



As Jesus' Friends, We Must Stick with Him to Be Fruitful

Yahweh has anointed me to...give to them...the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that he may be glorified...I will make an everlasting covenant with them – Isaiah 61:1-8

[John 15:1-16, to the Mount of Olives, Wednesday]

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the farmer. Every branch in me that doesn't bear fruit, he takes away. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already pruned clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can't bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man doesn't remain in me, he is thrown out as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.

"In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so you will be my disciples. Even as the Father has loved me, I also have

In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit

loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and remain in his love. I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant doesn't know what his lord does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you. You didn't choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you will ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

"I command these things to you, that you may love one another."

1. Are you already pruned? How? How do you remain in Jesus? What fruit have you borne?

2. Who must you love today? How does being Jesus' friend help? How are you asking God?

3. Jesus, today I will keep your command to love others so I'll remain in you, please help me...

As Jesus' Friends, We'll Suffer but Have the Spirit's Help

I am weary with my crying. My throat is dry. My eyes fail, looking for my God.
 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.
 Those who want to cut me off, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty – Psalm 69:3-4

[John 15:17-16:11] “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his lord.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do to you for my name’s sake, because they don’t know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me, hates my Father also. If I hadn’t done among them the works which no one else did, they wouldn’t have had sin. But now have they seen and also hated both me and my Father. But this happened so that the word may be fulfilled which was written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’ [Psalm 69:4]

“When the Counselor has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will testify about me. You will also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

*If I don't go away,
 the Counselor won't
 come to you*

“These things have I spoken to you, so that you wouldn’t be caused to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he offers service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have told you these things, so that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you about them. I didn’t tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have told you these things, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I don’t go away, the Counselor won’t come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. When he has come, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment; about sin, because they don’t believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to my Father, and you won’t see me any more; about judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged.”

1. What are the Spirit’s jobs? How do you know he’s with you? How are you suffering?

2. How can Jesus say, “none of you asks” when Peter *did* (May 30)? Are you sorrowful?

3. Jesus, when I suffer even a little, I stop asking to know you and where you are; please...

As Jesus' Friends, We Miss Him on Earth, but Have Joy

Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together;
for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice
from their sorrow – Jeremiah 31:13

[John 16:12-33] “I have yet many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now. However when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak from himself; but whatever he hears, he will speak. He will declare to you things that are coming. He will glorify me, for he will take from what is mine, and will declare it to you. All things whatever the Father has are mine; therefore I said that he takes of mine, and will declare it to you. A little while, and you will not see me. Again a little while, and you will see me.”

Some of his disciples therefore said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you won’t see me, and again a little while, and you will see me;’ and, ‘Because I go to the Father?’” They said therefore, “What is this that he says, ‘A little while?’ We don’t know what he is saying.”

Therefore Jesus perceived that they wanted to ask him, and he said to them, “Do you inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you won’t see me, and again a little while, and you will see me?’ Most certainly I tell you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she gives birth, has sorrow, because her time has come. But when she has delivered the child, she doesn’t remember the anguish any more, for the joy that a human being is born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your

heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

**Your sorrow will
be turned into joy**

“In that day you will ask me no questions. Most certainly I tell you, whatever you may ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now, you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech. But the time is coming when I will no more speak to you in figures of speech, but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name; and I don’t say to you, that I will pray to the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came out from the Father, and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”

His disciples said to him, “Behold, now you speak plainly, and speak no figures of speech. Now we know that you know all things, and don’t need for anyone to question you. By this we believe that you came forth from God.”

Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Behold, the time is coming, yes, and has now come, that you will be scattered, everyone to his own place, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world.”

1. What else does the Spirit do? Why would the disciples weep? How would they have joy?
2. Did the disciples believe? Why were they scattered? Do you believe? How do you know?
3. Father, I’m asking you for the Spirit to fill me, so that my joy will be full, and I also ask...



December 4

Jesus Prays for Us, His Friends

I will betroth you to me forever...and you shall know Yahweh...Let us acknowledge Yahweh. Let us press on to know Yahweh. As surely as the sun rises, Yahweh will appear. He will come to us like...the spring rain that waters the earth – Hosea 2:20, 6:3

[Mark 10:46-52, Jericho] Jesus said these things, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you; even as you gave him authority over all flesh, he will give eternal life to all whom you have given him. This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on the earth. I have accomplished the work which you have given me to do. Now, Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world existed. I revealed your name to the people whom you have given me out of the world. They were yours, and you have given them to me. They have kept your word. Now they have known that all things whatever you have given me are from you, for the words which you have given me I have given to them, and they received them, and knew for sure that I came forth from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

I pray for them. I don't pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them through your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. Those whom you have given me I have kept. None of them is lost, except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be

This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God

fulfilled. But now I come to you, and I say these things in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves. I have given them your word. The world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that you would take them from the world, but that you would keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in your truth. Your word is truth. [Psalm 119:142] As you sent me into the world, even so I have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Not for these only do I pray, but for those also who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me. The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am, that they may see my glory, which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world hasn't known you, but I knew you; and these knew that you sent me. I made known to them your name, and will make it known; that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them."

1. Why does Jesus' use his first name? What else did he call himself? Who is he to you?
2. Do you know Jesus came from God? How so? Did the disciples? How does it affect you?
3. God, I want to know you more, your name and your Son, so that your love will be in me...



Jesus Conquers Grief to Do God's Will; the Disciples Don't

“Awake, sword...against the man who is close to me,” says Yahweh of Armies. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; and I will turn my hand against the little ones...two parts...will be cut off...but the third will be left” – Zechariah 13:7-8

[Matthew 26:31-32, 36-46, Gethsemane, Wednesday midnight] *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered.*

Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of me tonight, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ [Zechariah 13:7] But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.”

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go there and pray. *Pray that you don't enter into temptation.*” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be greatly sorrowful and severely troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here, and watch with me.”

He went forward a little, *about a stone's throw*, fell on the ground on his face, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him, saying, “Abba, my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not what I desire, but what you desire.”

Stay here, and
watch with me

He came to the disciples, and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What, couldn't you watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray, that you don't enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Again, a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cup can't pass away from me unless I drink it, your desire be done.” He came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy, and they didn't know what to answer him. He left them again, went away, and prayed a third time, saying the same words. *An angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. Being in agony he prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.*

Then, *when he rose up from his prayer*, he came to his disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and said to them, “Sleep on now, and take your rest. It is enough. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let's be going. Behold, he who betrays me is at hand.” [Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:42-46, John 18:1]

1. Why does Jesus ask Peter, James and John to watch with him? Why ask the cup to pass?
2. What has Jesus asked of you? Did he find you awake? How can you avoid sleeping today?
3. Jesus, you fought grief and resolved to save me, despite the cost; today I'm praying not to...



December 6

Judas Betrays, Peter Fights, But Jesus Embraces the Cup

He...carried our suffering...he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed...Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all – Isaiah 53:4-6

[John 18:2-14] Now Judas, *one of the twelve*, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. Judas then, having taken a detachment of soldiers and officers from the chief priests *the scribes, the elders*, and the Pharisees, came there while he was still speaking with lanterns, torches, and weapons—swords and clubs. Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were happening to him, went forth, and said to them, “Who are you looking for?”

They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus said to them, “I am he.”

Judas also, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When therefore he said to them, “I am he,” they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Again therefore he asked them, “Who are you looking for?”

They said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way,” that the word might be fulfilled which he spoke, “Of those whom you have given me, I have lost none.”

Now he who betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, “Whoever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him and lead him away safely.” Immediately he came to Jesus, and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

Jesus said to him, “Friend Judas, why are you here? Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

When those who were around him saw what was about to happen, they said to him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”

The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not...drink it?

Simon Peter therefore, having a sword, *stretched out his hand*, drew it, and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. *But Jesus answered, “Let me at least do this”—and he touched his ear, and healed him.* The servant’s name was Malchus.

Jesus therefore said to Peter, “Put the sword into its sheath. The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not surely drink it? For all those who take the sword will die by the sword. Or do you think that I couldn’t ask my Father, and he would even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?”

In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes *to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders, who had come against him*, “Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to seize me? I sat daily *with you* in the temple teaching, and you didn’t *stretch out your hands* to arrest me. But all this has happened, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*”

Then all the disciples left him, and fled. *A certain young man followed him, having a linen cloth thrown around himself, over his naked body. The young men grabbed him, but he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.*

So the detachment, the commanding officer, and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound him, and led him to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should perish for the people. [Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-53, Luke 22:47-54]

1. Why does only John mention the falling soldiers? Why was Judas’ kiss still performed?
2. Do you relate to Judas, Peter and Mark (the fleeing boy)? How? What must you change?
3. Jesus, you reached out to Judas, healed Malchus, confessed your power to the crowds, and...



Peter's Great Boldness for Jesus is Stripped by a Maid

Our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: transgressing and denying Yahweh, and turning away from following our God – Isaiah 59:12-13

[John 18:15-18, Annas' house, Thursday before dawn] Simon Peter followed Jesus *from a distance*, as did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought in Peter *to see the end*. Then the maid who kept the door said to

Peter, "Are you also one of this man's disciples?"

Are you also one of this man's disciples?

He *denied Jesus* before them all and said, "Woman, I am not. *I don't know him. I neither know, nor understand what you are saying.*"

Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of coals, for it was cold. They were warming themselves. Peter was with them, standing and warming himself. *He went out on the porch, and the rooster crowed.* [Matthew 26:57-58, 69-70, Mark 14:54-55, 66-68, Luke 22:54-57]

1. Who sparks Peter's first denial? Why is this significant? Have you denied Jesus this way?
2. Have you been denied? How? How did you feel? How can you stop denying Jesus today?
3. Jesus, great Yahweh, the I AM; I've denied you in so many ways, please help me today to...



December 8

Peter Realizes How He Denied Jesus—and Weeps Bitterly

I am Yahweh; and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness. I didn't say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.' I, Yahweh, speak righteousness. I declare things that are right – Isaiah 45:18-19

[John 18:19-25] The high priest therefore asked Jesus about his disciples, and about his teaching. Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where the Jews always meet. I said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. Behold, these know the things which I said."

When he had said this, one of the officers standing by slapped Jesus with his hand, saying, "Do you answer the high priest like that?"

Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, testify of the evil; but if well, why do you beat me?"

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. When he had gone out on the porch, the maid saw him, and began again to tell those who stood by, "This is one of them. This man

also was with Jesus of Nazareth" They said therefore to him, "You aren't also one of his disciples, are you?"

**And immediately
the rooster crowed**

He denied it again, and said with an oath, "Man, I am not. I don't know the man."

After about one hour passed One of the servants of the high priest, being a relative of him whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him? Surely you are also one of them, for your speech makes you known: for you are a Galilean."

Peter therefore began to curse, to swear, and denied it again: "I don't know this man of whom you speak! Man, I don't know what you are talking about!" and immediately the rooster crowed the second time. The Lord turned, and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word, how that Jesus said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." When he thought about that, he went out and wept bitterly. [Matthew 26:71-75, Mark 14:69-72, Luke 22:58-62]

1. What were Jesus' circumstances? Peter's? How did each respond? How do you? Why?
2. What kind of look did Jesus give Peter? How do you know? How does it make you feel?
3. Jesus, you predicted Peter's denial and loved him through it; I don't even realize how I've...

December 9

Jesus Reveals His Identity, Though It Helps His Enemies

Yahweh said to me, "You are my son. Today I have become your father. Ask of me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance"...Now therefore be wise, you kings...Serve Yahweh with fear...Give sincere homage to the Son – Psalm 2:7-12

[Mark 14:53-64, At Caiaphas' house, Thursday before and after dawn] Annas led Jesus away, bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. All the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes came together with him.

Now the chief priests, the elders, and the whole council sought witnesses and false testimony against Jesus to put him to death, and found none, even though many false witnesses came forward. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony didn't agree with each other. But at last some stood up, and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" Even so, their testimony did not agree.

The high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it which these testify against you?" But he stayed quiet, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, "I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us: Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God?"

Jesus said, "I am. You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of the sky."

The high priest tore his clothes, and said, "What further need have we of witnesses?

You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?" They all condemned him to be worthy of death.

The men who held Jesus mocked him and having blindfolded him, they struck him on the face and some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to beat him with fists, and to tell him, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck you?" The officers struck him with the palms of their hands. They spoke many other things against him, insulting him.

As soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together, both chief priests and scribes, and they led him away into their council, saying, "If you are the Christ, tell us."*

But he said to them, "If I tell you, you won't believe, and if I ask, you will in no way answer me or let me go. From now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

They all said, "Are you then the Son of God?"

He said to them, "You say it, because I am."

They said, "Why do we need any more witness? For we ourselves have heard from his own mouth!" [Matthew 26:57-68, Luke 22:63-71, John 18:24]

**[this is the third "trial" of five: first, before Annas; second, before Caiaphas while it was still dark and while no death sentence would be legal by Roman or Jewish law; third, the formal condemnation at dawn when the condemning conversation was repeated; fourth, before Pilate, without whose permission Jesus could not be executed; fifth, before Herod, who sent him back to Pilate. After these five arraignments, Pilate sentenced him to crucifixion.]*

1. Have you been accused? Were you guilty? Did you remain silent? How did you feel?

2. Why did Jesus say "I am"? Have you confessed his deity, even when it cost you? How?

3. Jesus, I'm like Peter, denying you even as you're confessing the truth, please help me...

December 10

A Remorseful Judas Doesn't Make Amends

Yahweh said to me, "Throw it to the potter, the handsome price that I was valued at by them!" I took the thirty pieces of silver, and threw them to the potter, in the house of Yahweh – Zechariah 11:13

[Matthew 27:3-10, Jerusalem, Thursday] Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that Jesus was condemned, felt remorse, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood."

But they said, "What is that to us? You see to it."

He threw down the pieces of silver in the sanctuary, and departed. He went away and hanged himself and falling headlong, his body burst open, and all his intestines gushed out. The chief priests took the pieces of silver, and said, "It's not lawful to put them into the

treasury, since it is the price of blood." They took counsel, and bought the potter's field with them, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field was called 'Akeldama,' that is, "The Field of Blood" to this day. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying,

"They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him upon whom a price had been set, whom some of the children of Israel priced, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me. [Zechariah 11:12-13, Jeremiah 19:1-13 and 32:6-9]" [Acts 1:18-19]

1. When have you felt remorse? How did you make amends? How did Judas? Did it work?
2. Why is this quote paraphrased and attributed to Jeremiah? Could Jeremiah have said it?
3. Jesus, Judas had a chance to turn from his plans and a chance to make amends; likewise, I...

The God of Truth is Questioned by an Incredulous Pilate

Into your hand I commend my spirit.
You redeem me, Yahweh, God of truth – Psalm 31:5

[John 18:28-38, Pilate's home, Thursday] They led Jesus therefore bound from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and delivered him up to Pontius Pilate, the governor. It was early, and they themselves didn't enter into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

They answered him, "If this man weren't an evildoer, we wouldn't have delivered him up to you."

Pilate therefore said to them, "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law."

Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying by what kind of death he should die. *They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting the nation, forbidding paying taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."*

Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered him, "*So you say. Do you say this by yourself, or did others tell you about me?*"

Pilate answered, "I'm not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests

delivered you to me. What have you done?"

Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I wouldn't be delivered to the Jews. But now my Kingdom is not from here."

Pilate therefore said to him, "Are you a king then?"

Jesus answered, "*So you say that I am a king. For this reason I have been born, and for this reason I have come into the world, that I should testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*"

Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

When he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no basis for a charge against him.

The chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they testify against you!"

But Jesus made no further answer, not even one word, so that Pilate marveled greatly.

Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

But they insisted, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee even to this place." But when Pilate heard Galilee mentioned, he asked if the man was a Galilean. When he found out that he was in Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem during those days. [Matthew 27:2, 11-14, Mark 15:1-5, Luke 23:1-7]

1. How does Pilate talk to the Jews? To Jesus? Who else talks like this? How can you help?
2. How does God use evil intents to accomplish his will? Is salvation in spite of evil or by it?
3. Jesus, *you* are the truth, the way, and the life, I can't come to God but by your suffering...

December 12

The Anointed One is Questioned by a Thrill-Seeking Herod

The kings of the earth take a stand, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against his Anointed, saying, "Let's break their bonds apart, and cast their cords from us" – Psalm 2:2-3

[Luke 23:8-12, Herod's palace, Thursday]
Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he had wanted to see him for a long time, because he had heard many things about him. He hoped to see some miracle done by him. He questioned him with many words, but he gave no answers. The chief priests and the

scribes stood, vehemently accusing him. Herod with his soldiers humiliated him and mocked him. Dressing him in luxurious clothing, they sent him back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before that they were enemies with each other.

1. What do we know about Herod (Feb. 28)? How would you respond? How did Jesus?
2. What do we know about the Jewish leaders (Apr. 4)? How did Jesus unite evil people?
3. Jesus, Messiah, Christ, Anointed One, you set an example and give me power to remain...

December 13

By Envy and Crowd-Pleasing, Jesus is Delivered to Death

I gave my back to the strikers, and my cheeks to those who plucked off the hair; I didn't hide my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore...have I set my face like a flint – Isaiah 50:6-7

[Matthew 27:15-26, Pilate's palace home, Thursday] Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the multitude one prisoner, whom they desired. They had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas, a robber, thrown into prison with those who had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder. When therefore they were gathered together, the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do as he always did for them. Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? The King of the Jews, who is called Christ?" For he knew that because of envy they, chief priests, had delivered him up.

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one that perverts the people, and see, I have examined him before you, and found no basis for a charge against this man concerning those things of which you accuse him. Neither has Herod, for I sent you to him, and see, nothing worthy of death has been done by him. I will therefore chastise him and release him."

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes to ask for

Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. But the governor answered them, "Which of the two, Barabbas or Jesus, do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!"

Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do to Jesus, who is called Christ, whom you call the King of the Jews?"

They all together said to him, "Away with this man! Let him be crucified! Release to us Barabbas!"

But the governor said, "Why? What evil has he done?"

But they cried out exceedingly, saying, "Let him be crucified!"

So when Pilate, wishing to please the multitude, saw that nothing was being gained, but rather that a disturbance was starting, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous person. You see to it."

All the people answered, "May his blood be on us, and on our children!"

Then he released to them Barabbas whom they asked, but Jesus he flogged and delivered up to their will to be crucified. [Mark 15:6-15, Luke 18:35-43, John 18:38-40]

1. Why do Pilate and the priests deliver Jesus? Ultimately, who causes Jesus' death? Why?
2. Are you envious? Of whom? Why? Are you a man-pleaser? When? How can you stop?
3. Jesus, you set your face like flint to suffer everything for me; the least I can do today is to...

December 14

Pilate's Last Conversation with God's Messiah

Make crowns, and set them on the head of Joshua...saying, 'Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Yahweh...bear the glory, and...be a priest on his throne' – Zechariah 6:11-13

[John 19:1-15, Pilate's palace, Thursday] So Pilate's soldiers then took Jesus into *the court, which is the Praetorium*, and gathered the whole garrison together against him. They stripped him and flogged him. The soldiers twisted thorns into a crown, and put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand and dressed him in a scarlet-purple garment. They *began to salute him, and kneeled down before him, mocked him, and kept saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"* They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head and they kept slapping him.

Then Pilate went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I bring him out to you, that you may know that I find no basis for a charge against him."

Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the man!"

When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him, they shouted, saying, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves, and crucify him, for I find no basis for a charge against him."

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When therefore Pilate heard this saying, he was more afraid. He entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus,

"Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Aren't you speaking to me? Don't you know that I have power to release you, and have power to crucify you?"

Pilate said to them, "Behold, the man!" Jesus answered, "You would have no power at all against me, unless it were given to you from above. Therefore he who delivered me to you has greater sin."

At this, Pilate was seeking to release him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this man, you aren't Caesar's friend! Everyone who makes himself a king speaks against Caesar!"

When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called "The Pavement," but in Hebrew, "Gabbatha." Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, at about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"

They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"

So then he delivered him to them to be crucified. [Matthew 27:27-30, Mark 15:16-19]

1. Why this further conversation? Why was Pilate afraid? Have you felt like this? When?
2. Did Pilate sin? What are your greater sins? Lesser ones? How does God feel about them?
3. Jesus, Yeshua, we flogged you to a bloody mass, yet still you reached out to Pilate; please...

December 15

A Weakened Jesus Finds Strength to Warn Jerusalem Again

The high places, ... the sin of Israel, will be destroyed. The thorn and the thistle will come up on their altars. They will tell the mountains, "Cover us!" and the hills, "Fall on us!" ... I will chastise them; and the nations will be gathered against them – Hosea 10:8-10

[Luke 23:26-32, in Jerusalem, Thursday]
When they had mocked him, they took the scarlet-purple off of him, and put his own garments on him. When they led him, bearing his own cross, away, they grabbed one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it after Jesus. A great multitude of the people followed him, including women who also mourned and lamented him. But Jesus, turning to them,

Don't weep for me... weep for yourselves

said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to tell the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and tell the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?"

There were also others, two criminals, led with him to be put to death. [Matthew 27:31-32, Mark 15:20-21, John 19:16-17]

1. Simon followed Jesus, bearing the cross; do you do this? How? How will you do it today?
2. What "days" does Jesus mean? How would the tree be dry? What does this mean for you?
3. Jesus, you knew that the temple would be destroyed and Jerusalem with it; but your body is...

December 16

Priests, Soldiers, and Bystanders Add Insult to Jesus' Injury

A company of evildoers have enclosed me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all of my bones. They look and stare at me. They divide my garments among them. They cast lots for my clothing – Psalm 22:16-18

[John 19:19-25, Calvary, Thursday] So they took Jesus to the place called "The Place of a Skull," which is called in Hebrew, "Golgotha," where they gave him sour wine to drink mixed with *myrrh and gall*. [Psalm 69:21] When he had tasted it, he would not drink. They crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the middle. *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."*

Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. There was written, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Therefore many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, "Don't write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'he said, I am King of the Jews.'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four

Pilate answered,
"What I have written,
I have written"

parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. Then they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to decide whose it will be," that the

Scripture might be fulfilled, which says,

"They parted my garments among them.

For my cloak they cast lots." [Psalm 22:18]

Therefore the soldiers did these things.

Those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying, "You who destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

Likewise the chief priests also mocking, with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the elders, said, "He saved others, but he can't save himself. If he is *the Christ*, the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now, if he wants him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" *Those robbers who were crucified with him insulted him and cast on him the same reproach. The soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"* [Matthew 27:33-43, Mark 15:22-23, Luke 23:33-37]

1. Why are the priests' words ironic? How do you change your tune to get what you want?
2. What was Jesus wearing? How many ways was he humiliated? How can you thank him?
3. Jesus, thank you for being humiliated so that I could stand before God unashamed; today I...

December 17

From the Cross, Jesus Gasps Out Words of Help to Others

He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds...Yahweh upholds the humble. He brings the wicked down to the ground...Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his loving kindness – Psalm 147:3-11

[Luke 23:39-43, Calvary, Thursday] One of the criminals who was hanged insulted him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us!"

But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Don't you even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Today you will be
with me in Paradise

But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Therefore when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. [John 19:25-27]

1. How have you questioned Jesus? Did you repent? Do you defend Jesus against insults?
2. Who stood by the cross? Who didn't? What did John do? How can you do likewise?
3. Jesus, even on the cross you thought about others, yet I join with those insult you; please...

December 18

Jesus Experiences True Death: Separation from God

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me?...All those who see me mock me. They insult me with their lips...“He trusts in Yahweh; let him deliver him. Let him rescue him, since he delights in him.” – Psalm 22:1-7

[Matthew 27:45-56, Calvary, Thursday]
Now from the sixth hour *the sun was darkened*. There was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani?” That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” [Psalm 22:1]

Some of them who stood there, when they heard it, said, “Behold, This man is calling Elijah.”

Immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him a drink. The rest said, “Let him be. Let’s see whether Elijah comes to save him.”

After this, Jesus, seeing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I am thirsty.” Now a vessel full of vinegar was set there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop, and held it at his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, “*It is finished.*” Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!*” Having said this, he bowed his head, breathed his last, and gave up his spirit.

Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many. Now the centurion,

*Father, into your hands
I commit my spirit!*

and those who were with him watching Jesus, when they saw that he cried out like this and breathed his last, and saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God.” *All the multitudes that came together to see this, when they saw the things that were done, returned home beating their breasts.*

All his acquaintances, and many women were there watching from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, serving him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and Joses, and Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, and many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Therefore the Jews, because it was the Preparation Day, so that the bodies wouldn’t remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special one), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Therefore the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they didn’t break his legs. However one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, that you may believe. For these things happened, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “A bone of him will not be broken.” [Exodus 12:46] Again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they pierced.” [Zechariah 12:10] [Mark 15:33-41, Luke 23:44-49, John 19:28-37]

1. Why does Jesus say that God forsook him? Have you felt like God forsook you? Did he?
2. What is “finished”? Who saw Jesus die? How did they respond? How do you respond?
3. Jesus, you were willingly cut off from your Father so I don’t have to be cut off; thank you...

December 19

Jesus' Empty Body: Loved by Some, Feared by Others

They made his grave with...a rich man...although he had done no violence...Yet it pleased Yahweh to bruise him...When you make his soul an offering for sin...the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand...he will see the light and be satisfied – Isaiah 53:9-11

[Mark 15:42-47, a garden tomb, Thursday evening] When evening had now come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath a rich man named Joseph of Arimathaea, a prominent council member, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their counsel and deed), who also himself was looking for the Kingdom of God—a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews—came. He boldly went in to Pilate, and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate marveled if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead long. When he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred Roman pounds. So, he bought a linen cloth, they took Jesus' body and, taking him down, wound him in the linen cloth with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb, in

which no man had ever yet been laid. Then because of the Jews' Preparation Day (for the tomb was near at hand) they laid him in a tomb which had been cut out of a rock. He rolled a great stone against the door of the tomb and departed.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed after, and sitting opposite the tomb, saw the tomb where he was, and how his body was laid. They returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Now on the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.' Command therefore that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest perhaps his disciples come at night and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He is risen from the dead;' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone. [Matthew 27:57-66, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42]

1. How would it feel to be Joseph, Nicodemus, or the women? Have you felt this way before?
2. What really worried the priests? How do you know? Have you tried to stop God's power?
3. Jesus, your body was empty—your soul was made an offering for sin—yet your friends...

December 20

The Women Continue to Love Jesus Body—but It's Not There!

I saw...one who was ancient of days...his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool – Daniel 7:9

[Mark 16:1-8, garden tomb, Sunday]
When the Sabbath was past, *while it was still dark*, behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from the sky, and came and rolled away the stone from the door, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him, the guards shook, and became like dead men. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" for it was very big. Looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back. *Mary Magdalene ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid him!" Therefore, Peter got up and ran to the tomb.*

Entering into the tomb, they* *didn't find the* [*all the women except Mary Magdalene]

Lord Jesus' body. It happened, while they were greatly perplexed about this, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were amazed. He said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? Don't be amazed. You seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Remember what he told you when he was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again? Behold, the place where they laid him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He goes before you into Galilee. There you will see him, as he said to you.'"

They went out quickly and fled from the tomb with fear and great joy, for trembling and astonishment had come on them. They said nothing* to anyone; for they were afraid and ran to bring his disciples word. *(These words seemed to them to be nonsense, and they didn't believe them.)* [Matthew 28:1-8, Luke 24:1-8, John 20:1-2] [*i.e. nothing on their way to tell the disciples]

1. How would it be seeing an angel? Hearing a friend is alive? He *is* alive; how will you act?
2. Why did Mary leave the others? What did she know (May 3)? How can you be like her?
3. Jesus, you rose and the angels celebrated by scaring soldiers and telling the news; I want to...

December 21

Mary's Hopes Dashed Then Revived; Disciples Don't Get It

For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, neither will you allow your holy one to see corruption. You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy. In your right hand there are pleasures forevermore – Psalm 16:10-11

[John 20:2-18, garden tomb, Sunday] But Peter and the other disciple went out, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran together. The other disciple outran Peter, and came to the tomb first. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths lying, yet he didn't enter in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and entered into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying, and the cloth that had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. So then the other disciple who came first to the tomb also entered in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they didn't know the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

But Mary was standing outside at the tomb weeping. So, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They told her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know

where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, and didn't know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"

She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him, "Rabboni!" which is to say, "Teacher!"

Jesus said to her, "Don't hold me, for I haven't yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brothers, and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Behold, Jesus met them*, saying, "Rejoice!" They came and took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go tell my brothers that they should go into Galilee, and there they will see me."

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her. *When they heard that he was alive, and had been seen by her, they disbelieved.* [Matthew 28:9-10, Mark 16:11, Luke 24:12][*Mary and the women who rejoined her]

1. Why did Mary weep after returning with Peter and John? What had she hoped to find?
2. Why didn't she recognize Jesus? Why did the disciples disbelieve? What did he say?
3. Jesus, it feels great to read what you said and did after beating death, I want to celebrate...

December 22

The Chief Priests Bribe the Guards to Deceive the People

For the company of the godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery. They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Their heart prepares deceit – Job 15:34-35

[Matthew 28:11-15, Jerusalem, Sunday] “Say that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him and make you free of worry.” So they took the money and did as they were told. This saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continues until this day.

Now while they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city, and told the chief priests all the things that had happened. *Say that his disciples ...stole him away*

When they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave a large amount of silver to the soldiers, saying,

1. Do you think Jesus rose from the dead? What’s your proof? What about the guard’s story?
2. How do you “prepare deceit”? How you “persuade” others? What will you do to stop this?
3. Jesus, so many people think you died and that was it, but that doesn’t make sense based on...

December 23

Jesus Explains All the Prophecies about Himself

Yahweh God said to the serpent...“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel.” – Genesis 3:14-15

[Luke 24:13-35, road to Emmaus, Sunday afternoon] Behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty stadia from Jerusalem. They talked with each other about all of these things which had happened, while they talked and questioned together, as they walked, on their way into the country, that Jesus himself came near, and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. He said to them, “**What are you talking about as you walk, and are sad?**”

One of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things which have happened there in these days?”

He said to them, “What things?”

They said to him, “The things concerning Jesus, the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we were hoping that it was he who would redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Also, certain women of our company amazed us, having arrived early at the tomb; and when they didn’t find his body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of us went to the tomb,

and found it just like the women had said, but they didn’t see him.”

He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself

He said to them, “**Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Didn’t the Christ have to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?**” Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. They drew near to the village, where they were going, and he acted like he would go further.

They urged him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is almost evening, and the day is almost over.”

He went in to stay with them. It happened, that when he had sat down at the table with them, he took the bread and gave thanks. Breaking it, he gave to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished out of their sight. They said one to another, “Weren’t our hearts burning within us, while he spoke to us along the way, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?” They rose up that very hour, returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and those who were with them, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” (*he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve*) They related the things that happened along the way, and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. [Mark 16:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:12]

1. Why couldn’t they recognize Jesus? What scriptures did he explain? What did they do?
2. Peter saw Jesus sometime earlier; how might he feel? How do you feel knowing he’s alive?
3. Jesus, I want to see the Old Testament as it is meant to be seen—foretelling your great...

December 24

A Savior Wrapped in Bands of Cloth

Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and will not be afraid; for Yah, Yahweh, is my strength and song; and he has become my salvation. – Isaiah 12:2

[Matthew 1:18-25, Bethlehem] Now the birth of Jesus Christ was like this; for after his mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, before they came together, she was found pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband—being a righteous man and not willing to make her a public example—intended to put her away secretly. But when he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take to yourself Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bring forth a son. You shall call his name Jesus, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins.”

Now all this has happened, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son.

They shall call his name Immanuel;” [Isaiah 7:14]

which is, being interpreted, “God with us.”

Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took his wife to himself; and didn’t know her sexually until she had brought forth her firstborn son. He named him Jesus.

[Luke 2:1-7] Now it happened in those days, that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to enroll themselves, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enroll himself with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him as wife, being pregnant.

It happened, while they were there, that the day had come that she should give birth. She brought forth her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a feeding trough, because there was no room for them in the inn.

1. If you were in Joseph’s shoes, how would you feel when Mary returned from Elizabeth?
2. Why is “God with us” the key miracle from which all others flow?
3. Jesus, thank you for becoming my salvation, being made flesh so that I can be saved...

December 25

The Angels and the Shepherds

When the flame went up toward the sky...the angel of Yahweh ascended in the flame...Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Yahweh. – Judges 13:20-21

[Luke 2:8-20, near Bethlehem] There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. For there is born to you, this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This is the sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a feeding trough." Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God, and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
on earth peace, good will toward men."

It happened, when the angels went away from them into the sky, that the shepherds said one to another, "Let's go to Bethlehem, now, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." They came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby was lying in the feeding trough. When they saw it, they publicized widely the saying which was spoken to them about this child. All who heard it wondered at the things which were spoken to them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, just as it was told them.

1. Why did God tell shepherds, whose job was considered lowly (night security guards)?
2. How did they respond initially, and after the angels left? Do you respond like this?
3. Christ my Lord, you are good news of great joy to me and all the people because you...

December 26

Jesus Gives the Disciples a Foretaste of the Spirit

I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy;
and I will tell those who were not my people, 'You are my people;'
and they will say, 'My God!' – Hosea 2:23

[Luke 24:36-49, a house in Jerusalem, Sunday evening] As they sat at the table, and as they said these things, Jesus himself stood among them *(when the doors were locked where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews)* and said to them, "Peace be to you."

But they were terrified and filled with fear, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

He said to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart (because they didn't believe those who had seen him after he had risen) "Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is truly me. Touch me and see, for a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones, as you see that I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands, *his side*, and his feet. While they still didn't believe for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

They gave him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. He took them, and ate in front of them. He said to them, "This is

what I told you, while I was still with you, that all things which are written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me must be fulfilled."

Then he opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures. He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father on you. But wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high."

The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive anyone's sins, they have been forgiven them. If you retain anyone's sins, they have been retained." [Mark 16:14, John 20:19-23]

1. How does Jesus rebuke the eleven? How is he kind? How does he commission them?
2. Have you been terrified? Did Jesus bring peace? Did he open your mind? How so?
3. Jesus, I need you to show up today and give me peace, please help as I'm sent out to...

December 27

Doubting Thomas Believes—and So Can We

Oh taste and see that Yahweh is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Oh fear Yahweh...there is no lack with those who fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but those who seek Yahweh shall not lack any good thing – Psalm 34:8-10

[John 20:24-31, Jerusalem, eight days after Easter] But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, wasn't with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

After eight days again his disciples were inside, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, the doors being locked, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be to you." Then he said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger,

and see my hands. Reach here your hand, and put it into my side. Don't be unbelieving, but believing."

Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed."

Therefore Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

1. Can you relate to Thomas (Apr. 17)? Why? How did God help you believe? Did you?
2. Is "seeing is believing" true? What does Jesus say? Is he against sign-seeking? Science?
3. Jesus, you want us to "taste and see" that you are good, so your words to Thomas are for...

December 28

Seven Disciples Get to Eat Breakfast with Their Risen Lord

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; but you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh – Leviticus 19:14

[John 21:1-14, Galilee] After these things, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I'm going fishing."

They told him, "We are also coming with you." They immediately went out, and entered into the boat. That night, they caught nothing. But when day had already come, Jesus stood on the beach, yet the disciples didn't know that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them, "Children, have you anything to eat?"

They answered him, "No."

He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

They cast it therefore, and now they weren't able to draw it in for the multitude of fish. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!"

So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around him (for he was naked), and threw himself into the sea.

But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits away), dragging the net full of fish. So when they got out on the land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fish, one hundred fifty-three; and even though there were so many, the net wasn't torn.

Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast."

None of the disciples dared inquire of him, "Who are you?" knowing that it was the Lord.

Then Jesus came and took the bread, gave it to them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to his disciples, after he had risen from the dead.

1. When else was Jesus revealed to his disciples? What's similar (Jan. 26)? What's different?
2. Where were Matthew, Thaddaeus, Simon, and James the Less? How are you like them?
3. Jesus, you're alive! And you're looking for ways to help me; today I will be where you are...

December 29

Jesus Reinstates Peter and Gives Him a Job to Do

Thus says Yahweh my God: "Feed the flock of slaughter. Their buyers slaughter them...and their own shepherds don't pity them"...So I fed the flock of slaughter, especially the oppressed of the flock – Zechariah 11:4-7

[John 21:15-25, Galilee] So when they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you."

He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you."

He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you have affection for me?"

Peter was grieved because he asked him the third time, "Do you have affection for me?" He said to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I have affection for you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Most certainly I tell you, when you were young, you dressed yourself, and walked where you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you, and carry you where you don't want to go."

Now he said this, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. When he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

Do you love me more than these?

Then Peter, turning around, saw a disciple following. This was the disciple whom Jesus sincerely loved, the one who had also leaned on Jesus' breast at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is going to betray You?" Peter seeing him, said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"

Jesus said to him, "If I desire that he stay until I come, what is that to you? You follow me." This saying therefore went out among the brothers, that this disciple wouldn't die. Yet Jesus didn't say to him that he wouldn't die, but, "If I desire that he stay until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who testifies about these things, and wrote these things. We know that his witness is true. There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they would all be written, I suppose that even the world itself wouldn't have room for the books that would be written.

1. What are "these"? Do you love Jesus more than these? Do you show it? Who are "sheep"?
2. Have you denied Jesus? How did he reinstate you? What's your job? How will you do it?
3. Jesus, you not only forgive, you reinstate; thank you for giving me a job, I'll do it today by...

December 30

Jesus is Given All Power So That We Can Have Power Too

I saw in the night visions...one like a son of man...There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away – Daniel 7:13-14

[Matthew 28:16-20, a mountain in Galilee] But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had sent them. When they saw him, they bowed down to him, but some doubted.

Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."

He said to them, "Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new languages; they will take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will in no way hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

"Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you.

Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."

Go, and make disciples of all nations,

Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers at once, most of whom remain until now, but some have also fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

Being assembled together with them, he commanded them, "Don't depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from me. For John indeed baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you now restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them, "It isn't for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set within his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." [Mark 16:15-18, Acts 1-4-8, 1 Corinthians 15:6-7]

1. What are Jesus' orders? Are they for you? What's not for you? What do you do to obey?
2. Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? How do you know? How is Jesus with you?
3. Holy Spirit, it was good Jesus went away so that you could empower us; today, please...

December 31

Jesus is Received into Heaven and Sits at God's Right Hand

As they were...talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father!"...And Elisha saw him no more – 2 Kings 2:11-12

[Luke 24:50-53, Bethany, 40 days after Easter] He led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. It happened, while he blessed them, that, *as they were looking*, he withdrew from them, *was taken up*, and was carried up into heaven, *and a cloud received him out of their sight. While they were looking steadfastly into the sky as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing, who also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus,*

who was received up from you into the sky will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky."

They worshiped him, and returned...with great joy

So then the Lord, after he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. They worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. They went out, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen. [Mark 16:19-20, Acts 1:10-11]

1. What gave them joy? What was the blessing? When did they preach? Who were the men?
2. Why were they in the temple? How do you praise Jesus? How do you preach everywhere?
3. Jesus, your return to heaven gives me tons of joy, since I know that you're at God's right...

