

Storyline Of The Bible

(by Carl Vasta / Published July 2006 by carlvasta.com / all rights reserved)

Audio Version read by Kathy Bird on www.carlvasta.com

There are at least 66 books that make up the Bible. Sometimes trying to follow a storyline is difficult because there are books that are good for support and prayer like Wisdom, Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. They take you away from the story. I have put the Storyline Of The Bible into 52 easy to read pages.

The story includes references so you can easily find any of the topics, in just about any version of the Bible. If you ever wanted to know what the Bible is all about,, here is your chance!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
• Before The Beginning	4
• The Earth	4
• The Creation Of Mankind	5
• The Great Flood	6
• Noah And The Animals Float For Over A Year	7
• God Starts A New World	7
• God Gives Laws For His People With A Promise	8
• God Repopulates The World	8
• God Starts The Hebrew Nation	9
• Abram's Has A Child With Sarai's Maidservant	10
• God Confirms His Covenant With Abraham	11
• God's Command To Be Circumcision	11
• God's Reveals That Sarah (Age 90) Will Have A Son	11
• Hagar And Ishmael Sent Away	12
• God Tests Abraham	13
• Sarah's Death	14
• A Bride For Isaac	14
• Abraham's Descendants	15

	<u>PAGE</u>
• About The Bible	16
• Communication With God	16
• The Rest Of The Story	17
• Isaac & Jacob	17
• Joseph	17
• Moses	18
• Moses Goes To Egypt	18
• God Brings Ten Plagues Upon Pharaoh	18
• The Ten Commandments	19
• The Promised Land	20
• Israel In The Promised Land	21
• Israel Is Divided Into Two Kingdoms	22
• The Northern Kingdom Of Israel Is Destroyed	22
• The Southern Kingdom Of Judah Is Destroyed	23
• Israel Returned After Captivity	24
• The End Of The Old Testament	24
• Jerusalem Between The Old And New Testament	25
• The Beginning Of The New Testament	26
• Gabriel Announces Birth Of John The Baptist	26
• Gabriel Announces Birth Of Jesus	26
• Elizabeth Gives Birth To John The Baptist	26
• Joseph Decides To Break The Engagement To Mary	27
• Augustus Orders A Census	27
• Mary Gives Birth To Jesus	27
• Author's Note: About The Origin Of The Calendar	28
• Astrologers Come From The East	28
• The Astrologers (The Three Wise Men) Find The Baby Jesus	29
• Herod Dies	29
• Mary & Joseph Lose Jesus In Jerusalem	29
• John The Baptist	30
• Jesus Is Baptized	31
• Jesus Is Tempted	31

	<u>PAGE</u>
• The Ministry Of Jesus	32
• Transfiguration	32
• Jesus Comes To Jerusalem	33
• Jesus In The Temple	34
• The Last Supper	35
• The Arrest Of Jesus	35
• The Trial Of Jesus	36
• The Crucifixion Of Jesus	37
• The Resurrection	39
• The Apostles Prepared To Start Church	39
• The Replacement Of Judas	40
• The Holy Spirit And The Birth Of The Church	40
• The Church Of Jesus Grows	41
• The Conversion Of Saul	42
• Preaching The Gospel To The Gentiles	43
• Paul's First Missionary Journey	44
• Letters In Support Of The Churches	45
• Paul's Second Missionary Journey	45
• Paul's Third Missionary Journey	45
• Paul Sent To Rome	46
• Paul Shipwrecked	47
• Paul In Rome	47
• The Closing Years For The Apostles	48
• The Book Of Revelation	49

Storyline Of The Bible

(by Carl Vasta / Published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

God has revealed a part of himself in the bible and yet we don't have the answers to questions like... How big is the universe; where does it exist and where did it come from? How was the earth created and was mankind created or did he evolve from bacteria and animals? If we evolved, then where did that "life" come from? If God created all of it, then where did God come from?

The bible puts forth an answer for some of these questions. It says God created the heavens and angels, Earth and all the life on Earth. It says the '*angels shouted for joy*', when God created the Earth.

(Book of Job: Chapter 38, Verse 7)

The Bible tells of Lucifer, the angel who was created perfect and without sin, but because of his beauty and splendor, his heart became proud and his wisdom was corrupted. His desire for the honor and glory, that belonged to God alone, caused him to sin and rebel against his Creator. He was judged by God and thrown to Earth along with a third of the angels who accepted Lucifer as their leader.

Note: The King of Tyre was never mentioned as being in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. (Book of Ezekiel: Chapter 28, Verses 12-15)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: After his fall from grace, the bible never refers to the name Lucifer again. It was his name only in the state of grace. He is now called Satan, Beelzebub, Devil, the tempter, serpent and other names.

"Lucifer"...The Latin translation in the Vulgate for "Morning Star". (Book of Isaiah: Chapter 14, Verses 12-14)

THE EARTH

The Bible says God created the heavens, the universe, and the earth in six days and on the seventh, He rested. From all that has been written in the world, it is still evident that God does not have a timeline. God has not revealed his origin or the details of His creation, but in order that mankind might have some understanding, creation has been put into terms of sections called days. Moses said, "**A thousand years is like one day to God**", but only God knows how much time has passed since He created all of it.

(The Creation of Heaven and Earth is found in the book of Genesis: Chapter 1)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

God prepares a home for mankind, plumbed with oceans, seas, lakes and rivers. He decorates our home with tropical jungles, and sets the tall curtain-like forests against the great walls of mountains that divide and surround us. The creator plants the fertile valleys with grapevines and fruit trees. He waxes clean the floors of the desert with hot scorching winds and roofs the towers of our magnificent home with icy snow caps.

God adds life to the water of the earth and wings to the sky. He fills our home with strange looking creatures; some to give us food, some to help us do our work, and some to be our friends. – narrative description by Carl Vasta

CREATION OF MANKIND

The bible says that God created man, but there were two creations of mankind;
the first being the body created from the dust of the earth,and....
the second when God 'breathed the spirit of life' into the body.

Genesis gives us two statements regarding the creation of mankind in the voice of God. It says that God said ***'Let us make man in our image'*** and it also says ***'So God created man in his own image'***. The first statement refers to more than one being: actually three entities that make up God's presence: ***the Father, the Son... who is the word of God, and the Holy Spirit.*** All three are present when God is spoken of as one God, as it is used in the second statement ***'So God created man in his own image'***. The bible says that God knew man needed a mate and he created a woman for the man; from the man's rib.

God created a beautiful garden called Eden for the man and woman, who were named **Adam and Eve**. He created them both innocent and gave them a warning that they would die if they ate the fruit from ***The Tree Of The Knowledge Of Good And Evil.*** Satan (*Lucifer*), disguised as a beautiful snake in the garden, told them that they would be like God if they ate the fruit from that tree. Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan which allowed him to plant the evil seed of doubt into their hearts and they lost their innocence.

Because of this, **the testing of all mankind began.** With each generation born to the earth, the evil impulse which is sin, remains with mankind and each person chooses to live their life following ***the ways of God which lead to life forever,*** or ***following the sins of Satan, which lead to death.***

In the garden, God took care of Adam and Eve. There were all kinds of trees that were 'pleasing to the eye and good for food'. There was no reason to worry, no tears of sorrow and no shame, but Adam and Eve brought a curse upon themselves by not believing God and now were banished from the garden. *Their eyes were opened to the differences of good and evil. Now women had to bear and take care of their children and men had to work to provide for their family. The snake would have to crawl on it's belly and eat dust, and have mankind as an enemy.*

Adam and Eve had two sons, **Cain and Abel**. Cain became a farmer and Abel became a shepherd. Cain brought some of his harvest and offered it as a sacrifice to God. Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep and offered it as a sacrifice to God.

*God was pleased with Abel's offering, **but he was not pleased with Cain's offering because of the attitude of Cain's heart.*** Because of jealousy Cain killed his brother Abel and when God asked Cain about his brother, he denied knowing what happened. Then God told Cain because he killed his brother, the ground would no longer yield crops to him and he would be a restless wanderer on the Earth. So Cain moved to a place called Nod, east of Eden and with his wife had many children.

(Found in the book of Genesis: Chapter 2 through 4)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This begs the question: Where did Cain find a woman to be his wife if Adam and Eve only had Cain and Abel? Adam and Eve had many children, but the story of God's salvation for mankind in the bible, is moved along by the main characters. It's like watching a play or movie. There may be many people on stage or in the scene that are never introduced, but the story is moved along by the main characters.

Because of the loss of their son Abel, God gave Adam and Eve another son named **Seth**. Nine generations were born; each lived to an average age of over 900 hundreds years. At the 10th generation, a man named **Noah** lived and was 500 years old when he became the father of 3 sons named **Shem, Ham, and Japheth**. (Genesis: Chapter 5)

THE GREAT FLOOD

By the time Noah came to be, the earth had become a bad place to live because the people were wicked and did as they pleased. There were even stories of giants; '*sons of god or gods*' who saw the beautiful daughters born to men and took them for their wives. **'Then God said, "My Spirit will not remain with man forever, for he is corrupt...."** and made the length of years a man would live to about one hundred and twenty years.'

'When the Lord saw how wicked everyone on earth was and how evil their thoughts were all the time, he was sorry that he had ever made them and put them on the Earth. He was so filled with regret that he said, **"I will wipe out these people I have created, and also the animals and the birds, because I am sorry that I made any of them."** '

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 6:verses 1-8)

God looked upon Noah favorably because he was righteous compared to the wicked generation that lived on the Earth and the bible says Noah walked with God and did everything God commanded him. Noah had a wife and three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Although the bible doesn't name them, Noah's sons had wives.

God told Noah to build an ark (a floating ship) 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. It was to have three decks; a lower deck, a middle deck, and an upper deck. The ark was to be finished to within 18 inches of the top, which was the roof. The 18 inches provided enough space to put window hatches that could open and close to let in air and light. There was also a large door in the side of the ark. God told Noah to make rooms in it and make the ark waterproof by coating it with pitch (a tar-like substance) inside and out.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

God told Noah he was going to destroy all life on Earth, but Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives would enter the ark and He would start the world over with Noah's family. God told Noah that ***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.*** Also God told Noah to take seven of every kind of clean animal and it's mate and seven of every kind of bird and it's mate.

When everyone and everything was on board the ark, the bible says in Genesis, **Chapter 7, verse 16,** that Noah entered the ark... **'Then the Lord shut him in.'**

NOAH AND THE ANIMALS FLOAT FOR OVER A YEAR

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.*** The ark floated on the surface of the water and soon the waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing on the earth perished.

The **waters flooded the Earth for a hundred and fifty days** then the waters started to recede steadily from the earth. **At the end of another hundred and fifty days,** the water had gone down and the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to recede until the tops of the mountains became visible. After forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven, and when the raven didn't come back, he sent out a dove to see if the water had dried from the land. But the dove could find no place to set its feet because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. Noah kept sending out the dove and one time it returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in it's beak. Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the Earth. He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. **Noah and his family had been on the Ark for over a year! (About 376 days after the flood, the Earth is dry.) With Noah and his family, God started a New World.**

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 7:17 through Chapter 8:19)

GOD STARTS A NEW WORLD

God told Noah and his family come out of the ark along with all the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground-- so they could increase their number on the Earth. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and sacrificed some of the clean animals and birds to God. ***And God said, "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."*** God blessed Noah and his sons and told them to have many children so that the Earth would be filled with their descendants.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

GOD GIVES LAWS FOR HIS PEOPLE WITH A PROMISE

God said to Noah, *"All the animals, birds and fish will live in fear of you. They are all placed under your power. Now you can eat them as well as green plants; I give them all to you for food. **The one thing you must not eat is meat with blood still in it; I forbid this because the life is in the blood.**"*

"If anyone takes human life, he will be punished. I will punish with death any animal that takes a human life. Man was made like God, so whoever murders a man will himself be killed by his fellow man."

"You must have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the Earth."

God said to Noah and his sons, *"I am now making my covenant with you and with your descendants, and with all living beings--all birds and animals-- everything that came out of the boat with you. With these words I make my covenant with you: I promise that never again will all living beings be destroyed by a flood; never again will a flood destroy the Earth."*

"As a sign of this everlasting covenant which I am making with you and with all living beings, I am putting my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of my covenant with the world. When ever I cover the sky with clouds and the rainbow appears, I will remember my promise to you and all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on Earth. This is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings." (Genesis: Chapter 8:20 through Chapter 9:17)

GOD REPOPULATES THE WORLD

The descendants of Noah wandered from the mountains of Ararat which exist **above the Fertile Crescent that borders the Arabian Desert to Mesopotamia and Babylon** and built their cities on the fertile sandy plains that existed between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Babylon (on the plain of Shinar) was the most popular city of these plains. It's people were skilled at building pyramid-like towers, **called ziggurats, that were made of bricks that were baked and joined together by bitumen mortar (asphalt found in its natural state or tar)**. Some were almost 300 feet high with temples at the very top and at the base.

These people believed that the Gods used these temple-towers as steps on their way to an earthly dwelling place. At this time, all the people of the world spoke one common language and they decided to put their efforts into building a larger city with the largest tower that would reach to the heavens. They thought that they would be famous having the tallest tower in the largest city and people would come from everywhere just to see it or live there.

The people's intention was to become one and not be scattered. God decided to confuse their language and stop them from building the tower so they would continue to populate the world. [Also the bible says this great city was called **Babel**, because it was there that the Lord confused the language of the whole world.](#)

(Genesis: Chapter 9:18 through Chapter 11:9)

GOD STARTS THE HEBREW NATION

God was about to reveal himself to one man and start the **Hebrew** nation whose people would be known as the chosen people.

A man by the name of **Abram**, his wife **Sarai**, and his nephew lived in a land called Haran. They were brought there by Abram's father **Terah** a numbers of years before. [According to the book of Genesis, chapter 12, verses 2-3....](#) When Abram was seventy-five years old, the Lord spoke to him and said, **"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 and who ever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you."**

[Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot,](#) all their possessions and the servants they had acquired in Haran [and traveled through the land of Canaan to the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.](#) **Abram built an altar to the Lord who appeared to him there and told him he would give his offspring much land.** Abram also built an altar in the hills of Bethel, then journeyed to the land of Canaan **where the Lord assured him in a vision that this was the land his offspring would inherit.**

After entering **Canaan**, Abram went through a period of wandering that lasted about ten years. He journeyed to **Shechem**, **Bethel**, and the **Negeb** (*which is the desert area south of Judea*). During a time of famine, Abram journeyed to **Egypt** where there was no famine for a while. During the years of wandering, Abram made many friends with Amoritish chieftains and kings and made some enemies, including the Pharaoh of Egypt, who feared for his own life, when God gave him a warning not to take Abram's wife, who he thought was his Abram's sister, for one of his own wives. Pharaoh invited Abram, his wife and all of the people who were with them to leave Egypt unharmed.

Abram and his nephew Lot separated because their herdsmen were constantly quarreling. **Lot chose the fertile plain of the Jordan and Abram lived among the oak groves in the hills of Hebron.**

Many different tribes of people inhabited the land that God spoke of and Abram must have wondered what God was going to do with all the people who were there now. **God reassured Abram saying,** *"Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, (Egypt) and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out (lead by Moses) with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said *"To your descendants I give this land, from the rivers of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates-- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."*

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "you have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." **Then the word of the Lord came to him:** *"This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."* He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Found in Genesis: Chapter 12 through Chapter 13)

And **'Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.'**

(Found at Genesis: Chapter 15, Verse 6)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Please notice that God considered Abram righteous because... **he believed what God had told him!**

ABRAM HAS A CHILD WITH SARAI'S MAIDSERVANT

After living ten years in Canaan, **Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."** (Genesis 16:2)

Abram agreed to Sarai's request but after Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, became pregnant, she began to look down on Sarai.

Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me." "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do what ever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. (Genesis 16:5-6)

The angel of the Lord found Hagar at a spring beside the road to Shur. He told Hagar to return to Sarai and submit to her. He comforted her by saying, **"I will increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."** (Genesis 16:10)

Then the angel of the Lord said to her, "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

(Genesis 16:11-12)

Hagar returned to Sarai and gave birth to a son named Ishmael which in Hebrew means "God hears". Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

GOD CONFIRMS HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAM

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ***"I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."***

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called, Abram your name will be Abraham, (father of many) for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:1-8)

GOD'S COMMAND TO BE CIRCUMCISED

Then God said to Abraham, ***"As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."*** (Genesis 17:9-14)

GOD REVEALS THAT SARAI (AGE 90) WILL HAVE A SON

God also said to Abraham, ***"As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."***

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

And Abraham said to God, **"If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"** Then God said, **"Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. (the name means "he laughs" because Abraham laughed at having a son in his old age) I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."** **When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.**

On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him.

Abraham was ninety-nine years old and his son Ishmael was thirteen on the day they were circumcised.

Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham when he was a hundred years old and they named him Isaac. God had blessed Sarah and Abraham and they couldn't stop laughing because of the thought of having conceived and given birth to a son in their old age. Abraham circumcised Isaac when he is eight days old, as God commanded him.

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 17:verses 15-27)

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL SENT AWAY

Isaac grew and on the day he was weaned, Abraham held a great feast. Sarah saw Ishmael, son of Hagar the Egyptian, acting in a mocking way and said to Abraham, **"Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."**

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, **"Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."**

(Genesis 21:11-13)

Early next morning, Abraham gave Hagar some food and a skin of water and sent her off with the boy. Hagar wandered the desert of Beersheba and soon the water in the skin was gone. She put her son under a bush and sat down near by, but out of the sight of him.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

She thought, "I cannot watch the boy die" and she started to sob. **God heard the boy crying and the angel of God called to Hagar, "What is the matter Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."** Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 21: verses 14-21)

GOD TESTS ABRAHAM

Some time later God tests Abraham saying, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Abraham took Isaac and two servants, along with wood that had been cut for the burnt offering and set out for the place God has told him about. On the third day, he saw the place at a distance and told his servants to stay with the donkey while he and the boy went to worship. Abraham put the wood on his son Isaac and he carried the fire and the knife.

On the way Isaac asked, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied

"The fire and the wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, **Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.**

But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied. **"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said.**

"Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught by its horns, in a thicket. He took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and re-affirmed the promise he made to Abraham and told him that he **would bless him and make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.**

Because Abraham did not withhold his only son, **God said, "Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."**

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 22:verses 1-18)

SARAH'S DEATH

Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. *Abraham buried her in a cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre at Hebron in the land of Canaan.* Abraham asked the Hittites to sell him some property for a burial site. They respected him as a mighty prince and were willing to give him anything he wanted, but Abraham insisted on buying a field with a cave worth four hundred shekels of silver.

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 23)

A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

The Lord had blessed Abraham in every way, and now when he was old and well advanced in years, he wanted to get a bride for his son Isaac.

Abraham told the chief servant in his household to go to his relatives in his own country and get a wife for his son, Isaac. The servant was concerned that the woman he picked may not want to return with him and he asked if he should take Isaac. **Abraham told him not to take Isaac with him because of God's promise: 'To your offspring I will give this land.'**

Abraham told his servant that God would send an angel before him so that he could get a wife for his son. The servant took all kinds of gifts from Abraham along with ten of his camels and made his way to the town of **Nahor** and had the camels kneel down near the well outside of town.

Then he prayed: "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'-- let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

Before he had finished praying, **Rebekah** came out with her jar on her shoulder. The servant asked the girl for a drink and it happened as he had prayed. Then he asked her who's daughter she was and she told him that she was the daughter of **Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Nahor. (Abraham's brother)** The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. When the camels had finished drinking, the servant gave her two gold bracelets and a gold nose ring and asked if there was room in her father's house for them to spend the night. Rebekah told him that they had plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for him to spend the night. The servant praised the Lord while Rebekah ran to her family and told her mother about what had happened. The camels were unloaded and water was brought for the servant and his men to wash their feet. Then dinner was set before them. But the servant did not eat before he told them about Abraham and how the Lord, God of Abraham, guided him to Rebekah.

Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed."

Abraham's servant bowed down before the Lord when he heard what **Laban (Rebekah's brother)** and **Bethuel (Rebekah's father)** had said and he gave Rebekah gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing. He also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother. Then they ate, drank and spent the night there.

The next morning Rebekah and her servants returned with the servant to Isaac, who was living in a place called Negev. Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 24)

ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS

Abraham took another wife and she bore him several children who became **the descendants of Keturah**.

Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's slave girl, was the father of twelve tribes who were scattered across the country from the northeast of the Egyptian border in the direction of Assyria and they were constantly at war with one another. Ishmael was one hundred and thirty seven years old when he died.

Abraham was one hundred and seventy-five years old when he died. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Mach-pelah near Mamre, where Sarah was buried. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

(Found in Genesis: Chapter 25:1-18)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

Abraham died without ever seeing his offspring inherit the land the Lord had promised him. But Abraham saw the birth of a son promised to him and knew that someday all that the Lord had told him would come to be.

Believing without seeing is the essence of faith!

ABOUT THE BIBLE

The remaining chapters, up to the introduction of Jesus, concern the struggle of the Abraham's descendants to put their faith in God like he did! *So far we have only been reading from the beginning book of the bible; **Genesis**.* The word "bible" comes from a Greek term "BIBLIA" meaning "the books". *The bible is divided into two sections; the "old testament", which is all that happened before Jesus was born and the "new testament", which is all that happened after Jesus was born. Both old and new testaments are combined to make up what is known as "The Bible", which are a collection of books by different writers inspired by the Holy Spirit, to give God's message to man.* It took about 1400 years to complete the Bible, starting from the time of Moses to the end of the first century A.D. The Bible or "scripture" is another way God chose to reveal Himself to his creation. It's pages show what happened to those people who put their faith in Him and what happened to those who did not believe.

THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

Before the written Bible, God made Himself known to his people by communicating with them directly. There was no bible for *Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Joseph!* *There was no written law until **Moses** received it from God on Mount Sinai. From that point in time, everything concerning God became "scripture", but God still chose to speak to his people directly!* The communication between God and man continued all the way to the last page of the Bible with the Revelation to John. His people listened and acted upon His word.

The bible makes the point that God has not changed! *Does that mean God talks to His people today? Yes, those who put their faith in Him and listen will hear His voice. Jesus backs it up by saying at the last supper: "The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you"...and..."When he comes, however, being the Spirit Of Truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but will speak only what he hears, and will announce to you the things to come. In doing this he will give glory to me, because he will have received from me what he will announce to you."*

(John 14:26 & 16:13-15)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

THE REST OF THE STORY

If we look at the Bible as one book, we will see that it has a **beginning, a middle, and an end**. We have already read the beginning and are starting *the middle part of the Bible*. From here on, I will make short paragraphs hitting the high points to keep the storyline. I will include **references** where you can find this information in the Bible if you choose to read more.

ISAAC has two sons named **Jacob** and **Esau**. Esau is the first born, but sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. When **Isaac** is old, he unknowingly gives Jacob a blessing for the first born, in which God blesses him in every thing he does. Esau is angry when he finds out and plots to kill his brother. **Rebekah**, Isaac's wife who has helped Jacob steal the first blessing, sends Jacob to her brother **Laban**, in Haran. He has two daughters and deceives Jacob into marrying both of his daughters. As payment for his daughters, Jacob has to work as a shepherd for Laban fourteen years. Jacob finally escapes Laban's grasp and takes his wives, children, servants, sheep and animals he has earned. Laban returns from a week's journey to find them gone and pursues Jacob and family with his own men. Meanwhile Esau hears of Jacob coming into the area and sets off to meet him! Laban catches up with Jacob and finally makes peace with him. After Jacob and his family leave Laban, he hears about Esau and his men coming for him and makes preparations to meet him. **At this point the Bible says he wrestles with an angel and the angel blesses him and names him "Israel"**. After this Esau and his men meet him, but Esau and Jacob make peace. **Jacob finally settles in the land of Canaan with his twelve sons, which become the Twelve Tribes Of Israel**. The first ten sons were from the wife he did not choose and the last two sons were from the wife he chose and loved. (Found in Genesis, Chapter 25:19 through Chapter 37)

JOSEPH, the eleventh son of Jacob is sold to a merchant caravan by his jealous brothers and taken to Egypt! Because God gives Joseph the power to interpret dreams, the Pharaoh makes him an advisor or lord of his household and a ruler throughout the land of Egypt. The great famine that Joseph told the Pharaoh about comes over the land but because Joseph has stored a great abundance of food, Egypt has more than enough! Jacob, who is living in the land of Canaan, sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and has all his family brought to Egypt.

(Found in Genesis, Chapter 37 & 39 through Chapter 50)

Author's Note: I think you would really enjoy the full story of Joseph because it has so many twists and turns. How Joseph is favored by Jacob, his father, because he is the first son of the wife he chose and loved. How Joseph's dreams cause his brothers to become jealous and sell him to merchants going to Egypt and then tell Jacob that Joseph has been killed and eaten by a wild animal.

Joseph is just a young boy when he is sold, but in Egypt he accomplishes much, but is falsely accused of rape and spends years in prison. But because he can interpret dreams that come true, the Pharaoh summons him to give the meaning of a dream he had that no one can explain. Joseph explains the dream to Pharaoh telling of a great famine to come and last seven years.

Joseph is now thirty years old when Pharaoh puts him in charge his land and Egypt is saved from disaster. The story goes on to tell how Joseph responds to his brothers who come for food. He brings his whole family to Egypt and has a heart-filled reunion with Jacob, his father, who thought Joseph was dead.

MOSES After the death of Joseph, a new **Pharaoh** comes into power who didn't know Joseph, but he is concerned about how fast the Jewish population is growing. Worried about the safety of his kingdom, he **puts the Israelites into bondage and tries to control their population by putting to death their male newborn.**

*Pharaoh's daughter finds the newborn baby, **Moses**, floating in a reed basket when she comes to the Nile river to bathe. The Jewish mother of Moses put him there because she was afraid they would kill him. She is near by when Pharaoh's daughter is looking for someone to nurse the baby and without knowing it, arranges for Moses' mother to take care of the baby for her. When Moses is older, Pharaoh's daughter adopts him as her son.*

When Moses is grown, he visits the places where the Israelites are working for the Egyptians and sees an Egyptian guard striking an Israelite. He becomes angry and kills the guard. The Pharaoh hears of the situation and tries to kill Moses, but **Moses flees to the wilderness of a place called Midian.** Moses finds a home with a priest that has seven daughters and marries one of his daughters name **Zipporah** and she bares him a **son named Gershom.**

Moses is taking care of a flock of sheep belonging to his father-in-law near the mountain of **Horeb** when he sees a bush that is burning but not being destroyed. **God speaks to Moses from the bush and tells him that Pharaoh is dead but a new Pharaoh is still holding the Israelites in bondage and He has heard their cry for help. God tells Moses to go back to Egypt and tell the Pharaoh to free his people so they may go the land God has waiting for them. Then God tells Moses that he must lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land!**

MOSES GOES TO EGYPT with his Levite brother **Aaron** and tells Pharaoh to let the Israelites go on a three day journey to sacrifice to the Lord God of Israel or he would punish them. *Pharaoh refuses to let them go and makes the Israelites work harder because of what Moses and Aaron said.* The Israelites begin to resent Moses and Aaron. **Moses again confronts Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites and turns his staff into a snake.** The Pharaoh has his magicians turn their staffs into snakes but Moses' snake swallows their snakes, **yet the Pharaoh would still not listen because his heart was hardened.**

GOD BRINGS THE TEN PLAGUES UPON THE PHARAOH and Egypt using Moses and Aaron to give Pharaoh the opportunity to let the Israelites leave Egypt after each plague. These were the plagues: **1.** God turns all the water (drinking water) in the river to blood. **2.** God sends plague of frogs to swarm over the territory. **3.** God sends the plague of Gnats. **4.** God sends the plague of flies. **5.** God sends the plague of disease that would kill all the Egyptian animals but not harm the Israelite animals. **6.** God sends the plague of boils on man and beast. **7.** God sends the plague of hail that destroys any man or animal, plant or tree left in the open.

8. God sends the plague of locust to eat any food that is left. **9.** God brings the plague of darkness, so dark that people can not see one another for three days. **10.** God is finished appealing to the Pharaoh and brings on the plague of the death of all the first born. It is for this plague that the celebration of Passover is started. All the Israelites are instructed to apply lamb's blood around the doorway of every house they live so that death will pass over them.

God uses the ten plagues; the last being the death of all first born children **to make the Pharaoh agree to free the Israelites, then Moses leads them out of Egypt to the Red Sea.** Pharaoh's heart is again hardened and in one last effort to kill the Israelites, he leads his armies out to the Red Sea. ***God opens up the Red Sea and makes a path for the Israelites to cross over. Pharaoh sends his army to pursue the Israelites. God closes the sea and Pharaoh's army drowns!***

(Found in the book of Exodus, Chapter 1 through Chapter 19)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS Moses leads the people to Mount Sinai where God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses.

(1) I am God, your Creator and have made all things. Don't give the respect I deserve to anybody or anything else.

(2) Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation. But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws.

(3) You shall not dishonor the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who dishonors his name.

(4) Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall do all your work, but the seventh day is day of rest and worship. God created the heavens and earth in six days and on the seventh he rested. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

(5) Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

(6) Do not commit murder.

(7) Do not commit adultery. [Sex between two people while one or the other or both are married to other people.]

(8) Do not steal.

(9) Do not accuse anyone falsely.

(10) Do not desire another man's house; do not desire his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns. (Exodus 20:1-17)

While Moses is on the mountain receiving the law, **the Israelites cast a golden statue of a calf and start to worship it as their God.** When Moses comes down from the mountain, he sees the people worshipping the golden calf and celebrating and dancing in wild revelry. His anger flares and he breaks the tablets containing the Ten Commandments at the base of the mountain!

Moses fuses the golden calf in the fire, grinds it into powder and mixes it with their drinking water. Then Moses calls out, "Whoever is for the Lord come to me" All those who are not for the Lord, Moses puts to the sword! Three thousand people are killed that day!

Moses goes up to the mountain to receive the law from God and gives it to the Israelites. There were over six hundred laws besides the Ten Commandments that were given on such topics as "protection of property", "social responsibility", "laws of justice and mercy", "Sabbath laws", "religious laws", and "miscellaneous laws".

THE PROMISED LAND God leads Moses and the Israelites to **the hill country of the Amorites (The Promised Land)** and tells them to occupy the promised land! The Israelites send twelve spies, one from each tribe, to survey the land so as to find the roads they must follow to the cities they must take! After forty days, the spies return with the report of a land flowing with milk and honey as God had said, but they also tell the Israelites that the cities are too fortified and the people that lived there are giants! Only two men who went with the spies, **Joshua and Caleb**, were in favor of taking the land promised by the Lord saying, ***"Don't rebel against the Lord and do not be afraid of the people in this land. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land."***

Because they are afraid, **the Israelites refuse to take the land and try to choose another leader to take them back to Egypt!** God tells Moses He will destroy these unbelieving people and make of him a nation that is larger and more powerful than they are. **Then Moses asks God to pardon the wickedness of these people saying, *"If you slay these people, the nations who have heard how you brought them out of Egypt and remained in their midst will say, 'The Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he swore to give them; that is why He slaughtered them in the desert.'"***

God pardons the people, but He tells Moses that because of their unbelief, ***none of them except for Caleb and Joshua shall see the promised land. God tells Moses to lead the people back into the desert until the new generation of people is ready to take the promised land!*** They wander forty years, one year for each day the spies remained in the land they refused to take!

During the forty years, they encounter much resistance from the nations surrounding them. They do battle and God protects them. **After forty years, Moses leads the people of the new generation back to take the promised land. Moses tells the Israelites that he is going to die and that Joshua will lead them across the Jordan to take the promised land as God had said.**

(Found in Exodus, Chapter 19 through the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)

Moses dies at the age of 120 years old and the Israelites mourn for thirty days. Then **Joshua leads them across the Jordan river and they victoriously take and settle in the land of Canaan.**

ISRAEL IN THE PROMISED LAND Israel remains a loose confederation of tribes governed by heroic figures known as "**The Judges**".

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Joshua urged Israel **to keep trusting God and obey His commands**, but after he died, Israel strayed from God's commands and **"every man did what was right in his own eyes"**. Because they **forgot** God, their enemies would severely oppress them, and then they would **remember** God and cry out for His help, and He would raise up a **hero**, (referred to by the bible as a **Judge** or a **deliverer**) to free them of their misery. This pattern was sadly repeated from one generation to the next by the Israelites for almost 400 years.

The main characters that God raised up to free the Hebrews from their current enemies were: **Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Eli, and probably the most important person in this era was Samuel.**

(**Also Ruth the Moabite who lived during this period**, was the widow of a Hebrew husband who would not leave her mother-in-law, Naomi as she made her way back to Bethlehem. She even put her faith in the God of Israel because of Naomi.

After Ruth came to Bethlehem, she remarried and bore a son named Obed: who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David.)

Though God is guiding his people, Israel wants a king like the other nations around them. **God gives them a warning: A king will make them slaves and servants and will use whatever they have for his own benefit, but the people do not take the warning seriously and are intent on having a king.** God gives them a king and Israel becomes a kingdom like other nations around them! **Israel lives under the rule of three kings: Saul, David, and his son, Solomon.**

(Found in the books of Joshua, Judges, 1Samuel, 2Samuel, through the 11th Chapter of 1Kings)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

ISRAEL IS DIVIDED INTO TWO KINGDOMS After King Solomon, *Israel is divided into two kingdoms: Israel, the northern kingdom and Judah, the southern kingdom.* God sends many great prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Obadiah, and Ezekiel), to warn the kings and people of each nation not to worship idols and not to disobey God!

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL IS DESTROYED

Because of their unfaithfulness to God, the northern kingdom of Israel is destroyed and taken into captivity by Assyria.

(Found in 2Kings: Chapters 14-18 and in 2Chronicles 25-27)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: After the death of King Solomon, *his son Rehoboam* refuses to lighten the burden and taxes on the twelve tribes of Israel saying, *“My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father [also] chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.* (1Kings 12:14)

Ten of the tribes refuse to live under **Rehoboam** and *form the Northern Kingdom of Israel with Jeroboam the son of Solomon's servant and make him King.* Their capital city was **Samaria**.

The 2 tribes that remained with Judah under King Rehoboam were Judah and Benjamin.

Israel lasts about 210 years and went through 19 evil kings before they were destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC. The last king ruling over Israel was **Hoshea**. (2Kings, Chapter 17.)

The captivities began somewhere between **740 BC - 732 BC** and started with **Pul king of Assyria** and then **Tiglathpileser king of Assyria**.

In **722 BC**, nearly ten to twenty years after the initial deportations, **Samaria** was finally taken by **Sargon II** after a three-year siege started by **Shalmaneser V**.

The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom never had a foreign edict granting permission to return and rebuild their homeland. Some refer to them as the “Lost tribes of Israel”.

But not all the people from the Hebrew tribes of the Northern Kingdom were taken away. Many people of the ten tribes **made their way to Judah before, during and after the Assyrian attack, but some would have been already living among the people of Judah and Benjamin.** Some proof of this can be seen in (2Chronicles 35:17-19), In the time of Josiah, when Passover observance was restored, it was kept with *“the priests and Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem”* and in the New Testament (Luke 2:36) says *that Anna the prophetess was of the tribe of Asher.*

The Assyrians were known for deporting conquered peoples to other lands and when they conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel **they deported many of the original inhabitants of Samaria and the surrounding region and replaced them with a mixture of people from the east.**

The Samaritans ended up a racially mixed society because of intermarriage between the Jews and the people from the east who had different customs and worshiped strange gods. After the return of the captives to Jerusalem and up into the time of Christ, the Samaritans were severely despised by the Jews and were considered “unclean”.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH IS DESTROYED

The kingdom of Judah follows in Israel's footsteps over a hundred years later and is destroyed by Assyria, with most of its people taken into exile in Babylonia after the fall of Jerusalem! The only people not taken are the very poor who are used to take care of the vineyards and fields.

(Found in 2Kings, Chapters 24 and 25)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *In 586 B.C., about 136 years after Israel was destroyed, Judah was taken into captivity and exiled to Babylonia. Judah had been governed by 21 Kings before it was destroyed by Babylonia, who had just conquered Assyria. Some of Judah's Kings "did evil in the sight of the LORD", and some of Judah's Kings turned the people back to the LORD and obeyed his commands.*

When the Northern Kingdom Of Israel was exiled, *Hezekiah* was then the king of Judah. He listened to and acted upon GOD's word through the *prophet Isaiah*, and the kingdom of Judah was spared and only Israel's ten tribes were taken.

Coniah was the king in Judah when Babylonians came to dominate the world. He "did evil in the sight of the LORD", so it was finally Judah's time to be conquered.

The people were deported to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar II. *Jerusalem was destroyed, its Temple was burned and all of its treasures were taken to Babylon.*

In the first wave of captives taken to Babylon, *the prophet Daniel, who is a young boy*, is taken and becomes popular with this king because of his faith in GOD and his wisdom. *Again, the only people not taken are the very poor who are used to take care of the vineyards and fields.*

In 537 B.C., some 49 years later, *after the fall of Babylon to the Persian king Cyrus the Great. The king issued a decree to 'allow the Jews to go back to their land' but many, who were settled there, considered Babylon their home.* Only a small amount of the Jews return to Judah compared to what were exiled, (*Nehemiah 7*) and among them only 74 Levites, known for their dedication to the things of God.

The first move back was led *by Zerubbabel, of the house of David* who found everything destroyed: no temple, torn down walls and a corrupt breed of Jews (*Samaritans*) living there. He laid the foundations for a new temple and 21 years later, they finished the work. *The Babylonian captivity lasted exactly 70 years, from the burning of Temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C., to the completion of the new rebuilt temple in 516 B.C.*

Under the leadership of *Ezra*, 58 years later, more Jews returned and *12 years later, Nehemiah received permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and govern Judea.* It took him 52 days to finish the wall, having to fight opposition from people who lived in the area.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

ISRAEL RETURNED AFTER CAPTIVITY After many years in captivity, God inspires *King Cyrus of Persia*, to allow the “**Jews**” (or the exiles from Judah, and later referred to anyone of the Hebrew race that returned from exile) to go back and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem! King Cyrus also gives the Israelites all the gold and silver utensils taken from the house of God when they were first taken into exile.

The first group of Jewish exiles returns to Jerusalem, builds and dedicates the Temple and the worship of God is restored. **Ezra**, a descendant of Aaron and a scholar with a thorough knowledge of the Law which God gave Moses, leads a second group of Jews to Jerusalem. Among them are priests, Levites (only the true Levites, sons of Zadok, ministered in the temple), Temple musicians, Temple guards, and workman, and with them, all the treasure that was taken from the destroyed temple at their captivity.

After he arrives in Jerusalem and carrying out the trust committed to him, Ezra starts his great work of reform. He finds out that the people, the priest, and the Levites were marrying foreign women; worshiping their gods and doing the same disgusting things that God destroyed Jerusalem for in the first place! Ezra sets up a divorce court so that Jews would be required to send their foreign wives and children away.

Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the Persian emperor Artaxerxes, asks permission to go and rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem. He receives permission and is sent to govern Judah and under his supervision, the walls of Jerusalem are completed.

Nehemiah cooperates with Ezra in bringing about many reforms based on the reading of the law of Moses to the people by Ezra. Nehemiah leads the people in public prayer and confession of Israel's sins and has them make a covenant, solemnly sealed, to walk in the law of the Lord as given by Moses!

(Found in 2Chronicles, Chapter 36, Verse 22 and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah)

THE END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The book of Nehemiah closes the biblical history of the old testament and leaves the stage set for the coming of the Mashiah (Hebrew meaning "anointed one") or Christo`s. (Christ in the English form of the Greek Christo`s, meaning "anointed one")

The Messiah's coming was foretold by many prophets in the Old Testament (Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi, Micah and also spoken of by David in Psalms) and is described as one who will deliver Israel from her enemies, and restore her as a nation. He would also put an end to war and rule righteously over his people and because he would establish justice and righteousness in the land, sin would be rooted out and Israel would become a holy people.

JERUSALEM BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

In 423 B.C., Jerusalem was not really prosperous under the great leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and somehow lost its attractiveness for the Jews. Even though the leaders of the people took up residence in Jerusalem, a vigorous effort was put forth to bring people into the city who were living in the surrounding areas by casting lots. One man in ten would be chosen to live in Jerusalem. (Found in Nehemiah Chapter 11 Verse 1-2)

Very little is known about Jerusalem's history for the next 100 years.

Upon the death of Alexander the Great, Jerusalem found itself under the rulers of Egypt and the South, known as the Ptolemy's, in 320 B.C.

One hundred years later, the rulers of Jerusalem went from Ptolemy to Seleucids, which was Syria and the North.

In the year 199 B.C., Egypt recovered rule of Jerusalem for one year only!

In 198 B.C., the powerful Syrian king, Antiochus III (the Great), took Jerusalem, welcomed by the Jews because he gave treasures to the Temple.

In 169-168 B.C., the son of Antiochus III, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), rules Jerusalem in a cruel manner, desecrating the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar, and prohibiting Jewish sacrifices, circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath, and killing any Jew possessing a copy of the Holy Scriptures. These outrages lead to war with the Jews in which the Syrian armies were repeatedly defeated by the brilliant Judas Maccabees. Jerusalem was delivered from this cruel king by Maccabees in the month of Chislev (our month of December in 165 B.C.) This time of deliverance has been celebrated by the Jews as Hanukkah, or the Feast of Lights.

Two years later, the son of the defeated cruel king, Antiochus IV (Eupator), reigned for two years then was slain.

After this, Jerusalem comes back into the hands of the Jewish authorities. It was not a peaceful reign because of the jealousy and divided interest on the part of the leaders. One Jewish leader, Alexander Jannaeus, crucified 800 Pharisees!

In 65 B.C., the Roman army starts to invade Jerusalem, but is ordered to stop. Pompey invades Jerusalem in 64 B.C., and destroys its walls.

In 55 B.C., the temple is again pillaged by Crassus and fifteen years later the area is occupied by the Parthians.

In 40 B.C., Augustus, the emperor of Rome, made Herod the Great, the king of Judea. (the Jewish territory) It took Herod three years to take the territory of Jerusalem and he took over the reign in 37 B.C. The Romans had a passion for constructing large buildings and Herod decided he would build the most significant structure ever to stand in the Holy city of Jerusalem. The building would be known as Herod's temple, which started construction in 20 B.C., and was finished in 62 A.D., even though Herod had died in 4 B.C. (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1963, Eleventh printing-February 1970)

THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The new testament begins with two writers: MATTHEW, the tax-collector who was chosen by Jesus to become his apostle and LUKE, who was not one of the twelve apostles but through close association wrote the events related to him by those who were there.

GABRIEL ANNOUNCES JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH The book of Luke starts with the story of a priest of the Temple in Jerusalem named Zachariah, who is told by the angel Gabriel that his wife Elizabeth, is going to bear a child even though they are both very old. Gabriel tells Zachariah the child's name shall be called John and he shall call many people to return to God and announce the coming of the Messiah! Zachariah finds these things hard to believe and for his disbelief, the angel makes him unable to speak until the baby is born!

GABRIEL ANNOUNCES THE BIRTH OF JESUS The angel Gabriel appears to a young virgin girl named Mary, who lives in the city of Nazareth and is engaged to a man named Joseph, of the family of David. Gabriel tells Mary that she will conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus. "He will be worthy of great honor and will be called, 'Son of God'. The Lord God will make him a king like his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; and his kingdom will never end."

Mary is troubled and surprised by Gabriel's words and she says to the angel, "How can this be, for I am a virgin and have not slept with any man?" The angel tells her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will put the child in you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God.' Then Gabriel tells Mary about her relative Elizabeth who is now six months pregnant even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do."

Mary says to Gabriel, "I am the Lord's servant, may it happen to me as you have said." Mary goes to see Elizabeth and remains with her for about three months, then returns home.

ELIZABETH GIVES BIRTH TO A SON and when the neighbors and relatives assemble for the circumcision of the child, they intend to name him after his father, Zachariah. Elizabeth says, "No! His name is to be John." They point out to her that none of the relatives have that name, then using signs they ask Zachariah what he wishes the child to be called. On a writing tablet he writes, "His name is to be John." All are astonished and at that moment Zechariah's mouth is opened and he begins to speak in praise of God. (Found in the Book of Luke: Chapter 1)

The book of Matthew starts with the genealogy from Abraham to King David and through to Joseph, husband of Mary, who is the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ. This is where Matthew joins Luke in telling the story of Jesus birth.

JOSEPH DECIDES TO BREAK THE ENGAGEMENT to Mary quietly and not expose her to public ridicule because she is pregnant. The angel of the Lord comes to Joseph in a dream and tells him: "Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah concerning the birth of the Messiah:

"A virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Immanuel"
(Isaiah:7:14) a name which means "God is with us".

Joseph does as the angel of the Lord tells him and accepts Mary as his wife.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 1)

EMPEROR AUGUSTUS ORDERS A CENSUS to be taken throughout the Roman Empire, so everyone has to return to his ancestral home for registration. Joseph, who is a descendant of David, returns to his native city of Bethlehem in Judea to register. Traveling with him is Mary, who is soon to have a child. The city is crowded with others who have come to register and no rooms are available so they take shelter with the animals.

MARY GIVES BIRTH TO A SON and she wraps him in bands of cloth and lays him in a manger. Angels appear to shepherds tending flocks in the fields near there and say to them: "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Savior is born-- Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (A manger is a feeding trough or box to hold hay for horses or cattle to eat)

Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: ***Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased"***

The shepherds hurry off to Bethlehem and find the baby lying in a manger. They tell Mary and Joseph about what the angels told them and all who hear what the shepherds say are amazed. After the eighth day, the baby is circumcised and given the name Jesus as the angel had told Mary and Joseph. The time came for them to take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, because every first born is to be dedicated to the Lord according to the law of Moses.

(Found in the Book of Luke: Chapter 2)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: In the ancient times near the beginning of creation, mankind's calendar was measured by length of the days and nights, the position of the stars and the cycle of the moon. The Chaldean and Egyptian astrologers became quite learned on the movement of the astronomical bodies. The Jewish calendar was measured in terms of harvest times, the ripening of the fruit on the trees, the rainy winter months and religious festivals.

In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar's calendar made a great advance over contemporary calendars and had 365 and 1/4 days a year. This was to be the start of the Christian Era calendar meaning everything that happened before the birth of Christ was noted B.C., and everything that happened after the birth of Christ was noted A.D. (Anno Domini) Latin for "in the year of our Lord".

This Christian Era calendar was introduced to the world in the sixth century or 600 A.D. There was a start error in this calendar and it is now agreed that the beginning of the era should have been fixed at least four years earlier. So instead of Jesus being born at 1 A.D., it is thought he was born in 5 B.C. (Found in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary)

Check out Carl's, "Why We Should Celebrate Christmas" (Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus)

ASTROLOGERS COME FROM THE EAST to King Herod asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him honor." ("his star" foretold in the Book of Numbers: Chapter 24: verse 17)

King Herod is greatly disturbed along with the rest of Jerusalem and asks the priest and scribes where the Messiah was to be born?

They reply, "In Bethlehem of Judea, and here is what the prophet Micah has written:
'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the princes of Judah, since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

(Micah - Chapter 5 : verse 1)

Herod sends the astrologers to Bethlehem and instructs them to return with information about the child so that he can pay homage to the Messiah too.

THE ASTROLOGERS FIND THE BABY JESUS with Joseph and Mary, and present their precious gifts. They are warned in a dream not to return to Herod and they return to their country by another route. Joseph receives a message from an angel of the Lord in a dream: "Get up and take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him." Joseph takes Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt.

Herod realizes he has been deceived by the astrologers and becomes furious. He orders the killing of all the male babies younger than two years old in Bethlehem and the regions surrounding the city. Then what was said by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

"A cry was heard at Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation:

Rachel bewailing her children; no comfort for her, since they are no more."

(Jeremiah: Chapter 31: verse 15)

HEROD DIES and is succeeded by his son, Archelaus, as king of Judea. Joseph is told by an angel of the Lord in a dream to take Mary and the child and return to Israel, fulfilling what was said by the Lord through the prophet Hosea:

"Out of Egypt I have called my son." (Hosea: Chapter 11: verse 1)

Joseph hears that Herod's son is now king and he is afraid to go back to Judea, but he is guided by God to settle in the city of Nazareth, in Galilee.

(Found in Matthew: Chapter 2: verses 22-23)

MARY AND JOSEPH LOSE JESUS in Jerusalem at the feast of Passover when he is twelve years old. On the third day searching, they find him in the temple, sitting with the teachers, listening and asking questions. All who hear him are amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him: "Son why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow." His parents did not understand when Jesus asks them why they did not know that he would be in his Father's house? Jesus returns with his parents and is obedient to them.

(Found in the Book of Luke: Chapter 2: verse 41)

Two more writers, Mark and John start their gospels at this point. MARK, Not one of the twelve apostles but a disciple and interpreter of Peter, wrote down what had been preached by Peter, one of the twelve apostles. This is the shortest of the four gospels. JOHN was one of the twelve apostles and writer of the gospel of John.

The first thing John says in his gospel is that Jesus is the only Son of God. Jesus was there in the Father's presence from the beginning as the '**WORD of GOD**' and through him all things came into being. The Father sent him into the world as a man, made of flesh and bone, but the world who was made through him did not know him. Even his own people rejected him, but anyone who received him and believed that the Father sent him, he gave them the right to become God's children. The law was given to us by Moses; but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but Jesus who is at the Father's side, has made him known to us.

(Found in Book of John: Chapter 1: verses 1-17)

JOHN THE BAPTIST came to the desert of Judea and started preaching: "Turn away from your sins because the reign of God is at hand!" John was the man the prophet Isaiah was speaking about when he said:

A voice of one calling in the desert, Prepare the way for the Lord, make a straight path for him to travel

(Isaiah Chapter 40: verse 3)

John was clothed in a garment made of camel hair, wore a leather belt around his waste and his food was grasshoppers and wild honey. People from Jerusalem, Judea and the area surrounding the Jordan River came to see him. All who confessed their sins were baptized with water by him.

When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he called them snakes and said, "First do those things that show that you have turned from your sins and don't think you can escape from the punishment God is about to send by saying that Abraham is your ancestor." God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham!

Then the people asked him, "What are we to do?" John tells them, "Share your food and clothing with those that have none", and to the tax collectors he said, "Don't collect more than is legal!" and to the soldiers he said, "Be content with your pay and don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely."

The Jewish authorities sent some priests and Levites to question John about his identity. After questioning him they asked, "If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?"

John answered, "The ax is ready to cut down the trees at the roots: every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire. I baptize you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He has his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out." (Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 3: verses 9-12)

JESUS IS BAPTIZED Jesus makes his appearance before John to be baptized, and after Jesus is baptized, he comes up out of the water, the sky opens and John sees the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him. Then, a voice from the heavens says, "You are my beloved Son, On you my favor rests."

John told his disciples the next day when he saw Jesus coming toward him, "Look there is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born'. I confess I did not recognize him, though the very reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." But I did not recognize him. The one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, it is he who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen for myself and have testified, 'This is God's chosen One.'"

(Found in Book of John: Chapter 1: verses 29-34)

JESUS TEMPTED After his baptism, Jesus is lead by the Holy Spirit into the desert where he remains for forty days and is tempted by the devil. The devil proposes three temptations: "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to turn to bread." and Jesus answered him, "The scripture says, 'Man cannot live on bread alone but needs every word that God speaks.'"

Then the devil takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple in the Holy City and says, "If you are God's son, throw yourself off this point for the scripture says, God will give orders to his angels about you: they will hold you up with their hands, so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones." Jesus answered, "But the scripture also says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Finally the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed all the kingdoms of the world in all their greatness. The devil said, "All this I will give you if you kneel down and worship me." Then Jesus answered, "Go away, Satan! The scripture says, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!'" Then the devil left Jesus and the angels came and tended to his needs.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 4: verses 1-11, also in Mark-1:12 and Luke-4:1)

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS After Jesus returns from the desert, he learns that Herod has John the Baptist arrested and thrown into prison because John claimed it was wrong of Herod to marry his brother's wife. Jesus decides to leave Nazareth and go to Galilee and live in Capernaum by the sea near the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way what was written by the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled:

"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road to the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee, land of the Gentiles! The people who live in darkness will see a great light. On those who live in the dark land of death the light will shine."

From that time Jesus began to preach his message: "Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of heaven is near!"

(Found in Matthew: Chapter 4: verses 12-17, also in Mark-1:14-15 and Luke-4:14-15)

Jesus starts his ministry; preaching the good news, healing the sick, comforting the poor in spirit, performing many great miracles, and even bringing the dead back to life. Jesus gains popularity throughout Galilee and Judea, and his healing and teachings command respect wherever he goes except Nazareth, the town in which Jesus was raised and grew up. Jesus did not perform any miracles there and he angered the people so much that they dragged him to a cliff to throw him over, but Luke in Chapter 4, verse 30 says '...they were intending to throw him over the cliff, but he walked through the middle of the crowd and went his way.' Jesus ministry lasted anywhere from two and a half to three and a half years. All four gospels are filled with the stories of Jesus ministry like the time he and his disciples were crossing the sea in a storm and the boat started to be swamped with water, but Jesus calmed the storm and the waves. Another story where Jesus fed 5000 people who came to see him in a remote area having only five loaves of bread and two fish. These stories are easy to find, but I will be concerned here with the highlights of Jesus' life so that the storyline can be presented clearly.

[Check out all Carl's Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus](#)

THE TRANSFIGURATION Because of all that Jesus does, the people are moved to try and make him their king and rid themselves of the tyranny of the Roman empire. Jesus frustrates those who would make him king by telling them he is not the political redeemer they are looking for, but the bread of life sent by the Father. John states in Chapter 6, verse 60, that after hearing Jesus words, many disciples remarked, 'This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?' Many of Jesus' followers turned back and would not go with him any more. So Jesus asked the twelve that he chose if they would leave him too. And Peter reaffirms their commitment saying, "...we believe and know that you are the Holy One who has come from God." Jesus tells them that even though he chose the twelve of them, he knew that one of them was a devil who would betray him. (He was speaking of Judas Iscariot) Jesus devotes the rest of his ministry to teaching the twelve disciples he chose.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: While Jesus was with them, the gospels call them disciples because they are still learning from him; after Jesus' resurrection, the gospels and scripture call them Apostles.

Jesus takes three disciples, Peter, John, and James, up to a mountain to pray. While they are there, the appearance of the face of Jesus changes and his clothes become dazzling white. There appears with him Moses and Elijah, talking about the events that are about to take place in Jerusalem concerning Jesus' death. The disciples are amazed, and as they are discussing what they see, a cloud appears and they are afraid as it comes over them. A voice from the cloud says, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen -- listen to him!" The disciples are so terrified when they hear the voice, they throw themselves face down on the ground. Jesus comes up to them and touches them saying, "Don't be afraid!" So they look up and see no one there but Jesus.

Jesus tells the disciples not to say anything to anyone about this until the Son of Man has risen from death. The disciples obey Jesus' order and they ask why the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first before the Messiah. Jesus answered, "Elijah has already come and people did not recognize him, but they put him to death. In the same way they will also mistreat the Son of Man." Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist. [Mark tells how Herod beheaded John the Baptist in Chapter 6: verse 14.](#)

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 17: verses 1-13, also in Mark 9:2, and Luke 9:28)

JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM The entry into Jerusalem by Jesus is recorded in all four gospels and has been foretold by Isaiah and Zechariah. Throughout his ministry, Jesus finds rising opposition from the scribes and Pharisees, who resent his rejection of the traditions they keep so carefully. They are shocked when he claims to be the "Son of God" and declare men's sins forgiven.

Six days before the Passover Feast, Jesus returns to Bethany to bring Lazarus back to life. He had been dead and in the tomb for three days and a crowd was there and saw Lazarus come out of the tomb. Because of this, many Jews put their faith in Jesus, but this makes the chief priests angry and they plot together to kill both Jesus and Lazarus.

Many people gather in Jerusalem for the Passover feast and the story of Jesus raising Lazarus to life is circulating through the crowd. Jesus approaches Jerusalem and they come to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives. Jesus sends two disciples ahead saying, "Go to the village there ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied up with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to me. And if anyone says anything, tell him, 'The Master needs them'; and then he will let them go at once." It happens as Jesus said and fulfills what was written by the prophet Zechariah:

"Tell the city of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you! He is humble and rides on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples return with the donkey and her colt. They threw their cloaks over the colt and Jesus got on. A large crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The groups of people preceding and those following Jesus begin to thank and praise God saying,

"Glory to the Son of David!"

God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory to God!"

(From Psalms 118: verse 26)

Then some of the Pharisees in the crowd speak to Jesus saying, "Teacher, tell your disciples to be quiet!" Jesus said, "If they were to keep silent, the stones themselves would cry out."

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 21, also in Mark 11, Luke 19:28 and John 12:12)

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE At the temple, where Jesus is going, there are men selling doves and other animals for sacrifices. Money changers sit at their tables charging fees for exchanging foreign currency. Jesus sees all of this and is angered. He drives out the buyers and sellers and overturns the money changer's tables saying "Scripture has it, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you are turning into a den of thieves." When the chief priest and scribes hear of this, they begin to look for a way to destroy him, but they were afraid because the people are under the spell of his teaching.

Jesus teaches every day in the temple area and the blind and the lame come to be healed. The chief priest and scribes become displeased and insulted when they see the wonders he performs and hear the children shouting out in the temple area, "Praise to David's Son!" They come and ask Jesus, "Do you hear what the children are saying?" Jesus answers, "Of course I do! Haven't you ever read the scripture, 'You have trained children and babies to offer perfect praise.'" Then Jesus leaves them for the day.

The next day, the priest and the elders try to trap him into saying something against the Roman government or making statements that are blasphemous so they can bring charges against him, but everything they try fails and they're afraid of the multitude of people who are praising Jesus.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 21: verse 12, also in Mark 11:15, Luke 19:45)

Check out Carl's "Signs Revealing Christ's Return To Earth" (Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

THE LAST SUPPER Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples and the betrayer of Jesus seeks out the priests and offers to hand Jesus over to them. They are delighted and agree to give him thirty pieces of silver in exchange. He accepts and waits for the right time to hand him over without the people knowing it.

The day before the Passover Festival, Jesus and the twelve disciples are at supper. Jesus breaks some bread, gives it to his disciples and says, "This is my body which is given for you. Every time you eat bread, think of me." Jesus takes a cup of wine and gives it to the disciples and tells them to drink from the cup and says, "This wine is my blood that will be shed to remove the sins of all who come to believe in me and it is the start of a new agreement between God and mankind."

After supper, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples and tells them that one of them is about to betray him. Then he tells Judas to do quickly what he must do and Judas leaves. The rest of the disciples think Judas, who holds the purse, was sent to buy something in preparation for the Passover festival and did not perceive that he was about to betray Jesus.

After Judas leaves, Jesus gives the disciples a new commandment: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." He tries to make them understand that he is going away to prepare a place for them in heaven, but they must stay and bear fruit for the kingdom of heaven. He puts this analogy before them: I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me."

Jesus tells them when he goes to the Father, he will send the Holy Spirit who will reveal the truth about God and himself.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 26: verse 17, also in Mark 14:10, Luke 22 and John 13)

Check out Carl's "The Last Supper" and "Bread Of Life" (Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus)

THE ARREST OF JESUS Jesus and the disciples leave the city and go to a garden at the Mount of Olives to pray, and he tells them they will desert him tonight. They protest and say they will not, but Jesus says, "It is written in the scripture, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the flock will be scattered.'"

Peter tells Jesus he would never desert him, but Jesus says, "I give you my word, before the rooster crows tonight, you will deny that you even know me three times". Peter replies, "Even though I have to die with you, I will never disown you!" The other disciples join in with Peter saying they would never disown Jesus too.

Jesus prays for the disciples so they will be protected and be able to spread the good news that he gave them. He tells them to stay awake and be on the lookout while he takes Peter, James, and John and goes a short distance to pray. Then Jesus tells the three to stay there and keep watch with him.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

Jesus goes a little farther and drops to the ground in sorrow and prays, "My father, if it is your will, take away this suffering that is about to happen to me, but even though I don't want to go through this, let your will for me be done."

Jesus comes back and wakes Peter and says, "How is it that you three were not able to keep watch with me for even one hour? Keep watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" Twice more Jesus goes to pray and comes back to find them sleeping. Finally he wakes them up and tells them his betrayer is here.

Judas comes and with him, a group of Roman soldiers, and some Temple guards sent by the chief priests and elders. They arrest Jesus and the disciples become scared and run away.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 26: verse 36, also in Mark 14:32, Luke 22:39 and John 18)

THE TRIAL OF JESUS Jesus is taken to the house of the high priest where other members of the council are waiting to question him. Peter and John follow to see what is going to happen to Jesus but Peter is recognized as a follower of Jesus. It is here that he denies knowing Jesus three times, then he hears a rooster crow, remembers what Jesus had told him, and goes away and weeps bitterly.

The chief priests and elders seek many false witnesses to testify against Jesus so they can kill him, but no evidence can be found to support their charges. Finally Caiaphas, the high priest, says to Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God" Jesus answered, "I am, and you will all see the Son of Man seated at the right of the Almighty and coming on the clouds of heaven!" The high priest tears his robes and says, "We don't need any more witnesses! You heard his blasphemy." (to speak lightly or carelessly of God) After hearing this, they all vote that Jesus is guilty and should be put to death.

Early the next morning the whole assembly brings Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor appointed for Judea. Pilate questions Jesus privately and finds him innocent. The Jews become angry and start to protest.

When Pilate learns that Jesus is from Galilee, he sends him to Herod, the governor of Galilee, who happens to be in Jerusalem. Herod is delighted to see Jesus whom he has heard so much about and is hoping to see him perform a miracle. Jesus does not respond to Herod's questioning despite the strong accusations made by the chief priests and teachers of the law. Herod makes no charge against Jesus, but he and his soldiers make fun of him and treat him with contempt. Then they put a fine purple robe on him, and send him back to Pilate.

Pilate calls together the chief priests, the leaders and the people and explains that he nor Herod have found Jesus guilty of anything deserving death, so he will have Jesus whipped and set free. The Jews are stirred to protest and tell Pilate Jesus should die.

Every year at Passover, Pilate sets free a prisoner. He taunts the Jews by asking them, "Which one do you want me to set free for you? Jesus Barabbas (he was in prison for riot and murder), or Jesus called the Messiah?" He knows that Jesus has been handed over because the Jewish authorities are jealous. Pilate's wife sends him a message: 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, because in a dream last night, I suffered much on account of him.' The chief priest and elders persuade the people to ask Pilate to release Barabbas and put Jesus to death. Then Pilate asks the crowd, "What crime has he committed?" They start shouting, "crucify him!"

Pilate takes Jesus and has him whipped. The soldiers make a crown out of thorny branches to pierce his head and dress him in the fine purple robe that came from Herod. They put a stick in his hand and chant, "Long live the King of the Jews!" They kneel before Jesus and make fun of him. They slap him, spit on him and take the stick and hit him.

After the soldiers have their time with Jesus, Pilate brings him out before the crowd wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe to show them Jesus has been punished by being whipped, scourged and humiliated. When the chief priest and elders see Jesus they start shouting, "crucify him!" Pilate tries to argue back saying, "I find no reason to condemn him." The Jews answer back, "We have a law that says he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." Pilate becomes afraid and takes Jesus back in the palace for more questioning.

Pilate again comes before the crowd attempting to free Jesus, but the Jews shout back, "If you set him free, that means that you are not the Emperor's friend! Anyone who claims to be a king is a rebel against the Emperor!" When Pilate hears these words, he washes his hands in front of the crowd saying, "I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing!" The people publicly accept the responsibility of putting Jesus to death, then Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 26: verse 57, also in Mark 14:53, Luke 22:63 and John 18:19)

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS It is about nine o'clock in the morning when they lead Jesus, carrying a cross, outside the city walls of Jerusalem to the place where they will crucify him. Along the way, the soldiers force a man named Simon, from Cyrene, to carry Jesus' cross.

At a place called Golgatha, Jesus is crucified and hangs on a cross, bleeding to death from the scourging and where the nails pierce his hands and feet. ([Golgatha means a bald, round, skull like mound; the place had the appearance of a skull when viewed from a short distance.](#))

After the soldiers crucify Jesus, they take his clothes and divide them among themselves and gamble for the robe which is made of woven cloth without any seams. This was written in scripture by David in [Psalms 22, verse 18](#):

"They divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe."

Pilate writes a notice on parchment and has it nailed on the cross above Jesus' head which reads: 'Jesus, the King of the Jews'. It is written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The chief priests want Pilate to change it to 'This man said, I am the King of the Jews'. Pilate's response is, "What I have written stays written".

Two criminals are also crucified with Jesus, one on each side of him. One taunts Jesus saying, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" The other one speaks to the one taunting Jesus and said, "Don't you fear God? We deserve what we are getting because of what we did, but he has done no wrong." And he says to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus tells him, "I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me."

Jesus sees his mother and the disciple John standing near the cross. He says to his mother, "He is your son." And he says to John, "She is your mother." From that time, the disciple took her to live in his home.

At about noon, the sun stops shining and darkness covers the whole country until about three o'clock in the afternoon when Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me? ([These words start the 22 Psalm, written by David which describe the feelings of Christ on the cross and the glory which will be given to him by all nations of the world.](#))

Jesus says, "I am thirsty" and someone runs up with a sponge, soaked in sour wine, puts it on the end of a stick and holds it up to Jesus' lips and Jesus cries out in a loud voice, "Father, it is finished. In your hands I place my spirit." Then he dies.

At that moment, the earth shakes, rocks split apart and the curtain hanging in the temple is torn in two. This curtain separated the symbols of the Jewish religion (altar of incense, the table of shewbread, and the seven branched lamp stand) from the room reserved for God, When the captain of the guard and the soldiers who are keeping watch over Jesus see the earthquake and all that happens and they say, "He really was the Son of God!"

The Jewish authorities did not want to have the men who were being crucified left on the crosses during the Sabbath so they got permission from Pilate to break their legs so they would die sooner. As they were doing this, they come to Jesus and see he is already dead so they did not break his legs but John saw one of the soldiers pierce Jesus side with a spear making two scriptures come true: "Not one of his bones will be broken" and "People will look at him whom they pierced".

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 27: verse 32, also in Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26 and John 19:17)

[Check out Carl's "The Meaning Of The Cross" \(Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus\)](#)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by [carlvasta.com](#))

THE RESURRECTION A man named Joseph from the town of Arimathea, receives permission from Pilate to take the body of Jesus. He and another man by the name of Nicodemus wrap Jesus' body in linen with spices and place it in a new tomb that Joseph has prepared for himself. He seals the entrance with a large stone.

The next day, which is the Sabbath, the chief priests ask Pilate to put a guard at the tomb saying, "Jesus said he would be raised to life after three days and if any of the disciples of Jesus should steal his body, that would make the last lie worse than all the rest that Jesus told to the people. Pilate tells them, "Take a guard, go and make the tomb as secure as you can."

Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, it was discovered that Jesus had risen from death and left the Roman guarded tomb. Two women who come to the tomb see the large rock rolled away from the entrance and cannot find the body of Jesus. Two men in radiant clothes stand beside them and the women are terrified. "Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here; he has been raised." Then the angels remind them of the things that Jesus said about being crucified and three days later rising to life. They say to the women, "Go tell the disciples Jesus has been raised and you will see him in Galilee."

They hurry back and tell the apostles what had happened, but some of the apostles think the women are speaking non-sense and they do not believe them. Peter and John however, run to the tomb and see it is empty, with the cloth that was around Jesus' head rolled up and put separately from the other linen wrappings. Then they both believe that Jesus has risen from death and they go back to tell the others.

(Found in the Book of Matthew: Chapter 27: verse 57, also in Mark 15:42, Luke 23:50 and John 19:38)

Check out Carl's ["The Meaning of Easter - Three Examples From Jesus"](#) (Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus)

THE APOSTLES PREPARED TO START THE CHURCH Jesus appears to two disciples walking on the road to a small village seven miles away from Jerusalem. When Jesus leaves them, they go back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples how Jesus talked and ate with them. By now, the other disciples knew that Jesus' body was not in the tomb and they did not believe the story told by the women about Jesus' appearance to them. The scripture says, '...as yet they did not understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead'. They locked themselves in their homes, afraid the Jews would come after them because they were disciples of Jesus.

While they are talking to the two disciples who had talked and ate with Jesus, he appears to them saying, "Peace be with you" and then he opens their minds to the scripture and imparts the Holy Spirit upon them saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." One of the disciples named Thomas is not there and when the other disciples tell him what happened, he says, "I will never believe it without seeing and feeling the holes in his hands where they nailed him to the cross and wound in his side where the Roman spear pierced his body."

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

A week later when the disciples are all together, Jesus comes and stands before them saying, "Peace be with you", and then says to Thomas, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe!"

Thomas replies, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus says to him: "You became a believer because you saw me. Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed." (Found in the Book of Luke 24: verse 13 and John 20:19)

Luke continues the story in the book

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, and says that Jesus appeared to the apostles many times for forty days after his resurrection in ways that proved beyond a doubt that he was alive. Jesus helps them believe and finally he leads them to a place in Bethany and he tells them, "I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised, but you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you." Then he raises his hands and blesses them. As they are all watching, he is taken up into heaven. They return to Jerusalem with great joy giving thanks to God. Soon the time will be right for them to start preaching the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus name. (Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 1: verse 6)

THE REPLACEMENT OF JUDAS The eleven apostles: Peter, John, James and Andrew, Phillip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Patriot, and Judas son of James, gather in an upper room in Jerusalem where they are staying. They frequently pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers.

A few days later there is a meeting at the upper room with about 120 believers and the subject is the replacement of the 12th disciple, Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus. When Judas found out that Jesus was condemned to death, he tried to undo his wrong by returning the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests saying, "I have sinned by betraying an innocent man to death!" The chief priests answered, "What do we care about that? That is your business!" Judas threw the coins down in the temple and went off and committed suicide. The chief priest could not put 'blood money' in the treasury according to their law, so they bought a field to be used as a cemetery for foreigners. The new 12th apostle, Matthias, is chosen by lot and added to the group of eleven apostles. (Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 1: verse 12)

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH Ten days after Jesus had left them, all the believers are gathered in one place. It is also the Jewish celebration Feast of Weeks or the Day of First Fruits (of the harvest), which occurs fifty days after Easter Sunday.

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

Suddenly there is a noise from the sky like a strong wind blowing and it fills the house where they are meeting. Then they see what looks like tongues of fire which spread out and touches each person there. They are all filled with the Holy Spirit and they speak in other languages as the Spirit enables them. The commotion of all this noise draws a large crowd of Jews who are living in Jerusalem and have come from every country in the world. Luke says each person hears the believers speaking in their own language and are amazed by it. Others claim these believers have had too much wine and are drunk.

Peter stands up and addresses the crowd saying, "These people are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o'clock in the morning!" Then he proceeds to tell them about the prophecy from scripture having to do with Jesus whom they have crucified and makes an appeal to them saying, "Save yourselves from the punishment coming upon this wicked people!" Many listen to Peter and come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and Luke says that three thousand people are baptized that day and the new Church is started. And for the believers, this day is turned into the Christian Pentecost. (meaning fiftieth day) (Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 2)

THE CHURCH OF JESUS GROWS The Apostles and the other believers continue their ministry, led by Peter and John; preaching the good news about Jesus, healing the sick, comforting the poor in spirit, and performing many great miracles. The Church is gaining popularity and there is much opposition from the chief priests, the officer of the Temple guards, and some Sadducees. They are annoyed because Peter and John are teaching the people that Jesus had risen from death. The Temple guards take Peter and John to jail, but finally they are released with a strong warning not to speak or preach in the name of Jesus. This does not stop them from preaching the good news about Jesus and the healing ministry of the Church continues to grow and new believers are added to the Church by the thousands.

The attempt of the chief priests and Sanhedrin (the Council) to suppress the Church by stoning a new leader named Stephen does not stop the good news about Jesus from being preached. From that day the Church in Jerusalem begins to suffer cruel persecution and all the believers are scattered throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria, taking with them the good news about Jesus. The only ones who remain in Jerusalem are the Apostles. These stories are easy to find in the book of ACTS, but I will be concerned here with the highlights of the Apostles lives so that the story line can be presented clearly.

One of the Apostles named Phillip goes to a principle city in Samaria and preaches the good news about Jesus and performs many miracles of healing. The Apostles in Jerusalem hear about Phillip's success in Samaria preaching the word of God, so they send Peter and John to them. On their way back to Jerusalem, Peter and John preach the good news in many villages of Samaria and Phillip continued on his own preaching on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the towns from Azotus to Caesarea.

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 2: verse 43 through Chapter 8)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL A man named Saul, also known as Paul, born of purest Jewish blood, the son of a Pharisee, and also born a Roman citizen from the city of Tarsus, persecutes the believers of Christ going from house to house dragging out both men and women and throwing them in jail. Saul was raised in orthodox Judaism and was a superior, zealous student tutored under the famous Gamaliel who taught the teaching of the old testament. Saul persecuted the Christians with fanatical devotion to Judaism and was convinced that Christians were heretics and that the honor of Jehovah demanded their death. Luke tells us that Saul was watching the cloaks of the people who were stoning Stephen to death and approved of this act.

Saul, asks the High Priest for letters of introduction to the synagogues in Damascus so he can arrest and bring back the followers of Jesus to Jerusalem. As Saul is near the city of Damascus, a light from the sky flashes around him. He falls to the ground and hears a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, Why Do You Persecute Me?" Saul asks, "Who are you Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you persecute," the voice said. "But get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do."

The men who are traveling with Saul don't see anyone, but they hear the voice. When Saul gets up off the ground and opens his eyes, he is blind. The men lead him into the city of Damascus and he stays there blind and not eating anything for three days. He is praying and has a vision of a man named Ananias who comes and places his hands on him and restores his sight.

God has told Ananias, who is a Christian living in Damascus, to go to Paul and restore his sight. Ananias is afraid because of Saul's reputation and what he has come here to do. The Lord tells Ananias, "Go, because I have chosen him to serve me, to make my name known to Gentiles and kings and to the people of Israel. And I myself will show him all that he must suffer for my sake." Ananias does as the Lord had told him and Saul's sight is restored and he is baptized and his strength returns.

Saul stays with the believers in Damascus a few days and while he is there he goes to the synagogues and begins to preach that Jesus was the Son of God. All those who hear him are surprised because this is the man who killed those who worshiped Jesus and who came to arrest the believers of Jesus and take them back to Jerusalem to be punished. When the Jews question his motives, Saul's preaching becomes even more powerful, and his proofs that Jesus was the Messiah are so convincing that the Jews who live there cannot answer him.

Saul goes to Arabia for a while, maybe to rethink his beliefs in the light of all that has happened to him at Damascus, but he returns to Damascus preaching more aggressively. The Jews are so frustrated with him, they meet together and make plans to kill him, but Saul hears of their plan and escapes the city at night with the help of the believers.

Three years after becoming a believer, Saul goes to Jerusalem to speak to Peter, but the Apostles do not believe he has changed and are afraid of him. A man named Barnabas, who is an early Christian believer and has given money to support the poorer members of the Church in Jerusalem, comes to Saul's aid.

He takes him to Peter and explains what has happened to Saul and how he boldly preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus. The Apostles let Saul stay with them for two weeks and while Saul is there, he preaches the good news about Jesus all over Jerusalem, but the Jews living there try to kill him. When the believers find out that the Jews tried to kill Saul, they take him to Caesarea and send him home to Tarsus where he thrives as a tentmaker by profession and remains in obscurity for some years.

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 9: verses 1-31)

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES Peter travels everywhere preaching the good news, healing the sick, and raising those who had died back to life. And everywhere he goes, many people become believers.

A captain in the Roman army named Cornelius and his whole family are religious and worship God. He does much to help the Jewish poor people and while he is praying, he has a vision in which he sees an angel of God who comes to him and calls his name. The angel tells him God is pleased with his prayers and works of charity and is ready to answer him. He tells Cornelius to send some men to Peter and invite him to come to your house and hear what he has to say.

Peter has just had a vision from God telling him not to consider anything unclean that God has declared clean and then tells him not to hesitate about going with the men who have been sent to him. Peter goes with them, along with some of the Jewish believers, to the house of Cornelious.

When Peter gets there, Cornelious tells him about his vision and says, "You have been good enough to come and now we are all here in the presence of God, waiting to hear anything that the Lord had instructed you to say." Peter begins to speak: "I now realize that is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what race he belongs to." Then Peter preaches the good news about Jesus and while he is speaking, the Holy Spirit comes down on all those who are listening to his message. The Jewish believers who have come with Peter are amazed that God poured out his gift of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, for they were speaking in strange tongues and praising God's greatness. Peter spoke up: "These people have received the Holy Spirit, just as we did. Can anyone stop them from being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ with water?" And so the Gentiles were baptized that day.

When the Church at Jerusalem heard about the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, they criticize Peter saying, "You were a guest in the home of uncircumcised Gentiles, and you even ate with them!" Then Peter tells them all that happened and then he says, "I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' It is clear that God gave those Gentiles the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; who was I, then, to try to stop God!" When they hear this, they stop their criticism, praising God and saying, "God has given to the Gentiles also the opportunity to repent and live!"

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 9: verse 32 through Chapter 11: verse 18)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY Some of the people who were scattered when the persecution started in Jerusalem went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the good news about Jesus to the Jews only. But other believers who came from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch preaching the good news to the Gentiles. This news reaches the Church in the Jerusalem and they send Barnabas to Antioch. He sees how God has blessed the people, so he goes to Tarsus to look for Saul and brings him back to Antioch to minister to the believers and build up the church. They stay there for a year and this church greatly supports the Church of Jerusalem with money during the next persecution by Herod.

After Herod dies, Barnabas and Saul are sent by the Holy Spirit on a missionary journey to bring the good news of Jesus to many countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. On his first journey, Saul and Barnabas sail from the coastal city of Seleucia to the large Island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. (After their visit to Cyprus, Luke, the writer of Acts, changes Saul's name to 'Paul')

Paul and Barnabas travel to a different city named Antioch in Pisidia, then to Iconium, Lystra where Paul is stoned, dragged out of the town and left for dead. But when the believers gather around him, he gets back up and goes back into the town. He leaves with Barnabas the next day and travels to Derbe. After this, they return to the cities where they had visited and formally establish churches there. After traveling through the area of Pisidia, they preached the message in Perga and Attalia, then they sail back to the church of Antioch in Syria and tell the believers how God has opened the way for the Gentiles to believe the good news about Jesus.

Barnabas and Paul stay with the believers for a long time and during their stay, some men come from Judea and start teaching the believers that they cannot be saved unless they are circumcised as the Law of Moses requires. Paul and Barnabas get into fierce arguments with them about this, which results in a trip to Jerusalem to talk to the Apostles and elders about this matter.

Some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees said that the Gentiles must be circumcised and told to obey the Law of Moses. Paul reminds them that God showed his approval of the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he had the Jews. Then he tells them, "God made no difference between us and them; he forgave their sins because they believed. So then, why do you now want to put God to the test by laying a load on the backs of the believers which neither our ancestors nor we ourselves were able to carry? No! We believe and are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are." This persuaded the Apostles and elders not to require the Gentiles to be circumcised, but to require them to: eat no food that has been offered to idols; eat no blood; eat no animal that has been strangled; and keep themselves from sexual immorality.

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 11: verse 19-30 and Chapter 13 through Chapter 15: verse 35)

THE LETTERS IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW CHURCHES When the new churches were started in each town and people were appointed to be the leaders, the Apostles would communicate with them by sending them letters (later referred to as epistles) to instruct them and encourage them in their new faith. The first letter like this is written by James at the Church in Jerusalem and is written to "all God's people scattered over the whole world." It was written about the time that Barnabus and Paul started the church of Antioch in Syria.

Paul wrote letters as part of his support for the new churches he started on his missionary journeys to give instructions to the disciples he left in charge and to encourage the new churches in faith to Jesus Christ. All of these letters are found in the Holy Bible between Acts Of The Apostles and The Book Of Revelation. Paul wrote 13 (or 14, if Hebrews is by him); Peter, 2; John, 3; and Jude, 1.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY Paul gets ready to visit the brothers in every town where they had preached the word of the Lord and find out how they are doing. There is a strong difference of opinion on who should go with them, so Paul and Barnabas choose separate missions. Barnabus takes John Mark and goes to Cyprus and Paul chooses Silas for his second journey and travels through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches.

Paul and Silas go to Derbe and Lystra and request that another believer named Timothy join them. Together they travel through the province of Asia not preaching the word of the Lord because the Holy Spirit did not let them. And the Spirit of Jesus would not let them enter the province of Bithynia so they travel on through to Troas and then because of a vision, they go to Macedonia. Paul travels to many towns that surround the Mediterranean Sea and everywhere he goes, more believers are added and more churches are started. Paul leaves his companions to help the new churches and goes to Athens, then to Corinth and while he is there, he is joined by Silas and Timothy who have come from Macedonia. Paul stays with the believers in these towns, from a couple of weeks to a couple of years, building and supporting the churches he has started. After Corinth, Paul travels to Ephesus and has discussions with the Jews in the synagogue and they ask him to stay, but he is on his way to Jerusalem and tells them with God's will, he will come back to them. Paul greets the Church in Jerusalem, then goes to the church of Antioch in Syria and spends some time there with the believers. (Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 15: verse 36 through Chapter 18: verse 22)

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY After a little time in Antioch, Paul starts his third journey by going through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the believers. Then he went to Ephesus and found some twelve disciples and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. They told him that they never heard of the Holy Spirit and they had only received the baptism of John or by water.

Paul said, "The baptism of John was for those who turned from their sins; and he told the people of Israel to believe in the one who was coming after him--that is, in Jesus." Then Paul laid his hands upon them and they were baptized by the Holy Spirit and they spoke in strange tongues and also proclaimed God's message.

Paul continued on to Macedonia, Greece and Achaia, but he is anxious to get back to Jerusalem by Pentecost so he sends two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia while he spends more time in the province of Asia. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul is now aware that he will not be seeing these churches anymore and that he will be arrested and taken to Rome. He tells the believers in the towns on his way back to Jerusalem that he will not be seeing them anymore and there is many a tearful farewell. He arrives in Jerusalem and is arrested in the Temple.

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 18:verse 23 through Chapter 21:verse 36)

PAUL SENT TO ROME After his arrest and all the way to Rome, Paul takes every opportunity to preach the good news about Jesus: to those who try to kill him, to the Roman guards; to the governors and kings who are trying to settle his case; to those in charge of taking him to Rome; to the prisoners that are with him; to anyone who will listen!

After his arrest, Paul is held in prison by Felix, the governor of Judea, for two years, and he gives him some freedom and allows his friends to provide for his needs. Then a new governor named Festus succeeds Felix and tries to gain favor with the Jews by having Paul tried in Jerusalem. Because he is a Roman citizen and because he knows the Jews would kill him in Jerusalem, Paul appeals to the Emperor in Rome and Festus agrees to send him there. Even King Agrippa, who visits Festus, says after hearing Paul tell his story, "This man could have been released if he had not appealed to the Emperor" For they all agreed that Paul had not done anything which deserved death or prison.

On the day it was decided to sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners are handed over to Julius, an officer in the "Emperor's Regiment. They sail to Sidon which is about half way between Jerusalem and the church of Antioch in Syria. Julius is kind to Paul and allows him to go and see his friends, to be given what he needs. Then they sail close to the coast in the Mediterranean Sea because of the winds and to a port named Myra which is half way between Tarsus and Corinth. There Julius finds a ship that is going to Italy and puts the prisoners aboard. This ship has great trouble making headway to the other ports along the coast and because of the weather, has to take a detour to the island of Crete and comes to a port near the town of Lasea called Safe Harbors.

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 21: verse 37 through Chapter 26: verse 8)

PAUL SHIPWRECKED Paul says, "We spent a long time there, until it became dangerous to continue the voyage." Then Paul tells them that if they continue on, the voyage will be dangerous; there will be great damage to the cargo and to the ship, and loss of life as well." But the army officer was convinced by what the captain and the owner of the ship said, and not by what Paul said.

The men did not want to spend the winter in that harbor and thought they could make it to the other side of the island in a better harbor called Phoenix. They set sail when the weather seemed fine, but soon a storm blew them away from the island and they were at the mercy of the storm and the wind for fourteen days. They lose the cargo and the ship is wrecked and stranded just off the island of Malta. They finally listen to Paul when he tells them what to do and all 276 men on board make it to shore safely.

They are there for three months and Paul does many miracles and heals many people while they are there. The people give them many gifts and what they need to continue their journey. Then they leave for Rome on a ship from Alexandria called the "Twin Gods", which has spent the winter in the island.

(Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 26: verse 9 through Chapter 28: verse 11)

PAUL IN ROME Paul sails from the island of Malta, which is just below the island of Sicily. If you look on a map Sicily looks somewhat like a football that is about to be kicked by what looks like a boot (the country of Italy). The ship that Paul is on sails to Sicily and then to Rhegium, Italy.(The toe of the boot) From there they head up the coast of Italy to Puteoli, and will travel by land to Rome. At Puteoli, Paul finds some believers who ask them to stay for a week and then they travel on to Rome. Word has spread about Paul and while they are traveling, many believers come to meet him from far away towns located on the road leading to Rome. When he sees them, he gives thanks to God and is greatly encouraged.

When he arrives in Rome, Paul is allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him. After three days, Paul contacts the Jewish leaders and asks to arrange a meeting with them to explain his story. The leaders are interested to hear about the party to which Paul belongs and sets date to which Paul can address a large number of people where he is living. Some who hear him speak are convinced by his words and others do not believe.

So they left disagreeing among themselves, after Paul had said this one thing: "How well the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah to your ancestors! For he said,

'Go and say to this people: You will listen, but not understand; you will look and look, but not see, because this people's minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and closed their eyes otherwise, their eyes would see, and their ears would hear, and their minds would understand, and they would turn to me, says God and I would heal them.'

(These were the same words spoken by Jesus to the leaders of Israel.)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

And Paul tells them, "Now you know the message of salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen!" Paul lives for two more years in a place he rents for himself, and he welcomes all who come to see him. He preaches the good news about the Kingdom of God and teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ with boldness and freedom. (Found in the Book of Acts, Chapter 28: verse 12-31)

THE CLOSING YEARS FOR THE APOSTLES The extreme price paid by those who would not give up their faith in Jesus was death, and those who died like this were known as Martyrs. The people who imposed these conditions on the believers were the Jewish priests and elders and men like Saul before his conversion. They thought they were doing a service for God, by getting rid of those who did not give respect to God or the Law of Moses. The first of these Martyrs was Stephen and many came after him.

The second group of people who imposed death on the believers were those who had no use for God or his people. They were people like Nero, the Emperor of Rome who made a sport out of killing Christians for entertainment.

There were those like the silversmith named Demetrius who made silver models of the temple of the goddess Artemis in the town of Ephesus. Paul had succeeded in convincing many people in Ephesus and nearly the whole province of Asia that man-made gods were not gods at all. Demetrius was worried that the temple of the great goddess would come to mean nothing and her greatness would be destroyed and so would his profits from the sale of silver model temples. He stirred up a riot against Paul, but had no success in doing him harm.

It is thought because of letters (or epistles) that were written after **Paul** was in Rome, that he stayed for two years and was released. This was before the persecution of the Christians in Rome by Emperor Nero. After his release, he is thought to have visited Ephesus, leaving Timothy to work there while he went to Macedonia. He left Titus to finish the missionary work on Crete and tells him in the final instructions of a letter, (Titus;3:12) "do your best to come to me in Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there." From there he may have made a visit to Spain and might have been working there when the persecution of the Christians started in Rome.

In the epistle **Paul's Second Letter to Timothy; 1:16-17; 2:9**, it is revealed that Paul is again a prisoner in Rome and kept in close confinement as a criminal. His first appearance before the court holds no condemnation for him, but when he writes at (2Timothy;4: 6-8; 16-18), he knows that he has finished his work on earth for the Lord. He is executed at Rome in late A.D. 66 or early 67.

Peter and his wife traveled to many towns preaching the good news of Jesus to the Jews. He came to Rome shortly after Paul's first release from prison and writes two letters, The First Letter from Peter and the Second Letter from Peter.

In the first, he seeks to strengthen the saints in their sufferings for Christ, while in the second letter, he warns against those teaching Christ will not return again saying that only God will decide the right time for Jesus' return and it will not be too late, for God is calling all people to himself and giving them a chance to believe.

Peter was executed at Rome in A.D. 65, under the persecutions by the Emperor Nero.

John was one of the twelve Apostles and writer of the gospel of John, 3 epistles and the book of Revelation, the last book of the bible. He spent his last years in Ephesus and it was likely that the seven churches of Asia, mentioned in book of Revelation, knew him well.

Because of his testimony that Jesus is Lord and the Word of God, he was exiled to the small island of Patmos which was the site of a penal colony, where political prisoners were condemned to hard labor in the mines. Here he wrote Revelation, a book to give his readers hope and encouragement, and to urge them to remain faithful during time of suffering and persecution.

He apparently died in Ephesus near the end of the first century about 98 to 100 A.D.

(Information found in The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1963, Eleventh printing-February 1970)

THE BOOK OF REVELATION (The last book of the Holy Bible) This is a book written to the seven churches of Asia, which represents all the churches that exist everywhere in the world. They were real churches and were located on the main roads running North and South and communication between them was easy because of their location.

Revelation or **“the unveiling”** was written 'in order that the evils in the churches might be corrected and they might be prepared for the events that were about to confront them.' The Christians were already feeling the pressure of paganism and the threat of persecution at their doorstep, because the moral and social conditions of the empire were getting worse. This letter from John 'provided a new perspective on history by showing that the kingdom of Christ was eternal, and that it would ultimately be victorious over the kingdoms of the world.'

(Information found and quoted from The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1963, Eleventh printing-February 1970)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *God sends this revelation through Christ, to John.* He tells John to “write down the things you saw,” Revelation: Chapter 1: (**“The Vision Of Jesus Christ”**) “then write the things that are,” Revelation: Chapters 2 and 3 (**“Jesus’ letters to the seven Churches”**) “then write the things that will take place right after this” Revelation: Chapter 4 to the end of the book – (**“Worship In Heaven”, “The Tribulation”, “The Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ”, and “The Judgement of all the inhabitants of the World since the beginning – Dead and Alive”, “The New Heaven and Earth”, “The New Jerusalem”, “The River”, and the “Tree of Life”**)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)

It was revealed to John what was to come for the “CHURCH” (the believers of Jesus) after they had finished their work and were taken off the Earth or “caught up into heaven” by an event we know as “the rapture”.

In an instant, all Christian believers, (all of those who have put their trust in Jesus as their personal savior) who are living or have died – will join Christ in the sky, and be taken into heaven and reunited with their loved ones who have gone before them. They will be given new bodies, (not corruptible), but like Jesus’ body and live in His presence forever.

In the book of Revelation, the “CHURCH” is not mentioned after Chapter 3, the beginning of a seven year TRIBULATION or “the crushing”. They are all in heaven with GOD! They are not mentioned again until they come back with Jesus after the Tribulation when He starts his 1000 year reign on the Earth.

The apostles asked Jesus when He would come back and take His people off the Earth. Jesus tells them...

“As for the exact day or hour, no one knows it, not the angels in heaven nor the Son, but it is known only to the Father.” (Matthew: Chapter 24 - Verse 36)

“So it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal; one will be taken and one will be left.” (Matthew: Chapter 24 – Verse 40)

¹⁰*Jesus’s words to the “CHURCH” of Philadelphia: “You have kept my command to remain strong in the faith no matter what happens. So I will keep you from the time of suffering (THE TRIBULATION). That time is going to come to the whole world. It will test those who live on the earth.” (Revelation: Chapter 3 – Verse 10 / NIRV)*

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH OF THESSALONIANS

¹³*“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.*

¹⁴*For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.¹⁵ According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

¹⁶*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

¹⁷*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.”*

(NIV 1st Thessalonians: Chapter 4 - Verses 13-18)

Revelation contains four great visions and each vision contains a picture of Christ.

'The First Vision pictures Christ as the critic of the churches, who commends their virtues and condemns their vices in the light of His virtues.'

(Revelation: Chapter 1, Verse 9 through Chapter 3, Verse 22)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *God sends this revelation through Christ, to John.* He tells John to "write down the things you saw," Revelation: Chapter 1: ("[The Vision Of Jesus Christ](#)") "then write the things that are," Revelation: Chapters 2 - 3 - ("[Jesus' letters to the seven Churches](#)")

'The Second Vision deals with the progressive series of seals, trumpets, and bowls, which mark the judgment of God upon a world dominated by evil.'

(Revelation: Chapter 4, Verse 1 through Chapter 16, Verse 21)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: "then write the things that will take place right after this" Revelation: Chapters 4 -16 ("[Worship In Heaven](#)", "[The Tribulation](#)")

Each vision, which is a time frame, advances to the next vision and tells a story of how God will allow the world to be seduced by Satan until he sets up his throne in God's Holy Temple to be worshiped.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: After Satan sets up his throne, The next three and half years of the tribulation are the worst mankind has ever seen ever know or will. ([Read the details in Matthew, Chapter 24](#) or go to the link below '[Signs Revealing Christ Return To Earth](#)' ([Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus](#))

'The Third Vision depicts the overthrow of evil society, religion, and government in the destruction of Babylon and the defeat of the beast and his armies by this victorious Christ.'

(Revelation: Chapter 17, Verse 1 through Chapter 21, Verse 8)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: "then write the things that will take place right after this" Revelation: Chapter 17: Verses 14 - 18 and Chapters 18 – 20 ("[The Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ](#)", and "[The Judgement of all the inhabitants of the World since the beginning of time – Dead and Alive](#)")

Then God will send Christ to defeat Satan and ***end the world as we know it and start a New World Kingdom with Christ as King.*** Satan will be locked up in the abyss (bottomless pit) for a thousand years while Christ rules the world with those (alive and who will be raised from the dead) who were faithful to him and not seduced by Satan.

At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released and will go out and deceive the nations scattered over the whole world and bring them together in battle to wipe out God's people, but fire will come down from heaven and destroy the people of the nations who have gathered to destroy God's people.

Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast (Satan's slave who is given power by Satan and demands to be worshiped) and the false prophet have already been thrown; they will be tormented day and night forever. The rest of the dead will be raised back to life. Then God will judge all the generations that have lived on the earth according to what they had done. Whoever does not have his name written in the book of the living is thrown into the lake of fire along with death and the world of the dead.

'The Fourth Vision is the establishment of the city of God, the eternal destiny of His people. The book closes with an exhortation to the readiness for the return of Christ.' (Revelation: Chapters 21 and 22)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: "then write the things that will take place right after this" Revelation: Chapters 21 – 22 (*"The New Heaven and Earth", "The New Jerusalem", "The River", and the "Tree of Life"*)

Then a new heaven and earth will be seen and the first heaven and earth will disappear and the sea will vanish. John says, 'he saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. He said he heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: "Now God's home is with mankind! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared. (Found in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21: verse 1 - 4)

(Information found and quoted from The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1963, Eleventh printing-February 1970)

Check out Carl's *"Signs Revealing Christ's Return To Earth"* (Paraphrased Quotes From Jesus)

(Storyline Of The Bible – Carl Vasta - published July 2006 by carlvasta.com)