

Fifteen Most Important Facts Of Life and Death

How to Teach These 15 Facts

1. Use the *Facts* to discuss eternal truths with persons or families.

- a. Visit the family once or twice a week, to study one *Fact* each time. The *Facts* are presented in the form of easy-to-relate Bible stories.
- b. To begin with, study a *Fact* first with the head of a family. Ask him if it's OK to share the story with his family.

2. Respect shy people.

Do not embarrass poor readers or persons who are struggling with a new language. Ask them if they would like to read the story, or if they prefer that you read it to them. Ask them to read it aloud. If they want *you* to read it, maybe it's because they do not read well. To find out, you might ask him to read only the first sentence, or one of the brief questions.

3. Get the head of the family to tell (or read) the stories to his family as soon as possible.

- a. Use the questions. Have him read a story (or a portion of it); then ***ask him the questions*** about it. Do not waste time getting into long philosophical discussions. Keep moving through the study.
- b. As soon as possible, have him read the story to his family *and* ask them the same questions. Keep showing him exactly how to teach it, in a way he can imitate at once: reading, then asking the questions. Do not use a method of teaching that depends on your own background of theological study or teaching experience; he will not even try to imitate it.
- c. Use your own discussion questions if you prefer.
- d. Once a head of family is teaching the Facts, encourage him to invite other friends and relatives, besides his own family. Follow through as in Acts 2:41 as soon as possible, as soon as they respond in faith and repentance to Christ, to establish them in your church or cell group.

Fact # 1: All Things Were Made and Are Sustained by The One Supremely Powerful Creator

Picture the planets, stars and sun being created in the sky. What do you suppose the angels thought, as they saw God fling these huge, flaming globes into space? In beautiful, poetic language God related His CREATION in the *Holy Bible*. It was written by men inspired by God's Holy Spirit in Ancient Israel where East faces West and Asia touches Africa. The *Book of Genesis* chapters 1-3 reveals it:

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Creation (Portions from the Bible, the book of Genesis chapters 1 and 3)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good... And there was evening and there was morning—the first day.

And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters... So God made the... sky... the second day.

And God said, "...let the dry ground appear..." God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees... according to their various kinds... the third day.

And God... made two great lights... to govern the day... and to govern the night. He also made the stars... the fourth day.

...God created... every living and moving thing with which the water teems... and every winged bird... the fifth day.

...God made the wild animals... and all the creatures... according to their kinds. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over... all the earth." ... male and female he created them... the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in their entire vast array. ...so on the seventh day he rested from all his work...

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden... The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."...

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man... The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

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He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"...

To Adam he said... "Cursed is the ground because of you... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."... The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them...

The Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

***Question:** Men who do not know the Supremely Powerful Creator soon create their own gods and follow them blindly (these false gods take the form of idols, money, power, sex, food and drink, fast cars, big houses, human knowledge, etc.). Why do men try to create gods?*

*The Serpent signifies Satan who, like all other spirits, was made by the One Supreme Creator. But Satan rebelled. He takes the good things of God's creation and makes men do bad things with them, even worship them instead of their Maker. But the Supreme Creator is preparing another world that will never be corrupted. He revealed it many hundreds of years later in the second part of the **Holy Bible**, called the **New Testament**. The Apostle John relates the vision in Revelation 21:1-8 (below).*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

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And he that sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

Questions

- According to the Holy Bible, where did all things come from?
- When the first man disobeyed his Maker, what was his punishment?
- Who tempted the first man Adam to disobey, so that he would die?
- Whom do you want to obey, your good Creator or the evil tempter?
- What does our Creator promise those who seek Him, after death?

Fact # 2: Men Corrupt God’s Perfect Creation

Picture many people floundering in the water, drowning, with a large boat floating nearby which they cannot reach. Why does God allow disasters to happen occasionally?

Noah's Ark: Genesis 6:9 - 7:23

This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it; The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.

And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean

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and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. They had with them every wild animal according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in.

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing... perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men, animals, and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

Questions

What did men do in ancient times that angered the supremely holy God?

How do you suppose the Most Holy One feels today as He looks down on the world?

What did God do to punish those who disobeyed Him in ancient times?

Now God has prepared something better than the wooden ark that Noah built, to save all men who repent of their sins. The Apostle Peter, one of the first followers of Jesus Christ, wrote about it in his first letter to new Christians (chapter 3:18-22). What do you think it is? What has God prepared?

Do you think it is another large boat, made of steel?

Might it be a huge rocket that can carry us to heaven?

God's own son Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for our sins, and rose again from the dead. All who trust in Him for salvation are raised with Him to heaven and eternal life. He serves as an "ark" or vehicle of eternal salvation for us. His disciple Peter wrote the following.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from

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the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has Gone into heaven and is at God's right hand.

Did the Apostle Peter believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?

Peter added in his second letter to new Christians, how the Holy One will punish men in the future (chapter 3:5-13):

But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and ...the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

...Do not forget ...with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ...He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ...But we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness..

How will God punish men who rebel against Him in the final day of judgment?

According to Peter, in whom are men saved from death and punishment if they trust in God's forgiveness?

Fact # 3: The One Supreme God Is Angered When People worship Other Gods

Picture a group of fanatical prophets, dressed in crude animal skins, leaping on their altar, crying out and cutting themselves. Why might men behave like that?

Elijah Faces King Ahab and the Prophets Of Baal (I Kings 18:1,2,16-46)

...The word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land." So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab.

Now the famine was severe in Samaria... Ahab went to meet Elijah. ...He said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?"

"I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals. Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal... who eat at Jezebel's table."

So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The God who answers by fire—he is God."

Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

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Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

Then they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon. “Oh Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed... they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response... no one paid attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which was in ruins... he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it... He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”

“Do it again,” he said, and they did it again... and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench... The prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Oh Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Oh Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Oh Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”

...Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees... the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on...

Many hundreds of years later, another trial took place, to see if men could recognize God among them. It was very different.

The Trial of Christ (Mark 14:53-65)

They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together... looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

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They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophesy!” And the guards took him and beat him...

They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

“Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.

The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”

But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed... “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

“Crucify him!” they shouted.

“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate... had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away... They put a purple robe on him, then wove a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They struck him on the head repeatedly with a staff and spit on him... Then they led him out... It was the third hour when they crucified him.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on the first day of the week... on their way to the tomb and they asked...” Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said, “You are looking for Jesus... who was crucified. He has risen! ...He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

Why do you think some people preferred to follow the false God Baal?

How did God prove that He was the true God, rather than the idol Baal?

God ordered that the prophets of Elijah be slain. Idolatry of any kind is a serious sin and angers the one true God. Why do you suppose some people like to worship idols that men have made with their own hands, instead of the one supremely good and holy God?

Jesus had done many good works and miracles of healing. Nevertheless the high priest and his court condemned him to die. What did Jesus say that made them angry and caused them to say he should die?

What did God do, on the third day after Jesus died, to prove that Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God was true?

The women found Jesus’ tomb empty. He was not there. Whom did the women see there?

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What did this messenger of God tell Jesus' disciples to do?

Fact # 4: The Most Holy One Does Not Tolerate Evil

Picture a man killing a lamb as an offering to God, while another man stands watching angrily, by with sheaves of grain in his hand. Why do some men get angry when they see others worship God in a different way than they want to do?

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1 - 16)

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain... Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

But the Lord said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Why was Cain jealous and angry with Abel?

God accepted Abel's animal sacrifice rather than Cain's. It was an innocent victim. It appealed to the mercy and grace of God. It was like the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: a willing, innocent victim, for the forgiveness of men's sins. But Cain's sacrifice represented the work of his own hands, appealing to God to recognize his good works.

Does the Almighty and Most Holy One have the right to decree what kind of sacrifice He will accept, in order to accept us into His presence? Why?

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The Temptation of Christ (Matthew 4:1 - 11)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

The devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

What different results do we see, from Jesus' temptation, and from the first man Adam's temptation?

Adam represented all men and women of the entire human race. According to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans (chapter 5:12), we all are punished in Adam. When Adam was tempted by Satan, he disobeyed God and brought death on himself and on all men because they have all sinned just as he did. Sin is anything we do, think, or leave undone, that deserves punishment.

Paul called Jesus "the Last Adam" (I Corinthians 15:45). What did the "Last Adam" do when he was tempted?

How many times did the tempter tell Jesus to do something selfish to prove he was the Son of God?

1st: turn stones to bread (Jesus had fasted for many days).

2nd: jump from the high temple (many would admire him).

3rd: worship Satan and receive the kingdoms of the world.

Which time did Satan appeal to the desires of the flesh to tempt Jesus to prove He was the Son of God?

Which time did he tempt Jesus with political power?

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Which time did Satan appeal to Jesus' desire for admiration and praise for doing something spectacular?

Jesus refused each time. He answered Satan with verses of Scripture that are inspired by God. The Almighty Himself would prove that Jesus was His son, by raising Him from the dead—not by having Jesus do selfish things.

The greatest test for Jesus, however, was not Satan's temptation. It was when he chose to die as a willing sacrifice for our sins. He asked God his father to remove this horrible cup from death from him. Then he saw that it was God's will. He obeyed. He died as a sacrifice for our sins. The Apostle Paul explains the value of Jesus' loving obedience for those who believe in him and follow him (below).

For just as through the disobedience of the one man (*the first Adam*) the many were made sinners; so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (*are freed from guilt and forgiven forever by the Most Holy God*). (Romans 5:19)

According to *man's* law, does one man normally suffer the penalty of the sins of another?

Consider *God's* law of mercy and grace. Does our Creator have the right to say what kind of sacrifice He will accept, to forgive our sins?

Do you expect His law to be higher and nobler than ours? Why?

Fact # 5: The One Faithful God Keeps His Promises And Blesses those Who Trust Him

Picture a man with many servants and camels laden with bundles, trudging across a sandy, sunny desert, not knowing where they are going, or where they might find water. Yet they are sure that they will find a beautiful land to live in. Where does such faith come from?

Abraham's Obedient Faith Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord... said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

By faith Abraham, when called to go a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. (Hebrews 11:18) Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. (Rom. 4:3) Does the Almighty God have the right to bless those whom He chooses?

God chose Abraham and blessed him because he believed. Does God have the right to bless those who believe in His mercy?

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God promised to bless all nations through Abraham's seed. Scripture says that the true descendants of Abraham are those who have faith. God fulfills His promise to Abraham by blessing all nations through Abraham's descendant Jesus. All who believe in God's salvation through His son Jesus are also Abraham's sons. We who believe as Abraham did, are heirs of the blessings promised to Abraham. (Gal. 3:7-9,16)

According to Scripture, how do we become heirs of God's blessing, by faith (believing as Abraham did), or simply by doing religious works?

The Birth Of Christ (about 2,000 years later, Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 2:8-20)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Picture a large number of angels in the sky singing loudly and playing trumpets amid the clouds. What sort of news might be so important that God would announce it in such a strange way?

...and (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men
on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

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So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

When Mary became pregnant, Joseph (Jesus' earthly father) was going to reject her as his wife. Why?

Who was Jesus' *real* father?

What did the Angels from heaven say would be given to God's people through the newborn child?

Christ Heals a Paralytic (Mark 2:1 - 12)

...When Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus saw the faith of those who lowered the paralyzed man through the roof of the crowded house. First he forgave his sins. This made some people angry. Why?

Some were angry because only God could forgive sins, and it seemed to them that Jesus was claiming too much. But Jesus proved that he had God's authority on earth to forgive sins. What did he do, after he told the man that his sins were forgiven, to prove that his forgiveness was real?

Do you want the Almighty to forgive the sins of your family? Why?

Fact # 6: The Supremely Merciful God Hates Sin but Forgives Sinners who Repent

Picture thousands of people crying out in pain and holding their hands up to a serpent made out of bronze, on a pole. They weren't worshipping it. Why do you suppose they did it?

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A Bronze Serpent in the Wilderness (Numbers 21:4 - 9)

They (*the children of Israel on the way through the desert to the land God had promised them through Abraham*) traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea... The people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

What were the Israelites complaining about as they walked through the desert?

What did the Lord Almighty do to punish them?

What did their merciful God provide then, for their healing?

Christ's Conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)

Jesus lived many centuries after God's people were saved by looking in faith at the serpent in the desert. Jesus used that as an example of his own death, when he would be made a sacrifice for sin. His talk with Nicodemus was recorded by John in his gospel.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees (those who separated themselves from other people because they were more religious) named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel's teacher,” said Jesus, “and you do not understand these things? ...I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

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The serpent was lifted up on a pole in the desert for the healing of those who trusted God's mercy. Jesus said he also had to be lifted up for God's faithful people to be healed of their sin. Do you remember how he was "lifted up?"

On what kind of pole was he lifted up? How did Jesus die, and why?

The devoutly religious man Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Jesus had not died on the cross yet. He had not yet risen from the dead. But Nicodemus said he believed that Jesus was from God, because of something Jesus had been doing. What was it?

What did Jesus tell Nicodemus he had to do, to see the Kingdom of God?

Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus. Jesus talked of spiritual things. Even a good, religious man like Nicodemus had to be born all over again, in order to enter God's eternal kingdom! What kind of birth is this second birth? Does it mean our body or our spirit?

Jesus continued explaining to Nicodemus (who later became a believer and follower of Jesus).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

Picture an evil looking man sneaking away from a light. He looks back at the light and sneers. Why do people who have done something wrong fear and hate the pure light of God?

God hates the evil things we do. But He is also merciful. According to Jesus, why did God send His only son into the world? To punish us for the bad things we have done? Or to save us from His punishment?

If you want God to forgive you and your family for the wrong things you have done, what must you do, according to Jesus Christ?

Fact # 7: The All-powerful God Saves Believers From Death and Judgment

Picture a man painting blood on the doorposts of his house. Why would he this?

God Rescues his People from Slavery (Exodus 12 - 14)

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "...Each man is to take a lamb for his family... all the people... of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ...Take some of the blood and put it on the

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sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses... eat the meat... along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast... Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

"...I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn... The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you..."

Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and... slaughter the Passover lamb. ...Put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. ...When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood... and will pass over..."

At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh... to the firstborn of the prisoner... in the dungeon... there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

...Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "...Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks... and go..."

...God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea... Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp... by the sea. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."...

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!"... The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea... the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? ...It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today... The Lord will fight for you..." Then the Lord said to Moses, "...Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them..."

The... pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel... Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen followed them into the sea. ...The Lord... made the wheels of their chariots come... The Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them..."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea..." Moses stretched out his hand... The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen--the entire army of Pharaoh... Not one of them survived.

What did each home do with the blood of a lamb, so that the Death Angel would spare the oldest child?

What did the Almighty do then to save His people from the Egyptian army?

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*This escape from slavery was the great miracle upon which God based His covenant. This covenant, or Old Testament, is **not** simply the first part of the Bible, but the fact that God saved His people; they belonged to Him; so he expected them to obey His laws. The new covenant (New Testament) rests on other miracles.*

The “Lamb of God” Sacrificed for Sin And Risen

Hundreds of years later John the Baptist recognized Jesus even before He began teaching publicly: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). John foresaw Jesus' *crucifixion* several years before it happened (Matt. 27:32-54; John 19:30).

...They came to a place called Golgotha... When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots... Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying... “Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ...Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

...Darkness came over all the land. ...Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” ...One of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

...When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split... When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

Lambs were killed in the Old Testament as a sacrifice for sin. Why did John call Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?” On what “altar” was Jesus sacrificed?

Jesus did not stay dead. Our salvation depends on this greatest miracle of all (Luke 24:1-44).

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ...Suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”

...They told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ...But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves... That same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ...As they talked

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...Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

...One of them... asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened ...?”

“What things?”

“About Jesus of Nazareth... He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel... In addition, some of our women... went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

...When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”

...While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have...”

What happened the third day after Jesus died?

What was the great miracle in the Old Testament, upon which God based His *Old, temporary Covenant* with His people?

What is the greatest miracle of the *New, eternal Covenant*?

Review # 1 (Old Testament): The History of God’s People before His Son Came

Picture several priests praying beside a large square stone altar decorated with large horns at each corner. Smoke rises from it; a sheep is burning on it!

Why do you suppose they burned animals on a stone altar?

The Prayer of the Levites (Nehemiah 9)

“...You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens... the earth and all that is on it... You gave life to everything...”

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“You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land... You have kept your promise because you were righteous.

“You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

“You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right... through your servant Moses. In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn... to give them.

“But they, our forefathers, became arrogant... and did not obey your commands... But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said ‘This is your god, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,’ or when they committed awful blasphemies...

“For forty years you sustained them in the desert; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

“You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan...

“Their sons went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites...

“But they were disobedient and rebelled against you... They killed your prophets... they committed awful blasphemies. So you handed them over to their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.

“But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time.

“You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands... For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Why is Abraham considered to be the “Father of Many Nations” and a great example for all believers?

How did God rescue His people from slavery in Egypt?

What did God give His people on Mount Sinai, to guide them?

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How did the ancient Israelites behave themselves, usually, when they had the Law?

Fact # 8: The Eternal God Imparts His Own Everlasting Life to those who Love Him

Picture a man coming out of a large tomb, bound in white grave clothes, with people screaming in astonishment. Why do we fear death, and feel that it is so unpleasant?

The Raising of Lazarus from Death (John 11)

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha... The sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

...Then he told them... "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

... On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ...Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him...

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

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...Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

Then Jesus said, ““Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Therefore many... who had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them... The chief priests... called a meeting... “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” ...So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

How did Jesus prove on earth that our eternal life comes through him?

Why did the leaders fear Jesus?

What did they plot together to do?

Shortly after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he was crucified and rose again. His resurrection was not like that of Lazarus. Lazarus was raised back to his previous life in the same body. He still had to grow old and die a natural death. But Jesus rose in a glorified body; at first his followers did not recognize him. His Apostles saw him ascend to heaven in this new, heavenly body. According to Jesus, those who believe in him will be raised from the dead together with Him to eternal life in God’s heaven. Jesus explained it in John 5:24-29 (below).

...Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned... a time is coming and now has come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for... all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

According to Jesus, God is the source of all life. Whose voice will the dead hear, from their graves?

What will happen to them then?

Those who obey God will be raised to *life*. To what condition will the others be raised?

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Years after Jesus' resurrection and ascension to glory, the aged Apostle John saw a vision of God's final judgment. God revealed to him what happens to those who resist being redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:11-15, below).

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Lamb's book of life. The dead were judged according to that they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

John saw the book of life, with the names of those who escape God's final punishment. He also saw many other books in which something else is being recorded. God will use this other information to judge men who resist life in Jesus Christ. What is being recorded now in these judgment books?

This final punishment is "the second death." What will happen to those who rebel against the Holy God, in this second death? How will He punish them?

Fact # 9: The All-present, Almighty God Transforms Sinners who Want to be Clean

Picture a proud general of the army stepping down from a magnificent chariot to wade into a muddy river, and dipping himself seven times under the water while his soldiers stand by watching in surprise. Why would a person do such a silly thing?

The Healing of Naaman (II Kings 5:1 - 15)

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

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When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: “Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan (*River*) and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’!” So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him; his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in the entire world except in Israel...”

Leprosy in the Bible, is used to illustrate sin (it does not mean that lepers are any more sinful than other people). All men have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). Every person has “spiritual leprosy” and is unclean before God, until He cleanses us.

Whom did the Syrian army commander ask for healing?

What did the prophet Elisha tell him to do, to receive God’s healing?

How did Naaman’s react at first to this advice?

What finally happened?

*God healed Naaman’s **flesh** of leprosy. Even more important, Naaman trusted in the one true God. When we believe in Him, He transforms our spirit, our very soul (not only our flesh). Many hundreds of years later this transformation by the Spirit of God was revealed in the New Testament. An example is the transformation of Saul of Tarsus (below).*

Saul’s Conversion (Acts 9:1 - 19)

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

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The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered.

The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

What was Saul doing, when Jesus spoke to him?

What happened to Saul’s sight?

Why did Ananias fear Saul?

What did God tell Ananias that Saul would do?

What happened when Ananias prayed for him?

Saul was baptized to show that he was a follower of Jesus, and began his new life in Christ. He changed his name to Paul and took the good news of salvation in Jesus to many nations.

Do you want God to forgive you and transform your soul so that you might serve Him and live with Him forever in glory?

Fact # 10: Believers’ Father in Heaven Helps them to Turn from their Sins to Serve Him

Picture a band of soldiers knocking down large idols and breaking them to pieces angrily. Why do you think they did this?

King Josiah Eliminates Idolatry from Israel (II Chronicles 34 & 35)

Josiah... reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years... In his twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast images. Under his direction the

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altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles, the idols and the images... These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem. In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them, he tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel.

In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan son of ...Maaseiah the ruler of the city... to repair the temple of the Lord his God.

They went to Hilkiyah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the temple of God... Then they entrusted it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the Lord's temple. These men paid the workers who repaired and restored the temple...

While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the temple of the Lord, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord that had been given through Moses... He gave it to Shaphan...

Then Shaphan took the book to the king and reported to him... And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiyah... "Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord..."

Hilkiyah and those the king had sent with him went to speak to the prophetess Huldah...

She said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:... 'I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people... Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods... ' Tell the king of Judah... 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke... I have heard you, declares the Lord. Now I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place and on those who live here.'"

...Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the Lord with... all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands...

Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God...

Josiah celebrated the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem...

Josiah provided for all the lay people who were there a total of thirty thousand sheep and goats for the Passover offerings, and also three thousand cattle—all from the king's own possessions...

So at that time the entire service of the Lord was carried out for the celebration of the Passover and the offering of burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord, as King Josiah had ordered. The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a

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Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem.

The Passover was the feast in which the Israelites celebrated their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Do you remember what God had done to save them? What did they do with the blood of the Passover lamb, so that the oldest child of each home would not die?

What had happened when Pharaoh's army pursued them to the Red Sea?

After crossing the Red Sea miraculously on dry land, God commanded His people to have no other gods. They were to destroy all idols and worship Him alone. What did king Josiah do, to obey this part of the covenant of ancient Israel with the Almighty God?

In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to obey specific laws. He punished them if they disobeyed. But now, in the new covenant of Jesus, that is, in the New Testament, it is different. We obey Him not just because we fear His punishment, but because we love Him. We do what is right, not because we are forced to by laws, but because we want to. He gives us His own Holy Spirit so that our deepest desire is to turn from our sin and selfishness to serve Him. Jesus illustrates this change, or "repentance" in the following story.

A Prodigal (wasteful) Son (Luke 15:11-32)

"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to this father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never

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disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him.’

“My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

The selfish son in this story represents all of us, when we sin but later repent. Who does his forgiving, gracious father represent?

Why was the older son angry?

Does the most merciful God have the right to show His grace and goodness even on those who are undeserving, out of pure love and kindness?

What did the rebellious son do, so that his father could forgive him and restore him to the family?

Does this suggest to you what you and your family should do, in order to receive God’s favor? What do you think you should do?

Fact # 11: He who Never Sleeps Hears Believers when they Ask for Help

Picture a skinny, scared teen-age boy running toward a huge giant of a man with a helmet and armor and an enormous sword. The boy has no armor and holds only a small sling that he made himself. His friends look on, holding their breath with fear. Where could such a boy get the strength to be so brave?

David’s Defeat of Goliath (I Samuel 17:1 - 51)

Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war... The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

A champion named Goliath... came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels... Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why do you come out and line up for battle? ...Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us... This day I defy the ranks of Israel!...” On hearing the Philistine’s words, (*King*) Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse... Jesse’s three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war... Jesse said to his son David, “Take this... bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp... See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them...”

Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry... David... ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. As he was talking with them, Goliath... stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it...

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David asked the men standing near him, "...Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" ...What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."

But David said to Saul, "...The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you." Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, ...So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy... and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel..."

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground... David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and... cut off his head with the sword.

David the young shepherd boy later became king of Israel. He trusted God with his whole heart. Because of this, God promised him that one of his descendants would reign forever as king. This promise came true through Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the flesh, he came from king David's lineage.

David did not trust in his own strength. In whom did he trust?

Goliath the giant represented Satan, who defies The Almighty and rules all people who do not trust in God. David represented Jesus Christ who defeated Satan in his death and resurrection. Jesus was often confronted by demons (evil spirits under Satan's control). They spoke to Him through persons whom they possessed (who worshiped the demons or their idols until the evil spirits controlled them entirely). Mark 5:1-20 records an example (below).

Christ's Heals A Demoniac and Calms a Storm (Mark 5:1-20; Mark 4:35-41)

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue

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him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!”

Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus repeatedly not to send them out of the area.

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

How did Jesus prove here that He has power over invisible spiritual forces?

Jesus also proved that He has power over natural, physical forces (below).

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

How did Jesus prove here that He has power over visible, physical forces?

Fact # 12: People Must Come to the Most Holy God By Way of Jesus’ Blood

Picture fire coming down from God in a very sacred meeting place, on two proud young priests. What do you suppose they did to make Him so angry?

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Sin and Death of Aaron's Sons, Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-7)

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:

'Among those who approach me
I will show myself holy;
in the sight of all the people
I will be honored.'"

Aaron remained silent. Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.

Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the Lord will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the house of Israel, may mourn for those the Lord has destroyed by fire. Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting or you will die, because the Lord's anointing oil is on you." So they did as Moses said.

These two sons of Aaron were consumed by fire because they approached the most holy God disobediently. What did they do wrong?

The Lord is very strict as to how sinful men might worship Him. He is so holy and good, that He cannot look upon sin. A sacrifice for sin (or "atonement") must be made before any man can enter His presence. He gave warnings for the Old Testament high priest to make this atonement for the sins of the people (below).

Rules for the High Priest to Enter the Most Holy Place (Leviticus 16)

The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord. ..."Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain... where the ark is, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body... These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. ...Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household.

...He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover... In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been.

...This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work... because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. ...It is a lasting

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ordinance. The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. ...Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.” And it was done, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Many hundreds of years later, Jesus became the eternal High Priest for all men. But he entered into the heavenly temple, not made by men’s hands. He atoned for all men’s sins with His own blood, not that of animals. He did it once for all sins, to obtain our eternal salvation. The earthly sanctuary and priesthood of the Old Testament was but a shadow and copy of the true eternal one in heaven (below).

Jesus our High Priest Enters into the Eternal Holy Place for Us (Acts 1; Hebrews chapters 7-9)

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. He said to them: ...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ...and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

...Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. ...Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

...We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man..

...If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. ...But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: “...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” ...By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ...only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed... This is an illustration for the present time... When Christ came as high priest... he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves;

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but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

Into what kind of sanctuary (temple) did Jesus enter to atone for our sins?

Why did he not enter with the blood of animals?

Why did he not have to make atonement first for *his own* sins?

For whom is his atonement for sin valid?

For how long is it valid?

Fact # 13: God's Holy Spirit Lives in Believers and Guides them

Picture of very old man coming down from a smoking mountain carrying two heavy tablets of stone. His face is shining so that the people beg him to cover it. What do you think happened?

The Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant (Exodus chapters 19 -10)

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very same day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. ...And Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me ...a holy nation.”

And the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people; and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around; the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death...

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire....

And God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You will have no other gods before me.

You will not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them...

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God..

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work....

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

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You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Why were the people fearful when they approached Mount Sinai?

How many of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament emphasize that we are to worship the one true God only?

How many of the Ten Commandments tell us how to treat other people?

Unfortunately, men have never been able to keep all these commands of God, of the Old Covenant. We sin against them either in thought or deed. This is another reason why God made a New Covenant. The ancient law was good; but men are sinners and cannot keep it. In the New Covenant (New Testament) God has provided an entirely new way to govern us, by placing His Spirit in our hearts, so that we desire to do what is right. We are guided by the Spirit rather than by the letter of the law.

The Coming of God's Spirit To Live in Believers' Hearts (Acts 2)

When the day of Pentecost came, they (*Jesus' disciples, after His resurrection and ascension to heaven*) were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism) Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Then Peter... raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people...
And everyone who calls on the name
of the Lord will be saved.

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“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him... God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact... Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said... “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...”

Those who accepted the message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

What did the Holy Spirit enable the Apostles to do, that convinced the foreigners in Jerusalem that the message was of God?

What was the main thing that the Apostle Peter wanted them to believe about Jesus?

What did Peter tell those who were convinced to do?

How many responded?

What was the first thing those who believed and repented did?

God’s Spirit lives inside all who repent and believe in Jesus. They no longer need the old law to guide them to live right. The Holy Spirit puts God’s love in their hearts; they want to do what is right.

When does God’s Spirit come to live in a person's heart?

Fact # 14: God's People Confirm their Eternal Salvation with Water Baptism

Picture a dove coming down from a cloud, yet it is not really a bird but something that we cannot see at all, unless God gives it an appearance we can see. What do you suppose is happening?

The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13 - 17)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the desert,

Prepare the way for the Lord,

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Make straight paths for him.”

...People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea... Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River...

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

What did the people do, before John the Baptist baptized them in the river?

Why did John not want to baptize Jesus at first?

What happened when Jesus came up from the water?

*Baptism is a ceremonial washing away of sin. It represents our repentance: we **die** with Christ to our sins. It now also represents our new life: we **rise** with Christ to live forever in purity with Him (Acts 22:16 and Romans 6:3-4, below).*

Conversion of an Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26 - 40)

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before the shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the

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water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

The Ethiopian who believed in Jesus did not have to wait for several people to be present, in order to be baptized. Both he and Philip simply obeyed the Lord. What did Philip explain to him first?

The Old Testament is that part of the Bible written before Jesus instituted the New Testament. It has many prophecies foretelling Jesus' work of redemption. The Eunuch was reading one of them from Isaiah 53. The prophet Isaiah compared the coming Savior to a lamb being led without protest to slaughter. Why?

Conversion of a Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:16 - 34)

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

What did the Apostles tell the jailer to do when he asked to be saved?

After he received Christ as his savior by faith, who also was converted and baptized along with him?

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Do you desire to receive Christ, along with your family?

Fact # 15: Our Risen Lord Gathers His People into Loving Fellowships

Picture Jesus with His arms raised to heaven, praying earnestly, and His disciples watching in awe. It is His last night with them, before He is killed, and He knows it. What do you suppose He is praying for so seriously? Listen carefully for things He prayed for, for us.

Christ's Prayer for Believers at the Last Supper, Before He Died (John 17)

Jesus... looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one...

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ...I have sent them into the world...

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Which of the following things did Jesus pray for, in behalf those of us who believed in Him

1. eternal life

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2. joy
3. success in battle against non-believers
4. unity with Jesus
5. unity with each other
6. unity with the entire world
7. isolation from the world
8. to be sent into the world so that others might know the truth
9. protection from the evil one
10. to see Jesus' glory in heaven
11. to have the Father's love in them

(Jesus prayed for all but numbers 3, 6 and 7.) The first followers of Jesus loved one another fervently, and enjoyed wonderful fellowship, as do all His sincere followers today, in answer to Jesus' prayer (Acts 2:42-47). Do you want Him to bring God's love into your life and home?

This fellowship in Jesus is celebrated with a new Passover feast, now called "The Lord's Supper." Jesus added to its meaning; He is our Passover lamb (Mark 14).

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve (*apostles*), went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he waited for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast... when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"...

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said "...One of you will betray me."...

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said...

When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and he said... "Sit here while I pray... My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death..." He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Father... everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

...Then he returned to the disciples and found them sleeping...

He said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests...and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him..." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said,

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“Rabbi!” and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

“Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?...” Then everyone deserted him and fled.

What did Jesus ask his heavenly Father to do, if it was possible?

As He prayed Jesus came to know that his Father wanted him to die for our sins. After his resurrection, he united his disciples in joyful fellowship. Jesus appeared many times; one example is found in John 21.

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them (*the other disciples*), and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” ...Peter... jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish... When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

...Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.

...When they have finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “...Do you truly love me...?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

After Jesus ascended to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to live in all believers. So the group grew and became the “church.” The believers enjoyed a beautiful, loving fellowship, which exists today also wherever sincere, obedient followers of Jesus join together to obey His commands (Acts 2:44-47):

All the believers were together and... they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Do you want your family and friends to receive forgiveness in Jesus and to join this joyful, loving group of believers?

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Review # 2 (New Testament): Receive the Good News

Picture a large cross on a hill, with a man nailed to it. Even though the sun has not yet gone down it gets very dark, thunder deafens the people, the earthquakes, everyone is afraid. What has happened to cause such things?

Crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:32-54; John 19:30)

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying... “Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

...When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split...

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

Jesus was the son of man (of the virgin Mary). Who was His true Father?

Jesus, the Son of God, did miracles of healing and many other acts of love and goodness. So why did He have to die?

Picture a tomb dug out of the side of a cliff, with guards. But, as the sun starts to rise, they run away terrified. Why?

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Resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:1 - 44; John 20:24-31)

Picture a tomb dug out of the side of a cliff. As the sun comes up, several soldiers who were guarding it are running away terrified. What had happened?

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked ...Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel... In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

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They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have...”

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms...”

Now Thomas, (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

How do we know that Jesus rose bodily from the dead (not just his spirit)?