

BEGINNINGS

JESUS AS THE SUPREME DISPLAY OF THE GLORY OF GOD

— JOHN PIPER

GENESIS 1–2

After the question “Does God exist?” (to which God answers, “I AM,” Ex 3:14), the next question that can shape your life most deeply is “Why did God create the world?”

The short answer that resounds through the whole Bible like rolling thunder is this: *God created the world for his glory.* We’ll see what that means below, but first let’s establish the fact. “Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made” (Isa 43:6–7). Even if the narrower meaning here is “I brought Israel into being for my glory,” the use of the words “created,” “formed” and “made” is pointing us back to the original act of creation. This is why Israel ultimately exists. Because this is why all things ultimately exist — for the glory of God.

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR

When the first chapter of the Bible says, “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Ge 1:27), what is the point? The point of an image is to image. Images are erected in public to display the original. Point to the original. Glorify the original.

God made humans in his image so that the world would be filled with reflectors of God. Images of God. Billions of statues of God. So

that nobody would miss the point of creation. Nobody (unless spiritually blind) could miss the point of humanity, namely, God! Knowing, loving, showing God.

The angels cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:3). It’s full of human image-bearers. Glorious ruins. But not only humans. Also nature! Why such a breathtaking world for us to live in? Why such a vast universe? Scientists now say (I can’t verify it!) that there are more stars in the universe than there are words and sounds that all humans of all time have ever spoken. Why is it so gigantic?

The Bible is crystal clear about this: “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps 19:1). If someone asks, “If earth is the only inhabited planet in the universe, and man the only rational inhabitant among the stars, why is there such a large and empty universe?” The answer is that it’s not about us. It’s about God. Which means it’s not an overstatement; it’s an understatement. God created us to know him and love him and show him. And then he gave us a hint of what he is like — the universe.

We can see the purpose of creation even where the apostle Paul describes how we have fallen short of it. He says in Romans 1:20–21:

“God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly

seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.”

The great tragedy of the universe is that, while human beings were made to glorify God, we have all fallen short of this purpose and “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being” (Ro 1:23).

GOD HELPS US FEEL THIS TRUTH

So, resounding through the whole Bible — from eternity to eternity — like rolling thunder is God’s great purpose for all things: *He created the world for his glory.* Besides Isaiah 43:7 (“created for my glory”), Isaiah presses home the reality over and over to help us feel it and make it part of the fabric of our thinking:

“Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low ... And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together” (Isa 40:4–5).

“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another” (Isa 42:8).

“The LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel” (Isa 44:23).

“For my own name’s sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from

you ... I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another” (Isa 48:9–11).

“He said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor’” (Isa 49:3).

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor ... They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor” (Isa 61:1–3).

GLORIFY IS DIFFERENT FROM BEAUTIFY

This is why God created the world — that he may be glorified. Which does not mean that he may be *made* glorious. Don’t take the word *glorify* and treat it like the word *beautify*. To beautify means to take something plain and make it beautiful. We don’t take a plain God and make him beautiful. That is not what glorifying God means.

When God created the world, he did not create out of any need or any weakness or any deficiency. He created out of fullness and strength and complete sufficiency. As Jonathan Edwards said, “Tis no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain that it is inclined to overflow.”

EXODUS 32:11–13

PERFECT INTERCESSION

Moses interceded before God on behalf of the people in a priestly prayer, asking him to relent from destroying the nation based on three factors. First, God had just delivered the nation of Israel from Egypt, and he could not abandon them now. Second, Pharaoh would learn of the destruction of the nation and believe that Egypt had, in fact, been victorious and that God's plan was to bring them out of Egypt in order to kill them. Third, God had promised to uphold his covenant to his people, and he could not turn back on his promises. Moses' prayer demonstrated his understanding of the severity of the sin of the people, his knowledge of the glory of the Lord and his zeal for his people.

Jesus' intercessory prayer in the garden on the night he was betrayed follows this same pattern (Jn 17). Knowing the reality of life in a fallen world, he asked God to guard his people, protect them from the enemy, demonstrate his love to them and transform them by means of his Word. The author of Hebrews stated that Jesus, as the sinless intercessor and Son of God, has been resurrected and has ascended to the right hand of the Father so he can plead for the needs of his people (Heb 7:23–25).

and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. ⁶Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: ⁷the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent — ⁸the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, ⁹the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand — ¹⁰and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, ¹¹and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you."

The Sabbath

¹²Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹³"Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'

¹⁴"Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people. ¹⁵For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. ¹⁶The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."

¹⁸When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

The Golden Calf

32 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods^a who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

²Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." ³So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods,^b Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

⁵When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." ⁶So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

⁹"I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

¹¹But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?' Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your

descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" ¹⁴Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

¹⁵Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. ¹⁶The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

¹⁷When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."

¹⁸Moses replied:

"It is not the sound of victory,
it is not the sound of defeat;
it is the sound of singing that I hear."

¹⁹When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

²¹He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"

²²"Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. ²³They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' ²⁴So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

²⁵Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. ²⁶So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.

²⁷Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" ²⁸The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. ²⁹Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

³⁰The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

³¹So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. ³²But now, please forgive their sin — but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

³³The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ³⁴Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."

³⁵And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

33 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' ²I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ³Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

⁴When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. ⁵For the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell

EXODUS 32:32

MY LIFE FOR THEIR LIVES

Moses begged God to forgive the sin of the people, offering to give his life as a substitute for theirs should God so desire. The inexcusable sin of making and worshiping the golden calf prompted the righteous judgment of God. How could a people who had so recently been the recipients of the might and power of God decide to do such a thing? The inexplicable nature of this sin highlights the foolishness of all sin and the necessity of God's judgment.

Yet, as always, God's grace shone through. He did not blot Israel from the face of the earth, though he would have been justified in doing so. He was faithful to his covenant and sustained the nation, though he judged those who sinned against him. In his request, Moses recognized that someone must die for these sins, and he asked God to allow a substitute. But what they needed was a perfect substitute — one who was without sin and capable of offering himself to God as an unblemished sacrifice. They needed Jesus, the one who could do what Moses could not — namely, offer himself for sin, not merely for Israel, but for all of God's people forever.

^a I Or a god; also in verses 25 and 31 ^b 4 Or This is your god; also in verse 8

to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD's anointed.'¹¹ See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.¹² May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.¹³ As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you.

¹⁴Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea?¹⁵ May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

¹⁶When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud.¹⁷ "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.¹⁸ You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.¹⁹ When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today.²⁰ I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.²¹ Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family."

²²So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

David, Nabal and Abigail

25 Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.^a

¹A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel.² His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings — he was a Calebite.

³While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name.⁴ Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!'"

⁵"Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing.⁶ Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them."

⁷When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.

⁸Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days.⁹ Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"

¹⁰David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word.¹¹ David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

¹²One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them.¹³ Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing.¹⁴ Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them.¹⁵ Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is

THE LORD'S ANOINTED

At this point in Israel's history, a civil war threatened to divide the nation as Saul was trying to kill David. David had ascended to great popularity while Saul had fallen out of favor with the people. While David was out slaying giants and winning battles, Saul's jealousy eroded the health of the kingdom. Blinded by his own insecurities, Saul lost the support of his people. Saul tried to kill David on numerous occasions until David finally fled to the wilderness.

For years, David had been running from Saul and his men. But something unexpected happened inside this cave. Saul found himself in a vulnerable position and at the mercy of David. Of course, David's men encouraged him to take advantage of the situation and end Saul's life. In this moment, David had the chance to end Saul's terror over his life and take the throne that God had ordained for him years earlier. David had the political power, the public's support and the right from God to the throne, but he used this opportunity to reinforce Saul and his kingship instead of destroying him.

To cut off a piece of Saul's robe (24:4,11) would have been a symbolic act that discredited Saul's authority as king. It may have looked as if David was going to listen to the encouragements of his friends and kill Saul. Despite the fact that killing Saul would have seemed like the logical thing to do, David knew he could not kill God's anointed king no matter the circumstances. David refused to touch Saul because he was showing his allegiance to "the LORD's anointed" (24:6,10). David realized that all of his popularity and status had been given to him by God. Therefore, David trusted that God would protect him and give him the throne at the right time.

In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrated that he was truly the anointed Son of God. Yet the people used opportunities to disobey God's ways — and they struck the Anointed One. Still, Jesus demonstrated great mercy. He did not strike back but instead forgave them and prayed for them (Lk 23:34). After his crucifixion, death and burial, Jesus rose from the dead and took his rightful place on the throne in heaven, establishing his kingdom once and forever.

1 SAMUEL 25:1–13

ABIGAIL INTERCEDES

When Abigail discovered that her husband, Nabal, had foolishly rejected David's request for food and water, she realized that her entire household was in danger. She collected and brought a large amount of food for David and his men, and she begged David for mercy. David was so affected by Abigail's words and actions that he extended mercy on her household and sent her home in peace.

This story offers an interesting parallel for understanding the work of Jesus. Mankind is like Nabal by foolishly rejecting God's goodness and consequently deserving his judgment. Like David, God holds all accountable for their disobedience. The only hope for humanity is someone to intercede like Abigail interceded for Nabal. She demonstrated how Jesus bridges the gap between sinful humanity and a holy God. Jesus intercedes on behalf of people and accepts the penalty for our sin so that we can receive mercy.

^a Hebrew and some Septuagint manuscripts; other Septuagint manuscripts Maon

PROVERBS

BIRTH OF SOLOMON,
TO WHOM MOST
PROVERBS ARE
ASCRIED
c. 991 BC

DEATH OF SOLOMON
c. 930 BC

REIGN OF HEZEKIAH,
DURING WHICH SOME
OR ALL OF PROVERBS
WAS COMPILED
c. 715 – 686 BC

The writers of the book of Proverbs distill God's divine wisdom to provide insight for obedient worship in a world wrecked by sin. As a collection of practical wisdom sayings inspired by God, this book provides specific insight into the wisdom that God graciously offers throughout history. Solomon, Lemuel, Agur, and others communicated their wealth of God-given insight to the nation of Israel and to all subsequent readers of Proverbs.

The range of topics throughout the book demonstrates the complexity of human existence. From money to marriage, power to possessions, Proverbs presents practical wisdom for those seeking to follow God faithfully. These subjects are addressed throughout Proverbs in repeated and memorable sayings that were meant to be shared by God's people.

The main contrast in the book is between wisdom and foolishness (1:1–7). Foolishness is presented as humanity's natural propensity and, without God's intervention, a dangerous and destructive path for life, ultimately culminating in death and destruction in this life and the next (3:35).

Wisdom, on the other hand, is a gift from God and is the path to the life he intends (2:6). Because all people are born dead in sin and enslaved to foolishness, only God can deliver people from their impending doom. God graciously gives wisdom to those who, through faith, fear him and seek after him with all of their heart. Wisdom fosters a love for God, fulfillment in life and intimacy with God — in this life and the next (2:1–6).

Sin renders all humankind incapable of following the path of wisdom described in the book of Proverbs. Jesus, however, could and did follow that perfect path. He is the embodiment of the divine wisdom spoken of throughout the book. In his life and sacrificial death, he perfectly obeyed God's commands at great cost to himself. By looking at the life of Jesus, all people can see the One who perfectly followed the path wisdom affords. Jesus, who is the wisdom of God, lived the life humankind was meant to live but could not due to sin. By faith, believers can receive the gift of Jesus' righteous life and perfect standing before God. God gives his children the gift of his Spirit, which empowers them to follow his perfect path of wisdom.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING
OF WISDOM, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE
IS UNDERSTANDING.

Proverbs 9:10

will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do Not Worry

²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Judging Others

7 ¹Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

⁶Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

True and False Prophets

¹⁵Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree

cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

True and False Disciples

²¹'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

S When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ²A man with leprosy^a came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

The Faith of the Centurion

⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶"Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

⁷Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?"

⁸The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

Jesus Heals Many

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

^a 2 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

MATTHEW 7:13–14

THE WIDE AND THE NARROW GATES

Jesus explained that the roads to life and destruction are roads guarded by narrow and wide gates, respectively. In doing so, he taught that many people walk down the road that leads to destruction, while few people choose to walk down the road that leads to life. The road that leads to destruction is easy to find (Pr 14:12). Anyone who chases after the cares of the world without the mind of the Spirit (Php 2:1–11) walks along the broad road that leads to destruction, and they do so with many other people. In contrast, the narrow road is smaller, and fewer people travel upon it. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is the narrow gate, and by following him and living in his power, believers are able to walk upon the path of life.

^a 27 Or single cubit to your height

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

ALL WE NEED

Humans are fundamentally needy creatures — newborns instinctively gasp for oxygen, kids hunger for afternoon snacks, high schoolers seek friends and popularity, young adults chase careers, and so on. People are needy by design — physically, socially, emotionally and most importantly, spiritually. God is intimately acquainted with the needs of his people. As all-knowing God, he anticipates his people's needs; as a loving Father, he tenderly provides (Mt 7:7–11).

Having a laugh with friends or grabbing a bite to eat cannot result in lasting satisfaction. The deepest needs are of the soul, not the body. Thankfully, this passage proclaims that these needs can be satisfied through Jesus, who is rich in glory. The more we grow in our faith in Christ, the more our needs are satisfied by the riches he offers. Paul confirmed that the God of the universe is able: The One who created humans will also be their continuing resource. God can be trusted to take care of those who believe in Christ and who follow him with their lives. His supply of mercy is endless — flowing from the glory that is in Christ Jesus, who left heaven to show love and mercy to rebels. The God whom believers trust for provision is the same God with the power to conquer sin and death. He can meet any need.

Final Exhortations

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Thanks for Their Gifts

¹⁰I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵Moreover, as you Philipians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

²¹Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. ²²All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

* 23 Some manuscripts do not have Amen.

JESUS: OUR HEAD OF ALL THINGS

COLOSSIANS
