-18	---
Jesus reveals the reason for using parables to teach the crowds.	13:10-17 13:34-35	4:10-12 4:33-34	---	---
Jesus sails to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, calms storm, disciples awed.	8:18 8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	---
Jesus heals demoniac man in region of the Gadarenes, sends demons into pigs, people urge Jesus to leave the region.	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	---
Jesus returns to Capernaum, heals daughter of a synagogue official named Jairus, woman with issue of blood cured by touching the hem of his garment.	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	---
Jesus gives sight to two blind men, gives voice to a mute man, Pharisees attribute his power to the “prince of demons.”	9:27-34	---	---	---
Jesus teaches in synagogues in Galilee.	9:35-38	6:6b	---	---
Jesus teaches in synagogue at Nazareth, has his disciples with him, the people are offended, Jesus does no miracles there.	13:53-58	6:1-6a	---	---
Jesus sends the twelve out two by two to preach the kingdom and heal the sick, gives them authority over demons.	10:1-11:1	6:7-13	9:1-6	---
Herod Antipas mistakes Jesus for John the Baptist, who he had earlier beheaded.	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	---
The twelve report back to Jesus.	---	6:30	9:10a	---
Jesus goes off privately by boat with his disciples to Bethsaida for rest (and mourn after hearing that John the Baptist is dead), crowds run ahead and meet them.	14:13-14	6:31-34	9:10b-11	6:1-3
Jesus has compassion on the crowd and heals the sick, then feeds 5,000 people (just before the week of the Passover).	14:15-21	6:35-44	9:12-17	6:4-13
People want to make Jesus king because of miraculous signs, Jesus sends crowds away, disciples wait below while Jesus goes up a mountainside to pray alone.	14:22-23	6:45-46	---	6:14-15

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus approaches the disciple's boat by walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee, startles disciples, Peter sinks and prays.	14:24-33	6:47-52	---	6:16-21
Jesus heals many people at Gennesaret.	14:34-36	6:53-56	---	---
Jesus is found in Capernaum by crowds seeking more bread, Jesus reveals that he is the true bread from heaven and that anyone who eats his flesh and drinks his blood will have eternal life.	---	---	---	6:22-59
Many disciples cannot accept Jesus' new "flesh and blood" teaching and depart.	---	---	---	6:60-65
Simon Peter says that he and the eleven believe that he is the Holy One of Israel, Jesus reveals one of them will betray him.	---	---	---	6:66-71
← <i>Sabbath year ends</i> PASSOVER WEEK - April 15-22				
Jesus disputes with Pharisees about their man-made tradition and the word of God, says defilement comes from the heart, not by what food is eaten, Jesus explains the parable of Defilement and afterwards he explains that all foods are clean.	15:1-20	7:1-23	---	---
Jesus decides to stay out of Judea to avoid being killed by Jewish leaders.	---	---	---	7:1
Jesus goes to Tyre, heals the demoniac daughter of a Syrophenician woman.	15:21-28	7:24-30	---	---
Jesus travels through Sidon to the region of the Decapolis on the Sea of Galilee, opens the ears and loosens the tongue of a man who could not hear or talk easily, people are astounded by his works.	15:29-31	7:31-37	---	---
Jesus has compassion on a crowd that has been listening to him for three days, feeds the crowd numbering about 4,000 men, plus women and children.	15:32-38	8:1-9	---	---
Jesus and his disciples go by boat to Dalmanutha, Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign of his authority, none is given.	15:39-16:4	8:10-12	---	---
Jesus and his disciples go back by boat across the Sea of Galilee, he warns the disciples to beware the leaven of the Pharisees (their man-made teachings).	16:5-12	8:13-21	---	---
Jesus and his disciples arrive at Bethsaida, Jesus heals a blind man, demonstrates that healing by him is always total, not partial.	---	8:22-26	---	---

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus and his disciples go to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks the disciples who people think he is, Simon (who is named Peter by Jesus) answers that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and Jesus says that on “this rock” his church will be built and it will have the keys of the kingdom.	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21	---
Jesus reveals that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, be killed, and on the third day be raised, Peter objects, Jesus rebukes him.	16:21-26	8:31-33	9:22-25	---
Jesus reveals that if anyone wants to save his life, he must lose it, predicts that some listening will not see death before they see the coming of the Son of Man in glory.	16:27-28	8:34-9:1	9:26-27	---
Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain where they witness his Transfiguration, see Moses and Elijah, hear the voice of God confirm Jesus as his Son.	17:1-9	9:2-10	9:28-36	---
Jesus equates the ministry of John the Baptist with Elijah's coming, adding that the Son of Man will have to suffer at the hands of Jewish and Roman authorities.	17:10-13	9:11-13	---	---
Jesus heals a demoniac boy who the disciples could not heal, gives a discourse on faith, uses mustard seed as an example of the power of faith to move mountains.	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43a	---
Jesus reveals for the second time that he will be betrayed, killed, and resurrected.	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43b-45	---
Jesus and his disciples return to Capernaum, collectors of Temple tax come to Peter for payment, Jesus sends him to find a coin in the mouth of a fish.	17:24-27	---	---	---
Jesus' disciples ask who will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus tells them to become as little children.	18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48	---
Jesus warns about causing others to stumble, says not to stop others using his name since they are not against him.	18:6-14	9:38-50	9:49-50	---
Jesus teaches about kingdom conduct in this life, how to solve disputes among believers, the power of two or more praying together, application of forgiveness, then compares faith to a grain of mustard seed.	18:15-35	---	---	---

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
<i>Day of Pentecost - June 4</i>				
Jesus is taunted by his unbelieving brothers about going to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, he says he will remain in Galilee, afterward he goes secretly.	---	---	---	7:2-10
Jesus sends seventy disciples to preach and heal ahead of him as goes through villages on his way to Jerusalem, many in a Samaritan village reject his message, he explains the cost of commitment to him.	---	---	9:51-62 10:1-16	---
The seventy disciples report back to Jesus that even the demons submit to his name, Jesus praises the Father for hiding things from the wise and making them known to the children, says disciples are blessed to see what prophets and kings longed to see.	---	---	10:17-24	---
← Jubilee year ends <i>Feast of Tabernacles - October 9-16</i>				
Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, Jewish leaders are looking for him, on the third day of the feast Jesus publicly teaches in the Temple courts.	---	---	---	7:11 7:14
Midway through the feast (fourth day), Jesus again teaches in the Temple, woman caught in adultery is brought to him for judgment, he writes in dirt, says let he who is without sin cast the first stone.	---	---	---	7:53-8:11
Reactions to Jesus are mixed, Jewish authorities are astounded at the depth of his knowledge, Jesus says that his teaching is from the one who sent him, accuses the people of not keeping Law of Moses and wanting to kill him, they say Jesus is possessed by a demon.	---	---	---	7:12-13 7:15-24
People in Jerusalem are puzzled about Jesus' identity, ask if Jewish leaders really know that he is the Messiah, many believe in him because of miracles, chief priests and Pharisees try to arrest him, Jesus says they cannot go where he is going.	---	---	---	7:25-36
On last day of feast, Jesus says that out of him will flow rivers of living water so that any who thirst can drink and be refreshed.	---	---	---	7:37-38
Jewish leaders want to send Temple guards to arrest Jesus, but Nicodemus reminds them that Jesus must be heard before the council.	---	---	---	7:39-52

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jewish leaders want to send Temple guards to arrest him, but Nicodemus reminds them that Jesus must be heard before the council.	---	---	---	7:39-52
An expert in the Law asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus questions him, approves the expert's response that he must love God and his neighbor, then tells the parable of The Good Samaritan.	8:19-22	---	10:25-37	---
Jesus visits in home of Martha and her sister Mary, rebukes Martha for worrying about details while he is still with them.	---	---	10:38-42	---
Jesus proclaims himself the Light of the World just prior to the Feast of Lights (Dedication), then reveals that he is not of this world, predicts that they will know him when they lift him up, many people believe in him as the Messiah.	---	---	---	8:12-30
Jesus promises that those who follow his teachings will not die, calls the Judeans children of the devil, they say he is possessed by a demon, Jesus equates himself with the Father by claiming he predates Abraham, the people pick up stones to stone him, Jesus leaves Temple.	---	---	---	8:31-59
Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, assures them that if men know to give their children good gifts, the Father will give the Holy Spirit even more so.	---	---	11:1-13	---
Jesus cures a mute man, crowds are amazed, some say Jesus is using the power of the prince of darkness Beelzebub, Jesus teaches that a guarded house cannot be invaded, that an unclean spirit will leave and, if it returns to an empty house, will bring seven unclean spirits with it.	---	---	11:14-28	---
Jesus says that a wicked generation seeks after a sign, but will get no sign but that of Jonah, adds that his teachings and works are greater than the teachings and works of both Solomon and Jonah.	---	---	11:29-32	---
Jesus teaches that no one who has a lamp puts it under a basket but on a lampstand, that the eye is the light of the body, and urges people to empty their body of its darkness so that it can reflect light.	---	---	11:33-36	---

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus dines with a Pharisee who criticizes him for not washing his hands, Jesus rebukes him for his hypocrisy, scribes and experts in the law takes offense, Jesus says woe to the experts as well, Jewish religious leaders try to trap Jesus into saying something that can used to condemn him.	---	---	11:37-54	---
On sabbath Jesus heals a man born blind, Jewish leaders skeptical, Jesus says that he has come into the world so that those who cannot see can see and those who claim to see can be seen to be blind.	---	---	---	9:1-39
Jesus points out the guilt of the Pharisees who say they are not spiritually blind.	---	---	---	9:40-41
Jesus is asked about salvation, stresses the need for repentance, tells the parable of the Fig Tree that was cultivated to see if it would bear fruit in the third year.	---	---	13:1-9	---
Jesus tells the story of the Good Shepherd, explains the parable to his disciples.	---	---	---	10:1-18
Jesus heals woman infirmed for eighteen years, synagogue official objects to Jesus healing on the sabbath, tells people that they should not seek sabbath healing.	---	---	13:10-17	---
Some say Jesus is possessed by a demon, others ask how he can cast out demons and heal the sick if that is so, opinion is divided about his words and deeds.	---	---	---	10:19-21
Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed that grows into a tree, and to leaven in three measures of bread, says that the door to the kingdom is narrow, and that some who are last will be first.	---	---	13:18-30	---
Some Pharisees warn Jesus to leave Jerusalem because Herod wants to kill him, Jesus replies that a prophet cannot be killed outside of Jerusalem, then he laments over Jerusalem.	---	---	13:31-35	---
Jesus teaches crowd of thousands in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication, discussing various topics (see below).	---	---	12:1-59	10:22-23
Topics taught during the feast: Jesus warns against the teachings of the Pharisees and declares that nothing hidden will remain unrevealed. He promises that those who acknowledge him will be acknowledged before the angels and warns about speaking against the Holy Spirit. He tells the parable of the Rich Landowner, urges trust in God rather than worry, calls believers to be ready for the Son of Man's unexpected return, foretells division, laments failure to read the times, and urges reconciliation with accusers.				

29 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
<i>Feast of Dedication - December 17-24</i>				
Jesus dines with a Pharisee in Jerusalem on the sabbath, Pharisees are watching him intently, Jesus heals man with dropsy, asks the Pharisees present who would not save their son or an ox if either fell into a well, Pharisees refuse to answer him.	---	---	14:1-6	---
Jesus tells parable of the Honored Guest, which says to seek an humble seat and let the master of the house move one to a place of honor as he sees fit, that when you give a banquet, invite the poor, not those from whom you expect a return.	---	---	14:7-14	---
Jesus tells the parable of the Banquet, which says to accept the invitation and go to the banquet without excuses or delay since the host will eventually close the door to those who refuse the invitation.	---	---	14:15-24	---
Jesus warns those who want to follow him to count the cost of discipleship, that salt that has lost its flavor is of no value.	---	---	14:25-35	---
Jesus tells parables to show how the Father rejoices over all who return, that riches have no eternal value, that those who are faithful in little will be given much; parable of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin, parable of the Prodigal Son and Forgiving Father, parable of the Clever Steward.	---	---	15:1-16:15	---
Jesus explains that the Law and the Prophets pointed to the coming of the kingdom of God, and now that kingdom is being proclaimed through his ministry. People are pressing into it, responding to the good news with urgency. Yet this new movement does not cancel the authority of Scripture	---	---	16:16-17	---
Jesus comments on divorce and adultery, clarifying what Moses decided.	---	---	16:18	---
Jesus tells parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, says that if Israel will not believe Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe if one comes back from the dead.	---	---	16:19-31	---
Jesus warns against being a stumbling block, teaches on forgiveness.	---	---	17:1-6	---
Jesus teaches that a servant should not expect praise or reward from his master for doing what he is commanded to do.	---	---	17:7-10	---

29/30 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus heads to Jerusalem, passing through Samaria he heals ten lepers, one returns.	---	---	17:11-19	---
Jewish leaders try to get Jesus to say that he is the Messiah, he says that they have seen his deeds and that the deeds identify him, that his sheep hear his voice, reveals that the kingdom will not come with signs but is already in their midst, Jesus adds that he and the Father are one, Pharisees attempt to stone him for blasphemy.	---	---	17:20-21	10:24-39
Jesus reveals that the days are coming when they will desire to see the coming of the Son of Man but first he must suffer many things.	---	---	17:22-37	---
Jesus tells two parables about prayer: parable of the Persistent Widow, parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector.	---	---	18:1-14	---
Jesus teaches about divorce, changes the terms of divorce specified by Moses.	19:1-12	10:1-12	---	---
Jesus leaves Jerusalem and goes across the Jordan to the place where John the Baptist formerly baptized (Bethany in Perea).	---	---	---	10:40
Many people come to Jesus in Bethany, some bring their children to be blessed, the disciples try to stop them but Jesus says that of such is the kingdom of God.	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17	10:41-42
Jesus tells young man to sell everything, give it to the poor, and follow him, then observes that it will be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.	19:16-26	10:17-27	18:18-27	---
The disciples ask about their reward, Jesus says they will inherit eternal life and sit on twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel.	19:27-30	10:28-31	18:28-30	---
Jesus tells the parable of the Owner of a Vineyard, a story about a man who hired workers throughout the day, then paid all the same amount no matter how long they worked, says that the last shall be first and the first shall be last in the kingdom.	20:1-16	---	---	---
On the journey back to Jerusalem, Jesus tells his disciples that he will be handed over to the Jewish and Roman authorities to be condemned, flogged, and killed, but will rise again on the third day.	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34	---

30 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
The mother of James and John seek to gain favor for her sons, Jesus says that such positions are not his to give, that to be great one must be a servant.	20:20-28	10:35-45	---	---
Approaching Jericho on the way from Perea, Jesus heals blind Bartemaeus; leaving Jericho to go up to Jerusalem, Jesus heals two more blind men.	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	---
Passing through Jericho, Jesus dines with the tax collector Zacchaeus, who believes.	---	---	19:1-10	---
Nearing Jerusalem, the people following Jesus welcome him as king, expecting that the kingdom of God will appear immediately upon his arrival, Jesus tells the parable of the Nobleman Who Goes to a Far Country to receive a kingdom, entrusting money to his three servants to use while he is gone, then comes back to settle accounts.	---	---	19:11-28	---
Jesus returns to Bethany four days after Lazarus is buried, raises Lazarus from the dead, many believe, some tell Pharisees.	---	---	---	11:1-46
Passover near, Sanhedrin discuss Jesus, decide to have him killed, so Jesus and his disciples withdraw to Ephraim.	---	---	---	11:47-57
<i>Six days before Passover</i>				
Jesus comes back to Bethany before the start of the sabbath day at sunset.	---	---	---	12:1
<i>Sabbath Day</i>				
After sunset, Jesus eats a sabbath meal at the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.	26:6	14:3a	---	12:2
Mary anoints Jesus' feet with oil of nard, Judas objects, Jesus says her deed will be remembered wherever gospel is heard.	26:7-13	14:3b-9	---	12:3-8
Crowds come from Jerusalem to see Jesus and Lazarus, Jewish leaders plot to kill both.	---	---	---	12:9-11
PASSOVER WEEK #3 - March 31-April 7 <i>Synoptic days reckoned sunset to sunset, Johannine days sunrise to sunrise.</i>				
<i>1st Day of the Passion Week - 10th of Nisan - Saturday/Sunday</i>				
Jesus sends disciples from Bethphage to secure a donkey and foal.	21:1-6	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
Jesus enters Jerusalem as king seated on a donkey, with the people rejoicing and the Pharisees telling him to stop them.	21:7-11	---	---	---

30 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus drives money changers from Temple, heals blind/lame, Jewish leaders indignant.	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48	---
Greeks seek to talk with Jesus, who reveals that the Son of Man is about to be glorified, says that a grain of wheat must die to produce much grain, prays that the Father will glorify his own name. Jesus tells crowd that he will be lifted up, they ask how it is that the Son of Man will die.	---	---	---	12:20-36
Many believe but are afraid to say so because of fear of the Pharisees, Jesus says those who believe will receive eternal life.	---	---	---	12:37-50
<i>2nd Day of the Passion Week- 11th of Nisan - Sunday/Monday</i>				
Jesus curses the barren fig tree as he and the disciples go into Jerusalem, disciples are amazed, Jesus teaches on faith.	21:18-22	11:12-14 11:20-26	---	---
Jesus' authority is challenged by Jewish leaders, in return he asks them by whose authority John the Baptist did his works, they say that they do not know.	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	---
Jesus focuses on Israel's failure to be a nation of priests, warns that kingdom will be taken from them and given to a people who will produce fruit; parable of the Two Sons, parable of the Wicked Tenants, Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son.	21:28-44 22:1-14	12:1-11	20:9-18	---
Chief priests and Pharisees want to arrest Jesus but delay doing so because they fear the crowds that think Jesus is a prophet.	21:45-46	12:12	20:19	---
Jewish authorities question Jesus about tribute to Caesar, resurrection, and which is the greatest commandment.	22:15-40	12:13-34	20:20-40	---
Jesus asks question about the Messiah, Jewish leaders cannot answer.	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	---
Jesus specifies the eight woes, indicating what will befall the scribes and Pharisees.	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47	---
Jesus comments on the widow's mites.		12:41-44	21:1-4	---
<i>3rd Day of the Passion Week- 12th of Nisan - Monday/Tuesday</i>				
Jesus foretells destruction of the Temple.	24:1-2	13:1-2	21:5-6	---
Jesus gives the Olivet Discourse, warning of turmoil among nations, famines, earthquakes, persecution, and false messiahs. He foretells signs in the heavens and the Son of Man appearing in glory, gathering the elect.	24:3-25:30	13:3-37	21:7-38	---

30 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jesus explains the Last Judgment.	25:31-46	---	---	---
Jesus tells his disciples that he will be handed over to the chief priests, Jewish elders meet in Caiphus' house to plan how to have Jesus arrested, but do not want him killed during the Passover festival.	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	---
4th Day of the Passion Week - 13th of Nisan - Tuesday/Wednesday				
Judas goes to the chief priests and agrees to betray Jesus, begins looking for a way.	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	---
Disciples make preparations for Passover (and 1st Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread).	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	---
PASSOVER - 5th Day of the Passion Week - 14th of Nisan - Wednesday/Thursday				
Jesus and disciples eat meal in upper room after sunset (<i>same day Paschal lambs slain</i>).	26:20-35	14:17-31	22:14-38	13:1-17:26
Topics taught in the upper room: Jesus washes the disciples' feet, names Judas as his betrayer, institutes the Lord's Supper (changing the focus of the Passover from deliverance out of Egypt to deliverance from death, saying that his blood confirms the New Covenant), foretells the denials by Peter, says that he himself is the way, the truth, and the life, promises to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, tells the parable of the Vine and Branches, reveals his going and his return, prays for the disciples, and then prays for all who will believe after his resurrection and ascension.				
Jesus prays in Gethsemene.	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1
Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested.	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
Jesus tried before Annas and Sanhedrin, Peter denies Jesus at daybreak, Sanhedrin condemns Jesus for blasphemy, delivers him to Romans for execution.	26:57-75 27:1-2	14:53-72	22:54-71	18:13-27
Judas hangs himself.	27:3-10	---	---	---
Jesus is tried before Roman officials, first Pilate, then Herod Antipas, then back to Pilate who condemns him to be crucified.	27:11-31	15:1-20	23:1-25	18:28-19:16
Jesus crucified at noon, dies at 3pm while Paschal lambs are being slain until sunset.	27:32-56	15:21-41	23:26-49	19:17-37
Before sunset, Jesus' body is removed from the cross, placed in tomb by Joseph of Arimathea.	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
6th Day of the Passion Week - 15th of Nisan - Thursday/Friday 1st Day of the Feast of Weeks (First Fruits) for Pharisees				
After sunset, the Paschal lambs are eaten by Jews to commemorate the Exodus, and by the disciples in remembrance of Jesus while he was laying in the tomb. Note that this was after the supper in the upper room.	<i>That event is not mentioned in the Gospels, but Passover was kept by all observant Jews, and the eleven disciples would have been no exception.</i>			

30 CE (A.D.)				
<i>Events (cont.)</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Jewish leaders go to Pilate and demand a Roman guard be placed on Jesus' tomb.	27:62-66	---	---	---
<i>Seventh (Sabbath) Day of the Passion Week - 16th of Nisan - Friday/Saturday 1st Day of the Feast of Weeks (First Fruits) for Sadducees</i>				
Jesus' body lays in the tomb	---	---	---	---
<i>17th of Nisan - Saturday/Sunday</i>				
After sabbath ends at sunset, women purchase and prepare burial spices.	---	16:1	---	---
Jesus' physical body was resurrected to life after three days and three nights; during the next forty days after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to many witnesses as proof of his bodily resurrection to life.	28:1-20	16:2-20	24:1-53	20:1-21:24
<i>After forty days, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives</i>				
<i>And while they [the Apostles] looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven. ... Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'</i>				

Endnotes

1. Jesus echoed the First and Second of the Ten Commandments when He said: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind*” (Luke 10:27).
2. Full verse: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life*” (John 3:16).
3. As used in this book, Genesis, chapters 1-3, are to be considered primarily for their theological content—communicating spiritual truth through story. This places the focus on what the text reveals about the relationship between God and humanity while intentionally setting aside debates about chronology and literal interpretative frameworks. The latter topics lie outside the scope of this book. This approach does not deny the historical character of Genesis, but simply reflects a theology-only focus on its opening narratives.
4. *Tanakh* (also Tanach) is the English name for the Hebrew Scriptures, a name resulting from the acronym T-N-K formed by the initial letters of its three main sections, the Torah (Five Books of Moses), Neviim (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). The Jewish *Tanakh* in English and the Old Testament in Protestant Bibles are essentially the same, since both are translations derived from the Hebrew Masoretic text.
5. The near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 foreshadowed the death of Jesus on the cross. On Mount Moriah, Abraham’s beloved son carried the wood for his own sacrifice, just as Jesus later carried the cross to Calvary. The substitution of the ram in Isaac’s place anticipated Christ’s substitutionary death for mankind, portraying that God would provide his own beloved Son as the sacrifice needed for redemption of humanity (John 3:16).
6. *Berit Hadashah* (בְּרִית הַדָּשָׁה) is the standard Hebrew expression for the “New Testament,” in contrast to *Tanakh*, the Hebrew term for the “Old Testament.” It literally means “New Covenant,” reflecting the usage in Jeremiah 31:31–34.
7. The abbreviation “CE” is scholarly shorthand for “Common Era,” and is exactly equivalent to “A.D.” (*Anno Domini*, meaning “in the year of the Lord”).

SUGGESTED READING

If you want to know more about Jesus and his mission to bring salvation to the world, there is no better way to accomplish that than by going directly to Scripture. Start by reading the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You can access them online at the following locations:

BIBLE GATEWAY
www.biblegateway.com

BLUE LETTER BIBLE
www.blueletterbible.org

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