

Luke 24

But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

² They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

³ So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴ As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes.

⁵ The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?"

⁶ He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee,

⁷ that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day."

⁸ Then they remembered that he had said this.

⁹ So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples-- and everyone else-- what had happened.

¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened.

¹¹ But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn't believe it.

¹² However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.

¹³ That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem.

¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened.

¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them.

¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.

¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

¹⁹ "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people.

²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him.

²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

²² "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report.

²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive!

²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures.

²⁶ Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?"

²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on,

²⁹ but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them.

³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them.

³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

³² They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them,

³⁴ who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter."

³⁵ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

³⁶ And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said.

³⁷ But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

³⁸ "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt?"

³⁹ Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do."

⁴⁰ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

⁴³ and he ate it as they watched.

⁴⁴ Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

⁴⁶ And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.

⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'

⁴⁸ You are witnesses of all these things.

⁴⁹ "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

⁵⁰ Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them.

⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven.

⁵² So they worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy.

⁵³ And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God.

John 20:1-9, 24-31

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

² She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb.

⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵ He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there,

⁷ while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

⁸ Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed--

⁹ for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead...

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came.

²⁵ They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said.

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

²⁸ "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

³⁰ The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book.

³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

Acts 2:22-41

[Peter speaking] "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know.

²³ But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him.

²⁴ But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.

²⁵ King David said this about him: 'I see that the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

²⁶ No wonder my heart is glad, and my tongue shouts his praises! My body rests in hope.

²⁷ For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

²⁸ You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence.'

²⁹ "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us.

³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne.

³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

³² "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.

³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.

³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit in the place of honor at my right hand

³⁵ until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet.'"

³⁶ "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

³⁷ Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles-- all who have been called by the Lord our God."

⁴⁰ Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

⁴¹ Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day-- about 3,000 in all.

Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism.

³⁵ In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.

³⁶ This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel-- that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

³⁷ You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism.

³⁸ And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

³⁹ "And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross,

⁴⁰ but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear,

⁴¹ not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

⁴² And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all-- the living and the dead.

⁴³ He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."

Acts 13:16-43

So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. "Men of Israel," he said, "and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me.

¹⁷ "The God of this nation of Israel chose our ancestors and made them multiply and grow strong during their stay in Egypt. Then with a powerful arm he led them out of their slavery.

¹⁸ He put up with them through forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

¹⁹ Then he destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to Israel as an inheritance.

²⁰ All this took about 450 years. "After that, God gave them judges to rule until the time of Samuel the prophet.

²¹ Then the people begged for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years.

²² But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.'

²³ "And it is one of King David's descendants, Jesus, who is God's promised Savior of Israel!

²⁴ Before he came, John the Baptist preached that all the people of Israel needed to repent of their sins and turn to God and be baptized.

²⁵ As John was finishing his ministry he asked, 'Do you think I am the Messiah? No, I am not! But he is coming soon-- and I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the sandals on his feet.'

²⁶ "Brothers-- you sons of Abraham, and also you God-fearing Gentiles-- this message of salvation has been sent to us!

²⁷ The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the one the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned him, and in doing this they fulfilled the prophets' words that are read every Sabbath.

²⁸ They found no legal reason to execute him, but they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.

²⁹ "When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb.

³⁰ But God raised him from the dead!

³¹ And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel.

³² "And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors,

³³ and God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus. This is what the second psalm says about Jesus: 'You are my Son. Today I have become your Father.'

³⁴ For God had promised to raise him from the dead, not leaving him to rot in the grave. He said, 'I will give you the sacred blessings I promised to David.'

³⁵ Another psalm explains it more fully: 'You will not allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.'

³⁶ This is not a reference to David, for after David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed.

³⁷ No, it was a reference to someone else-- someone whom God raised and whose body did not decay.

³⁸ "Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins.

³⁹ Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God-- something the law of Moses could never do.

⁴⁰ Be careful! Don't let the prophets' words apply to you. For they said,

⁴¹ 'Look, you mockers, be amazed and die! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it.'

⁴² As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week.

⁴³ Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God.

Acts 17:2-3, 31

As was Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people.

³ He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah."... For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

Romans 1:2-4, 16-17; 3:21-25, 28; 5:1-21; 8:10-11, 31-39; 12:1-2

God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.

³ The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line,

⁴ and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord...

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes-- the Jew first and also the Gentile.

¹⁷ This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."...

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago.

²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

²⁴ Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood...

So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law...

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

² Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

³ We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.

⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.

⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.

⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.

⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.

¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.

¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

¹³ Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break.

¹⁴ Still, everyone died-- from the time of Adam to the time of Moses-- even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.

¹⁵ But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰ God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.

²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord...

And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.

¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you...

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?

³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one-- for God himself has given us right standing with himself.

³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one-- for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

³⁶ (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")

³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow-- not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below-- indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord....

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-- the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

1 Corinthians 15:1-9, 12-22

Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it.

² It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you-- unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.

³ I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.

⁴ He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

⁵ He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve.

⁶ After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

⁷ Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.

⁸ Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.

⁹ For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church...

But tell me this-- since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead?

¹³ For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either.

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless.

¹⁵ And we apostles would all be lying about God-- for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead.

¹⁶ And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.

¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost!

¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man.

²² Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

Ephesians 2:1-10

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.

² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil-- the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,

⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.

⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Philippians 3:8-11

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

⁹ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,

¹¹ so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Colossians 1:13-23; 2:11-15; 3:1-4

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son,

¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

¹⁵ Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,

¹⁶ for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see-- such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

¹⁷ He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

¹⁸ Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything.

- ¹⁹ For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,
²⁰ and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.
²¹ This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions.
²² Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.
²³ But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News...

When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision-- the cutting away of your sinful nature.

¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.

¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross...

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:9-11

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves.

¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.

¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words...

For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us.

¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.

¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

2 Timothy 1:9-10; 2:8-13

For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time-- to show us his grace through Christ Jesus.

¹⁰ And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News... Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.

⁹ And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained.

¹⁰ So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

¹¹ This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him.

¹² If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.

¹³ If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

Hebrews 8:1-2; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:19-25

Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven.

² There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands...

So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world.

¹² With his own blood-- not the blood of goats and calves-- he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

¹³ Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity.

¹⁴ Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

¹⁵ That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant...

For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf.

²⁵ And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal.

²⁶ If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.

²⁷ And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment,

²⁸ so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him... And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus.

²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

²¹ And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house,

²² let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

1 Peter 1:3-12

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,
⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance-- an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.

⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold-- though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

⁸ You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.

⁹ The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you.

¹¹ They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

¹² They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

1 John 3:16; 4:9-5:1-12

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters...

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

¹⁰ This is real love-- not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

¹³ And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵ All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.

¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

¹⁹ We love each other because he loved us first.

²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

²¹ And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too.

² We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments.

³ Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

⁴ For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith.

⁵ And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶ And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross-- not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony.

⁷ So we have these three witnesses--

⁸ the Spirit, the water, and the blood-- and all three agree.

⁹ Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his Son.

¹⁰ All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son.

¹¹ And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

¹³ I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

Revelation 1:17-18; 21:1-7, 22-25; 22:1:7

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last.

¹⁸ I am the living one. I died, but look-- I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave...

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.

² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

⁵ And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."

⁶ And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega-- the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life.

⁷ All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children...

I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light.

²⁴ The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory.

²⁵ Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there...

Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.

⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.

⁵ And there will be no night there-- no need for lamps or sun-- for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

⁶ Then the angel said to me, "Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon."

⁷ "Look, I am coming soon!"