

FIRST
NATIONS
VERSION



AN INDIGENOUS
TRANSLATION *of the*
NEW TESTAMENT

SAMPLER

Sample Passages: Matthew 5, Luke 1, John 3, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 13, and Revelation 5



About the *First Nations Version*

The First Nations Version (FNV) is a retelling of Creator’s Story—the Scriptures—following the tradition of the storytellers of these oral cultures. Many First Nations tribes communicate with the cultural and linguistic thought patterns found in their original tongues. This way of speaking, with its simple yet profound beauty and rich cultural idioms, still resonates in the hearts of First Nations people.

The FNV is a dynamic equivalence translation that captures the simplicity, clarity, and beauty of Native storytellers in English, while remaining faithful to the original language of the New Testament. Whether you are Native or not, you will experience the Scriptures in a fresh and new way.

Translation Council

The translation council was selected from a cross section of Native North Americans—elders, pastors, young adults, and men and women from differing tribes and diverse geographic locations. This council also represents a diversity of church and denominational traditions to minimize bias.

Our initial group, forming our translation council, consists of twelve First Nations individuals representing tribes from these diverse geographical regions. This council determined the style and method of translation to be used, and some continued to be involved in the review process and cultural consultation. From this group, a smaller council was chosen that determined the key translation terms.



Terry M. Wildman (Ojibwe and Yaqui)

is the lead translator, general editor, and project manager of the *First Nations Version*. He serves as the director of spiritual growth and leadership development for Native InterVarsity. He is also the founder of Rain Ministries and has previously served as a pastor and worship leader.



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An imprint of InterVarsity Press
Downers Grove, Illinois

InterVarsity Press
P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426
ivpress.com
email@ivpress.com
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InterVarsity Press® is the book-publishing division of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA®, a movement of students and faculty active on campus at hundreds of universities, colleges, and schools of nursing in the United States of America, and a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. For information about local and regional activities, visit intervarsity.org.

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(other permissions needed):

The publisher cannot verify the accuracy or functionality of website URLs used in this book beyond the date of publication.

Cover design and image composite:

Interior design:

Images:

ISBN 978-0-8308-1359-9 (casebound)

ISBN 978-0-8308-1350-6 (paperback)

ISBN 978-0-8308-2486-1 (digital)

Printed in the United States of America ☺

InterVarsity Press is committed to ecological stewardship and to the conservation of natural resources in all our operations. This book was printed using sustainably sourced paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

P	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Y	37	37	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21		



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1 THESSALONIANS



INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST NATIONS VERSION

AN INDIGENOUS TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



THE FIRST NATIONS VERSION TRANSLATION COUNCIL humbly submits this new translation of the Sacred Scriptures as our gift to all English-speaking First Nations people and to the entire sacred family, which is the body of the Chosen One.

The First Nations Version New Testament was birthed out of a desire to provide an English Bible that connects, in a culturally relevant way, to the traditional heart languages of the over six million English-speaking First Nations people of North America.

The FNV is a retelling of Creator's Story from the Scriptures, attempting to follow the tradition of the storytellers of our oral cultures. Many of our Native tribes still resonate with the cultural and linguistic thought patterns found in their original tongues. This way of speaking, with its simple yet profound beauty and rich cultural idioms, still resonates in the hearts of Native people.

The FNV takes into consideration contextual word choices, idiomatic expressions, and modifications in paragraph and sentence structure that clarify and facilitate understanding of the Scriptures. Our priority has been to maintain the accuracy of the translation and its faithfulness to the intended meaning of the biblical writers within a First Nations context. It is not a word-for-word translation, but rather it is a thought-for-thought translation, sometimes referred to as dynamic equivalence.

This translation was first envisioned by Terry M. Wildman. A while later the First Nations Version Translation Council was formed. Then with the help of OneBook and Wycliffe Associates, it expanded into a collaborative effort that included Native North Americans from over twenty-five tribes.

A small circle of interested Native pastors, church leaders, and church members gathered together under the leadership of Terry M. Wildman, OneBook, and Wycliffe Associates. They had input on the method of translation and the

first biblical terms that would be used, and participated in the wording, reviewing, and editing of the Gospel of Luke.

WHY THE NAME FIRST NATIONS VERSION?

The term *First Nations*, while mostly used in Canada for the original inhabitants of the land, is increasingly being accepted and used by many Native Americans in the United States and by indigenous peoples worldwide. Following this trend, the name First Nations Version was chosen for this translation.

WHY ENGLISH?

It is conservatively estimated that over 90 percent of First Nations people do not speak their tribal language, and even fewer can read it. This is the result of several generations of governmental assimilation policies that attempted to eradicate over 250 languages spoken in North America.

This translation is not intended to be tribally specific but to present the Scriptures in a general way, attempting to represent some of the simple yet profoundly beautiful ways our languages can be expressed in English.

We aimed for a style that is easy to read, with an attempt to present, in writing, the cadence and feel of an oral storyteller. A contextual approach was adhered to, using English word choices and idiomatic phrases that are culturally relevant, with an effort to refrain from a stereotypical or culturally degrading simplicity.

PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

OneBook, a Canadian organization dedicated to helping indigenous peoples all over the world translate the Bible for themselves, provided financial support along with the tools and training needed for a high-quality translation. They partnered with Rain Ministries, located in the United States, to facilitate this translation. Wycliffe Associates of Orlando served this project in the beginning by providing technical support and funding for gathering the council together.

CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

The First Nations Version of the New Testament was produced in response to the consistently positive feedback given to the initial translation efforts. As samples were shared in churches and other venues, those who heard these samples began asking for more. Pastors, evangelists, missionaries, Native elders, and others began to ask whether a complete New Testament would be translated using this contextual approach. The FNV is for all the churches, and it is especially for those involved in contextual ministry with Native North Americans.

THE TRANSLATION COUNCIL

A translation council was selected from a cross-section of Native North Americans. Elders, pastors, young adults, and men and women from different tribes and di-

verse geographic locations were chosen to sit on the council. This council also represents a diversity of church and denominational traditions to minimize bias.

Our council consisted of twelve (one remains anonymous) First Nations individuals with tribal heritages from diverse geographical regions. This council had input into the style and method of translation to be used. From this group, a smaller council was chosen to determine how the most important biblical terms would be translated.

The members of our council are listed below with their North American tribal heritages:

- Barry D. Belindo—Kiowa/Navajo/Pawnee/Choctaw
- Garland Brunoe—Wasco/Ojibwe
- Gordon Campbell—Kalispel/Spokane/Nez Perce
- Sháńdíń Church—Diné/Pokagon Band Potawatomi
- Alvin Deer—Kiowa/Creek
- John GrosVenor—Cherokee
- Antonia Belindo—Kiowa/Navajo/Pawnee/Choctaw
- Bryan Jon Maciewski—Anishinabe/Ojibwe
- Dale and Charlotte Tsosie—Diné (Navajo)
- Terry M. Wildman—Ojibwe/Yaqui

The following ministries gave of their time to participate in this project: Rain Ministries, OneBook of Canada, Wycliffe Associates, Native InterVarsity, and Mending Wings.

OTHER NATIVE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Besides the members of our council, many other First Nations people have had input into this translation as reviewers, cultural consultants, and community-feedback participants. All in all, the tribal heritages represented include but are not limited to Apache, Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Desert Cahuilla, Cayuga, Diné (Navajo), Hopi, Kalispel, Kiowa, Klickitat, Lakota, Mohawk, Métis, Miami, Muscogee, Nez Perce, Northern Cree, Odawa, Ojibwe, Pawnee, Plains Cree, Potawatomi, Tlingit, Tohono O’odham, Western Cree, Yankton Sioux, Spokane, Wasco, Yakama, and Yaqui.

CONSULTANTS AND SUPPORT

Alongside our translation council were a number of support people on this project. Our translation consultant was the former head of Wycliffe Canada and the founder of OneBook Canada, with over fifty years of biblical translation experience with indigenous cultures. State-of-the-art translation software called Paratext was provided by OneBook along with expertise and guidance. We also

had volunteer help from a retired teacher in Canada for the initial punctuation on the entire project. These friends and support partners were committed to having the First Nations people do the actual work of translation, while they provided experience, expertise, help, and feedback.

COMMUNITY CHECKING AND FEEDBACK

Our hope is that this translation will be used widely by the Native churches in North America. To facilitate this, about thirteen hundred draft versions of Luke were printed and distributed to Native churches, leaders, and many others both in Canada and the United States, asking for review and feedback. A number of pastors, church leaders, and members, along with some Bible scholars, participated in reviewing the draft version of Luke. Their input was valuable in improving this translation. Our translation council was instrumental in ensuring widespread community testing in Native communities. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and many great suggestions were incorporated.

For more information, visit firstnationsversion.com.

READER AIDS

Use of italics. In an attempt to present the Scriptures as a living and moving narrative, at times reasonably implied statements were added within, above, and below the text. For this, we used our imagination as we tried to picture what may have been the reaction in the voices and faces of the participants. These added statements are not intended to change the meaning of the text but rather to bring clarity. *For further clarity, these additions are in italics to distinguish them from the text of Scripture.*

History, culture, and geography. At times we also inserted comments about the history, culture, and geography within the story to add depth and understanding. This is for those without an historical understanding of the Jewish culture that is found in the New and Old Testaments. *All these additions are also in italics to distinguish them from the text of Scripture.*

Names of persons and places. We decided to follow our Native naming traditions and use the meaning of names for persons and places in this Great Story. In our community feedback, this practice was affirmed and appreciated. Most reviewers liked the standard English versions of the names in parentheses, while a few did not. We experimented with many options and finally decided to reduce the size of the font for the standard English names. Leaving the names in the text this way, instead of in footnotes, keeps the eye on the text and helps the reader's eye to more easily skip over it, if so desired.

Gender and the Great Spirit. We are of the understanding that the Great Spirit is neither male nor female. However, the original writers of the New Testament

present the Great Spirit as Father, a male term. We see these terms as cultural metaphors when used of Creator. However, it is clear in the Scriptures that Creator Sets Free (Jesus) was literally born into this world as a male human. In this translation, we follow in the footsteps of the writers of the New Testament and use male pronouns for the Great Spirit. This was also the practice of many of our Native peoples as they spoke of the Supreme Being.

Names of God. Great Spirit, Creator, Great Mystery, Maker of Life, Giver of Breath, One Above Us All, and Most Holy One are a few of the names you will find in this translation. Names like these have been chosen in the retelling of this story to honor the simplicity and beauty of our Native understanding of our Great Creator.

The First Nations people of Turtle Island (North America) have many names and terms referring to the Supreme Being that created the universe. One of the names or terms that has been used predominantly is Great Spirit or Great Mystery. Among the Anishinaabe peoples Kitchi Manitou or as in many biblical translations Gizhe Manitou would be used. This would be understood generally as Great Spirit or Great Mystery. The term Creator is also used frequently among many of our peoples. While these terms are not tribally specific, the usage of Great Spirit and Creator is generally accepted by our First Nations people as a reference to the Supreme Being.

Some have asked us why we are not using the English word “God.” While this term is almost exclusively used in English translations of the Bible, it is not an inspired usage. The word “god” is a translation of the Greek word *theos* in the New Testament and in the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Hebrew Scriptures. *theos* is a general term for the divine and can be used of Yahweh (the Hebrew name for God) or for lesser divine beings. The English term “god” most likely came from a Germanic language root which was originally used for a lesser Germanic deity. In the Hebrew Scriptures, there is also a generic word for deity, the word *El*, used of both foreign gods and Yahweh. There are many names, designations, and titles used in the Bible that refer to God.

For the First Nations Version we preferred to use names, designations, and titles for God that are more relevant to our First Nations people. Even though all Christians believe in one God, they certainly have different doctrinal statements and ideas of what to correctly believe about God. Our hope is that our Native people will make the connection, through this translation, with the one who reveals perfectly who the Great Spirit is—that is Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One.

Matthew 5

who sit in darkness, where death casts a great shadow, have seen the light of a new sunrise.”^a

THE GOOD ROAD IS CLOSE

¹⁷From that time forward Creator Sets Free (Jesus) began to speak out, “Creator’s good road from above is close. It is time to change your thinking and begin your great journey.”

HIS FIRST FOLLOWERS

¹⁸Creator Sets Free (Jesus) was walking by the shoreline of Lake of Circle of Nations (Sea of Galilee) when he saw two fishermen throwing out their nets. They were One Who Hears (Simon), also named Stands on the Rock (Peter), and his brother Stands with Courage (Andrew).

¹⁹He said to them, “Come, walk the road with me, and I will show you how to fish in a new way—for two-leggeds.”

²⁰They dropped their nets right then and became his followers.

²¹As Creator Sets Free (Jesus) was leaving, he saw two other brothers, He Takes Over (James) and He Shows Goodwill (John), the sons of Gift of Creator (Zebedee). They were sitting with their father in a canoe getting their nets ready for fishing. ²²Creator Sets Free (Jesus) called out to them, and they dropped their nets, left their father, and also became his followers.

WALKING THE GOOD ROAD

²³Creator Sets Free (Jesus) traveled throughout Circle of Nations (Galilee). He was teaching in their gathering houses and telling everyone the good story of Creator’s good road. He was healing the people of every kind of sickness and disease. ²⁴His reputation as a healer spread as far as Bright Sun (Syria). Then

they brought to him the ones tormented with evil spirits, along with people who suffered from seizures, and he healed them. He even healed the crippled and paralyzed among them.

²⁵Large crowds from all directions began to seek after him—too many to number! They came from Circle of Nations (Galilee) and Ten Villages (Decapolis), and from Village of Peace (Jerusalem), and the Land of Promise (Judea), and from beyond the river Flowing Down (Jordan).

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¹When Creator Sets Free (Jesus) saw this great crowd, he went back up into the mountainside and sat down to teach the people. His followers came to him there, ²so he *took a deep breath*, opened his mouth, and began to share his wisdom with them *and teach them how to see Creator’s good road*.

BLESSINGS OF THE GOOD ROAD

³“Creator’s blessing rests on the poor, the ones with broken spirits. The good road from above is theirs to walk.

⁴“Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who walk a trail of tears, for he will wipe the tears from their eyes and comfort them.

⁵“Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who walk softly and in a humble manner. The earth, land, and sky will welcome them and always be their home.

⁶“Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who hunger and thirst for wrongs to be made right again. They will eat and drink until they are full.

⁷“Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who are merciful and kind to others. Their kindness will find its way back to them—full circle.

⁸“Creator’s blessing rests on the pure of heart. They are the ones who will see the Great Spirit.

⁹“Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who make peace. It will be said of them, ‘They are the children of the Great Spirit!’

¹⁰“Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who are hunted down and mistreated for doing what is right, for they are walking the good road from above.

¹¹“Others will lie about you, speak against you, and look down on you with scorn and contempt, all because you walk the road with me. This is a sign that Creator’s blessing is resting on you. ¹²So let your hearts be glad and jump for joy, for you will be honored in the spirit-world above. You are like the prophets of old, who were treated in the same way by your ancestors.

SALT AND LIGHT

¹³“As you walk the good road with me, you are the salt of the earth, *bringing cleansing and healing^a to all*. Salt is a good thing, but if it loses its saltiness, how will it get its flavor back? That kind of salt has no worth and is thrown out.

¹⁴“As you walk the road with me, you are a light shining in this dark world. A village built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one hides a torch under a basket. Instead it is lifted up high on a pole, so all who are in the house can see it. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine by doing what is good and right. When others see, they will give honor to your Father—the One Above Us All.

FULFILLING THE SACRED TEACHINGS

¹⁷“When you hear my words, you may think I have come to undo the Law given

by Drawn from the Water (Moses) and the words of the prophets. But I have come to honor them and show everyone their true meaning. ¹⁸I speak from my heart, as long as there is a sky above and an earth below, not even the smallest thing they have said will fade away, until everything they have said has found its full meaning and purpose.

¹⁹“Anyone who turns away from these instructions and tells others to do the same will be looked down on, as a small one, on Creator’s good road from the spirit-world above. But the ones who do them and teach others to do the same, they will be looked up to as great ones.

²⁰“I will say this to you, unless you have a better reputation than the scroll keepers and the Separated Ones (Pharisees), you will not find the path that leads to the Land of Creator’s good road from above.”

Creator Sets Free (Jesus) then began to help the people see how the full meaning and purpose of the Law and the Prophets applied to them.

RESPECT TOWARD ALL

²¹“You have heard that our ancestors were told long ago, ‘Do not take another person’s life,’^b and ‘whoever does will have to answer to the tribal council.’^c

²²But I tell you, everyone who is angry toward a fellow human being will have to give an answer to the tribal council. If they speak with disrespect to someone, saying, ‘You hollow head!’ they will also face the tribal council. If they curse someone by saying ‘You damn fool!’ they may end up in the Valley of Smoldering Fire. ²³So if you are offering a gift at

^b5:21 Exodus 20:13

^c5:21 Deuteronomy 16:18

Creator's ceremonial lodge, and there remember that a Tribal Member has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift and go make things right. Then you can come back and finish the ceremony.

RESOLVING CONFLICT WITH DIGNITY

²⁵"If someone has a complaint against you and takes you before the village council, work out an agreement before you get there. *You know how to decide things for yourselves.* The council might decide against you and turn you over to the ones who have the power to put you in prison. ²⁶The truth is, there is no way out of there until honor has been restored."^a

HONORING OUR WOMEN

Most women in the time of Creator Sets Free (Jesus) were dominated by the men and were often treated like property and looked down on with disrespect.

²⁷So he said to the men, "You have heard the saying, 'You must not have sexual relations with another man's wife.'^b ²⁸But I tell you this, any man who looks at a woman and wants his way with her has already done so in his heart.

"*This is not how the Great Spirit wants us to see our sisters.* ²⁹If your right eye sees in this way^c—gouge it out and throw it away! ³⁰If your right hand does harm to her^c—cut it off and throw it away! It is better to lose a part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into the Valley of Smoldering Fire.

³¹"Drawn from the Water (Moses) said, 'If you put away your wife you must give

her divorce papers.'^d ³²Let me tell you why. Anyone who puts away his wife *without giving her divorce papers* makes her unfaithful when she remarries, unless she was unfaithful already. Then anyone who marries her is having sexual relations with another man's wife."

In those days men would "put away" their wives without divorcing them, leaving them destitute and unable to properly remarry.

NO SOLEMN PROMISES

³³"You have heard the ancestors were told, 'When you make a solemn promise, you must keep it to honor the Great Spirit.'^e ³⁴But I say this to you, do not make any solemn promises. Do not say, 'I promise by the spirit-world above,' for it is Creator's seat of honor, ³⁵or 'I promise by the earth below,' which is the resting place for his feet. Or 'I promise by Village of Peace (Jerusalem),' for it belongs to the Great Spirit Chief. ³⁶Do not even say, 'I promise by my own head.' Can you make even one hair on your head become white or black? ³⁷Your simple 'yes' or 'no' is enough. To say more is to speak with a forked tongue like the evil trickster snake."

EYE FOR AN EYE?

³⁸"You have also been told, 'Take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'^f ³⁹But I tell you, do not fight back. *Violence will not be defeated by more of the same.* If someone strikes the right side of your face, turn to him the other side also. ⁴⁰If someone takes you to the tribal council for your shirt, give him your vest also. ⁴¹If anyone, *even a soldier of the People of*

^a5:26 Lit. *until the debt is paid in full*

^b5:27 Exodus 20:14

^c5:29, 30 Lit. *offends you*

^d5:31 Deuteronomy 24:1

^e5:33 Leviticus 19:12

^f5:38 Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20

Iron (Romans), forces you to carry his bundle one mile, *show the strength of your heart and* carry it two. ⁴²Give to the one who asks for help, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

⁴³You have been told to love only your own people and to despise others as your enemy.^a ⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵But I tell you, treat your enemies with love and respect, and send up good prayers for the ones who make trouble for you and bring you pain. This will show that you are mature children of your Father from above, who sends his blessing of rain on the ones who do right and the ones who do wrong.

⁴⁶“If you love and show respect only to the ones who do the same, how does that bring honor to you? Even tribal tax collectors do these things. ⁴⁷If you welcome only friends, how are you different from others? Even outsiders from other nations do these things.

⁴⁸“By loving and blessing all people, you will be walking in the footsteps of your Father from the spirit-world above, who is perfect in all his ways.

6



THE WAY TO DO GOOD

¹“Beware of doing good just so people can see you, for then you will receive no honor from your Father from above, *who is the Creator*. ²When you give gifts to the poor and do good things for others, do not brag about it on the village pathways or in the gathering houses, like those who put on a false face, pre-

tending to be something they are not. The truth is, they honor only themselves and they will get nothing more.

³⁻⁴“But when you help others who are in need, do it in secret. Do not even tell your left hand what your right hand is doing. Then your Father who sees all things will honor you.

THE WAY TO PRAY

⁵“When you send your voice to the Great Spirit, do not be like the ones who love to stand up and pray with a loud voice in the gathering houses and along the village pathways, hoping to be seen and heard by others. The truth is, they have their honor already. They will get no more. ⁶Instead, find a quiet hiding place where no one can see or hear you and send your prayers to your Father in secret. He will see what you have done and honor you.

⁷⁻⁸“When you pray, do not be like the people from the Outside Nations, who use empty words over and over again, thinking their many words will help them be heard. Your Father, the Creator, already knows what you need even before you ask.

⁹“Instead, when you send your voice to the Great Spirit, here is how you should pray:

“O Great Spirit, our Father from above, we honor your name as sacred and holy.

¹⁰“Bring your good road to us, where the beauty of your ways in the spirit-world above is reflected in the earth below.

¹¹“Provide for us day by day—the elk, the buffalo, and the salmon. The corn, the squash, and the wild rice. All the things we need for each day.

¹²“Release us from the things we have done wrong, in the same way we release others for the things done wrong to us.

^a5:43 Leviticus 19:18

Luke 1

SHINING LIGHT TELLS THE GOOD STORY

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1

EYEWITNESSES

¹⁻³O most honored Friend of Creator (Theophilus), many have told this story, given to them from those who saw these things with their own eyes, the ones who first walked out this message to hand it down to us.

Having searched out this story from the first, it seemed like a good thing for me to retell it from beginning to end. ⁴In this way you will know for yourself the truth about the things you were taught.

CREATOR REMEMBERS HIS PROMISE

⁵It was in the time of *the bad-hearted* Chief Looks Brave (Herod), who ruled the territory of the Land of Promise (Judea), that Creator chose to send a powerful spirit-messenger to Sacred Village of Peace (Jerusalem), to a holy man whose name was Creator Will Remember (Zechariah).

He and his wife, Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth), were both descended from the tribe the ceremonial holy people are chosen from. ⁶They were in good standing in the eyes of the Great Spirit, and with good and pure hearts they walked a straight path, staying true to the tribal ways and traditions given them by the Great Spirit.

They lived in the hill country in the Land of Promise (Judea) of the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel).

⁷But Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth) was unable to have children, and both were growing old.

⁸Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) belonged to the clan of He Is My Father (Abijah), which shared the responsibility of prayers and ceremonies in the Great Spirit's ceremonial lodge that was in Village of Peace (Jerusalem).

⁹He was chosen in the traditional way to be the one to enter the sacred lodge and perform the sweet-smelling smoke ceremony for the evening prayer.

Most holy men could only hope for this honor once in a lifetime.

¹⁰A large number of people gathered outside to pray while he went inside.

¹¹As the smoke went up with his prayers, suddenly a spirit-messenger from the Great Spirit appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of sweet-smelling smoke. ¹²Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) was troubled when he saw the spirit-messenger. He trembled with fear that covered him like a blanket.

¹³"Do not fear!" the messenger said to him. "Your prayers have been heard. The Maker of Life will give you and your wife a son. You will give him the name Gift of Goodwill (John). ¹⁴He will bring great joy to you, and many people will be glad that he has been born."

The aroma of the sweet-smelling smoke filled the sacred lodge as the spirit-messenger continued.

¹⁵“He will be great and honorable in Creator’s sight and will not drink wine or any strong drink, but will drink deeply of the Holy Spirit even in his mother’s womb. ¹⁶Because of him many of the children of the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) will *find the good road and return to the Great Spirit and his ways.*”

Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) stood silently. His whole being continued to tremble as the messenger finished.

¹⁷“He will prepare the way for the Chosen One, walking in the same spiritual powers of the prophet Great Spirit Is Creator (Elijah). He will turn the hearts of many fathers back toward their children, and many rebellious children will again honor the wisdom of their elders, so that people will be ready to participate in Creator’s plan.”^a

When the spirit-messenger finished speaking, his words echoed through the lodge. Still trembling, Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) finally found his voice.

¹⁸Then he questioned the messenger, “We are too old to have children. How can I believe you?”

¹⁹The spirit-messenger answered, “My name is Creator’s Mighty One (Gabriel), *his chief messenger*. I stand close to the Great Spirit! These good words I have spoken to you will come to pass, ²⁰but since you did not believe my words, you will not be able to speak until they are fulfilled.”

²¹The people who were praying outside began to wonder why it was taking so long for Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) to come out of the lodge. ²²When he finally came out, unable to

speak and making signs with his hands, they understood that he had seen a vision.

²³When his traditional ceremonies were finished, he returned to his home in the hill country. ²⁴Soon afterward, Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth) was with child. She stayed at home and for five moons did not show herself to anyone.

²⁵She said in her heart, “The Giver of Breath has looked upon me with kindness and has taken away my shame. Now I will have respect in the eyes of my people.”

BITTER TEARS

²⁶When six moons had passed, the Great Spirit sent the same spirit-messenger, Creator’s Mighty One (Gabriel), to another small, out-of-the-way place in the hill country called Seed Planter Village (Nazareth). ²⁷There he appeared to a young virgin woman named Bitter Tears (Mary), who was promised in marriage to a man named He Gives Sons (Joseph), a descendant of the great chief Much Loved One (David).

²⁸Creator’s Mighty One (Gabriel) said to her, “Greetings, highly favored one! You are close to the Great Spirit and greatly honored among women.”

²⁹Bitter Tears (Mary) was deeply troubled by this greeting and wondered what the spirit-messenger would say.

³⁰“Do not fear,” he comforted her, “for you have found goodwill in the eyes of the Great Mystery. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son. You will name him Creator Sets Free (Jesus).”

It seemed like time stood still, and all creation stopped to listen as the messenger continued to speak.

³²“He will be greatly honored, the Son of the One Above Us All. He will be a

great chief like his ancestor Much Loved One (David) and will sit in his seat of honor. ³³He will always be chief over the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel). His chiefly guidance will never end.”

Bitter Tears's (Mary's) voice trembled with emotion, and her eyes grew wide as she looked into the face of the spirit-messenger.

³⁴She asked, “How will this be, since I have never been with a man?”

³⁵Creator’s Mighty One (Gabriel) answered, “The Holy Spirit will spread his wings over you, and his great power from above will overshadow you. This holy child born to you will be the Son of the One Above Us All.”

Then, to encourage her, ³⁶he said, “Your cousin Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth), who was called barren one, is six moons with child. ³⁷*See!* There is nothing too hard for the Great Spirit.”

She looked bravely into the face of the messenger.

³⁸“I am Creator’s servant,” she said with boldness. “Let it be for me just as you have said.”

Then Creator’s chief spirit-messenger left her.

COUSINS

³⁹Bitter Tears (Mary) quickly put together a traveling bundle and went to visit her cousin Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth), who lived in a nearby village in the hill country of the Land of Promise (Judea) ⁴⁰When she entered the home of her relatives, she greeted her cousin.

⁴¹When Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth) heard Bitter Tears’s (Mary’s) greeting, she felt her child jump inside her. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴²and with a loud cry she lifted her voice

and spoke these blessing words to Bitter Tears (Mary).

“The Most Holy One has honored you more than any other woman,” she laughed. “The child you carry inside you will bring great blessings to all people. ⁴³Why is Creator being so kind to me, sending the mother of the Great Chief to visit my home? ⁴⁴As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby jumped for joy inside me! ⁴⁵You have been chosen by the Maker of Life for a great honor, because you believed his words to you.”

THE SONG OF BITTER TEARS

When Bitter Tears (Mary) heard this, she was filled with gladness, and her words flowed out like a song.

⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷“From deep in my heart I dance with joy to honor the Great Spirit. ⁴⁸Even though I am small and weak, he noticed me. Now I will be looked up to by all. ⁴⁹The Mighty One has lifted me up! His name is sacred. He is the Great and Holy One.”

Her face seemed to shine as she continued.

⁵⁰“He shows kindness and pity to both children and elders who respect him. ⁵¹His strong arm has brought low the ones who think they are better than others. ⁵²He counts coup^a with arrogant warrior chiefs but puts a headdress of honor on the ones with humble hearts.”

She smiled, looked up to the sky, and shouted for joy!

^a1:52 “Counting coup” was a Native American practice among some of the Plains tribes of touching an enemy with a coup stick as an act of courage during battle, to show he could have killed him but chose to spare him instead. Each time the coup stick was used in battle, a mark would be placed on it. It counted the number of victories won.

⁵³“He prepares a great feast for the ones who are hungry, but sends the fat ones home with empty bellies. ⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵He has been kind to the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) who walk in his ways, for he has remembered the ancient promises he made to our ancestors—to Father of Many Nations (Abraham) and his descendants.”

When she finished, they both laughed with joy. With hearts full of gladness they told each other their stories.

⁵⁶For three moons Bitter Tears (Mary) stayed in the home of her cousin and then returned home to her own village.

A PROMISE FULFILLED

⁵⁷When her time came, Creator Is My Promise (Elizabeth) gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸When her relatives and close friends heard the good news that the Great Spirit had been so kind to her, they were glad and rejoiced! ⁵⁹Then, eight days later at his naming ceremony, all the relatives wanted to name him after his father, Creator Will Remember (Zechariah).

According to tribal law, the cutting of the flesh ceremony was performed for all male children on the eighth day. The child's name was also given at that time.

⁶⁰“No,” she said to everyone’s surprise. “His name will be Gift of Goodwill (John)!”

⁶¹But they said to her, “No one in your family has that name.” ⁶²They made signs with their hands to Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) to see what he wanted to name him.

⁶³He asked for a writing tablet and to their surprise wrote, “His name is Gift of Goodwill (John).” ⁶⁴Suddenly he could speak again, and when he opened his

mouth, he began to give praise to the Great Spirit.

⁶⁵All the people who heard about this trembled with wonder. Throughout the hills and valleys of the Land of Promise (Judea), they began to tell others what they had seen and heard. ⁶⁶All who listened began to wonder and say to themselves, “This child must have been born for some great thing.” For it was clear that the hand of the Great Spirit was upon him in a powerful and good way.

⁶⁷Then, with a glad heart, Creator Will Remember (Zechariah) spoke these words the Holy Spirit was giving him to say.

⁶⁸“All blessings to the Great Spirit of the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel)! For he has come to rescue his people from a great captivity. ⁶⁹⁻⁷⁰Just as the prophets foretold long ago in the land of our ancestor Much Loved One (David), he has lifted up his coup stick^a to show his great power to help us, ⁷¹to rescue us from the arrows of our enemies and all who look down upon us with hate.”

He lifted trembling hands to the sky and cried out.

⁷²⁻⁷³“He has given to us the same pity he has shown our ancestors and remembered the promise he made in the great peace treaty with Father of Many Nations (Abraham). ⁷⁴⁻⁷⁵He has come to free us from the fear of our enemies, so we can walk all our days in his sacred and right ways.”

Then he turned to his newborn son, and from deep in his spirit he spoke these words of blessing to him.

^a1:69-70 The coup stick was a stick with an eagle or hawk claw attached to its tip. It was used by some of the tribes of the Plains. A warrior in battle would scratch an enemy with it as an act of courage to show he could have killed him but chose to spare him instead.

⁷⁶“And you, my son, will be a prophet from the One Above Us All. You will make a clear path for the coming of the Great Chief, ⁷⁷to show his people that he will heal our broken ways by cleansing us from our bad hearts and releasing us from our wrongdoings. ⁷⁸Because Creator is kind and gentle, he will come to us as the sunrise from above, ⁷⁹to shine on the ones who sit in darkness and in the land of death’s shadow, to guide our feet on the good path of peace.”

⁸⁰Gift of Goodwill (John) grew strong in *body and spirit* and stayed in the desert, waiting until the time was right to show himself to the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel).

2

HUMBLE BIRTH

¹⁻²When the time drew close for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child, the government of the People of Iron (Romans) ordered that the people be numbered and put on government rolls. This happened during the time that Powerful Protector (Quirinius) was the governor of Bright Sun (Syria). ³All the Tribal Members were required to travel to their own ancestral village to register.

⁴⁻⁵He Gives Sons (Joseph) and Bitter Tears (Mary) set out on a long journey from Seed Planter Village (Nazareth) in Circle of Nations (Galilee), to House of Bread (Bethlehem) in the Land of Promise (Judea), the village of their ancestor, the great chief Much Loved One (David).

The journey took several long days and cold nights as they traveled over high hills and through the dry desert. When they arrived, tired and weary, they entered the crowded village.

⁶The time for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child was upon her! ⁷But no place could be found in the lodging house, so *He Gives Sons (Joseph) found a sheep cave where it was warm and dry*. There she gave birth to her son. They wrapped him in a soft, warm blanket *and laid him on a baby board*. Then they placed him on a bed of straw in a feeding trough.

⁸That night, in the fields nearby, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. ⁹Suddenly a great light from above was shining all around them. A spirit-messenger from Creator appeared to them. They shook with fear and trembled ¹⁰as the messenger said to them, “Do not fear! I bring you the good story that will be told to all nations. ¹¹Today in the village of Much Loved One (David) an Honored Chief has been born who will set his people free. He is the Chosen One!”

¹²The spirit-messenger continued, “This is how you will know him—you will find the child wrapped in a blanket and lying in a feeding trough.”

¹³Suddenly, next to the messenger, a great number of spirit-warriors from the spirit-world above appeared giving thanks to Creator, saying, ¹⁴“All honor to the One Above Us All, and let peace and good will follow all who walk upon the earth.”

¹⁵When the messengers returned to the spirit-world above, the shepherds said to each other, “Let us go and see this great thing Creator has told to us.” ¹⁶So they hurried to the village of Chief Much Loved One (David) and found Bitter Tears (Mary), He Gives Sons (Joseph), and the child, who, just as they were told, was lying in a feeding trough!

¹⁷The shepherds began to tell everyone what they had seen and heard about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard their story were amazed.

John 3

was here that other nations could come to learn about the Great Spirit and his ways.

¹⁴As Creator Sets Free (Jesus) entered the lodge, he saw people sitting at money tables. There were also others who were trading, buying, and selling the cattle, sheep, and doves for the ceremonies—inside the lodge!

SACRED LODGE KEEPER

It was so crowded that there was no room for the people from other nations who had come to learn about the Great Spirit. They were not honoring the purpose of this holy place.

¹⁵So Creator Sets Free (Jesus) took some leather straps and made a whip. He cracked the whip *to startle and move the animals, and to drive all the people from the lodge.* He tipped over the tables, which scattered their money on the floor. ¹⁶He then turned to speak to the ones who were selling the ceremonial doves.

“Go!” he roared at them. “Take these things out from here. Do not make my Father’s sacred lodge into a trading post!”

¹⁷The ones who walked the road with him listened and remembered the ancient prophecy, “My desire to honor your sacred lodge burns like a fire in my belly.”^a

¹⁸“What gives you the right to do these things?” the tribal leaders said to him. “Prove yourself and show us a sign!”

¹⁹“Tear down this sacred lodge,” he answered, “and in three days I will raise it up again.”

²⁰The people *shook their heads and* said to him, “It took forty-six winters to build this great lodge. How could you raise it up in three days?”

²¹They did not understand that he was speaking about the lodge of his own body. ²²After he was raised up from the dead, his followers remembered what he said and then believed the ancient Sacred Teachings and the words he spoke to them.

²³During the Passover festival many people began to believe in him because they saw the powerful miracles he was performing. ²⁴But he did not trust himself to them, for he could see right through them. ²⁵He did not need anyone to tell him about human beings, for he knew the hearts of humankind.

3

BORN FROM ABOVE

¹⁻²A man named Conquers the People (Nicodemus) came to Creator Sets Free (Jesus) in secret at night. He was one of the Separated Ones (Pharisees) and a headman of the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) who sat in the Great Council.

Out of the shadows he whispered, “Wisdomkeeper, we know the Great Spirit sent you to teach us. No one can perform powerful signs like these unless the Maker of Life walks with him.”

³“I speak from my heart,” Creator Sets Free (Jesus) answered, “Only one who has been born from above can see Creator’s good road.”

⁴Conquers the People (Nicodemus) *was surprised by this strange answer, so he* asked, “Can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother’s womb to be born a second time?”

⁵“Listen closely,” Creator Sets Free (Jesus) answered. “One must be born of both water and spirit to walk Creator’s good road. ⁶The human body only gives

^a2:17 Psalm 69:9

birth to natural life, but it takes the Spirit of Creator to give birth to spiritual life.^a ⁷Do not be surprised that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸Everyone born in this way is like the wind that blows wherever it wants. You can hear its sound, but no one knows where it comes from or where it goes.”

⁹“How can these things be?” Conquers the People (Nicodemus) asked.

Creator Sets Free (Jesus) looked gently but firmly into his eyes and continued.

¹⁰“How can it be that a wisdomkeeper and spiritual leader of the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) does not understand these things? ¹¹⁻¹²Listen closely, for you fail to hear what we are talking about. We are speaking about things we know to be true, but if you do not believe me when I talk about things on earth, how will you believe me when I talk about the things from the spirit-world above? ¹³For there is only one who has gone up and come down from the world above—the True Human Being.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵“*Do you not remember when Drawn from the Water (Moses) lifted up a pole with a snake on it in the desert wilderness?*^b This is what will happen to the True Human Being, so people will put their trust in him and have the life of the world to come that never fades away, full of beauty and harmony.”

Long ago, when the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) were wandering in the desert, they did not listen to the Great Spirit. Poisonous snakes came and bit them, and many were dying. Drawn from the Water (Moses) prayed for them, so Creator told him to put a snake on a pole and lift it up so

the people could see it. When they looked at it, they were healed and did not die.

Conquers the People (Nicodemus) remained silent, listening to the words of Creator Sets Free (Jesus).

¹⁶“The Great Spirit loves this world of human beings so deeply he gave us his Son—the only Son who fully represents him. All who trust in him and his way will not come to a bad end, but will have the life of the world to come that never fades away, full of beauty and harmony. ¹⁷Creator did not send his Son to decide against the *people of this world*, but to set them free from *the worthless ways of the world*.

¹⁸“The ones who trust in him are released from their guilt, but, for the ones who turn away from him *to follow the ways of this world*, their guilt remains. This is because they are turning away from the life of beauty and harmony the Great Spirit offers through his Son.

¹⁹“This is what decides for or against them. My light has shined into this dark world, but because of their worthless ways people loved the dark path more than the light. ²⁰When they choose the dark path, they do not want others to see, so they hide in the darkness and hate the light. ²¹But the ones who are true and do what is right are walking in the daylight so others can clearly see they are walking with Creator.”

GIFT OF GOODWILL STEPS BACK

²²Creator Sets Free (Jesus) and the ones who walked the road with him went to the nearby countryside in the Land of Promise (Judea). They stayed there and began to perform the purification ceremony^c as the people came to the river.

^a3:6 Or more literally: *Flesh gives birth to flesh, and spirit to spirit*

^b3:14-15 Exodus 21:9

^c3:22 baptism

²³*About a two-day walk to the north, Gift of Goodwill (John) was also performing the purification ceremony,^a at Spring of Water (Aenon), near Peaceful Village (Salem), where there was much water. ²⁴This was before Gift of Goodwill (John) had been put in prison.*

²⁵Some of the followers of Gift of Goodwill (John) began to argue with a local Tribal Member about the purification ceremony.^b ²⁶They took their argument to Gift of Goodwill (John).

“Wisdomkeeper,” they said to him, “the one you told us about at the river Flowing Down (Jordan) is performing the purification ceremony.^c All of the people are going to him now.”

²⁷“No one has anything,” Gift of Goodwill (John) answered, “unless it is gifted from the spirit-world above. ²⁸You heard me say, ‘I am not the Chosen One.’ I was sent to clear the way for him. ²⁹The bride at a wedding belongs to the groom, and like the best man, a friend who stands with the groom, I am glad to hear his voice. ³⁰But it is time for me to step back and for him to come forward into his place of honor. My part is fading away.

³¹⁻³²“The one who is greater than all speaks from the spirit-world above. The one who is from the earth speaks only about earthly things. The one from above speaks about the things he has seen and heard, but who believes him? ³³But I am one who receives his words, and I know for sure that the Great Spirit approves of all he says and does.

³⁴“The one whom Creator sent is the one who has all the fullness of Creator’s Spirit and clearly speaks his words. ³⁵The

Father above loves his Son and gives him all things.

³⁶“The ones who trust in his Son have the life of the world to come, which does not fade away, but the ones who do not walk in his ways will not have this life. Instead, they will remain *under the power of death*, which reveals Creator’s great anger.”

4

LIVING WATER

Many people were now coming to Creator Sets Free (Jesus) at the river Flowing Down (Jordan) for the purification ceremony.

¹⁻³Creator Sets Free (Jesus) was gathering more followers for the purification ceremony^d than Gift of Goodwill (John), although it was not he but his followers who were performing the ceremony. When Creator Sets Free (Jesus) found out that the Separated Ones (Pharisees) knew of this, ⁴he left the Land of Promise (Judea) to return to Circle of Nations (Galilee). On the way he had to journey through the territory of High Place (Samaria).

Many of the people from High Place (Samaria) were mixed bloods and despised by the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel). They had their own sacred lodge and ceremonies, and did not respect the Tribal Members or consider Village of Peace (Jerusalem) to be a holy place. Both of them would go out of their way to keep from having contact with the other.

The sun was beating down from high above the head of Creator Sets Free (Jesus) as he journeyed through High Place (Samaria).

^a3:23 baptism

^b3:25 baptism

^c3:26 baptism

^d4:1-3 baptism

Romans 12

through the eyes of the ancestors, they are greatly loved because Creator chose them for his good purposes. ²⁹For the Great Spirit will never take back his calling and gifts once he has given them.

³⁰Here is another way to see what I am saying: In the past you Outside Nations said no to these ways of the Great Spirit. But now, because the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) have said no to Creator's good story, you have said yes to it, and received the mercy they turned away from. ³¹Since they have also failed the Great Spirit, they can now receive mercy from him in the same way you have. ³²Creator has rounded up into one corral all who have failed to do what he wants, so that he can show his great kindness and mercy to everyone.

GIVING HONOR TO THE GREAT MYSTERY

³³O how deep are the treasures of both the wisdom and knowledge held by the Great Mystery!^a His decisions go far beyond our weak ways of thinking! ³⁴“For who has understood the thoughts of the Great Spirit? Who has given him counsel?”^b ³⁵“Who could give him a gift that would require a gift in return?”^c

³⁶For from him all things come, by him all things exist, and in him all things find their true meaning and purpose. All honor belongs to him, both now and in the world to come, to the time beyond the end of all days. Aho! May it be so!

12

BECOMING A TRUE HUMAN BEING

¹So then, my sacred family members, because Creator has shown us such mercy

^a11:33 Job 11:7

^b11:34 Isaiah 40:13

^c11:35 Job 41:11

and kindness, I now call on you to offer your whole beings, heart, mind, and strength, to the Great Spirit as a living sacrifice. Do this in a sacred and spiritual manner that will make his heart glad.

²Do not permit the ways of this world to mold and shape you. Instead, let Creator change you from the inside out, *in the way a caterpillar becomes a butterfly*. He will do this by giving you a new way of thinking, seeing, and walking. Then you will know for sure what the Great Spirit wants for you, things that are good, that make the heart glad, and that help you to walk the path of becoming a mature and true human being.

WISDOM FROM SMALL MAN

³Because Creator, in his great kindness, has made me a message bearer,^d I give this message to each of you. Do not think too highly of yourself. Instead, understand that the Great Spirit calls us to different purposes in answer to our trust in him. ⁴For just as our bodies have many members and each member has a different purpose, ⁵it is the same way with the body of the Chosen One. We are members of his body, and each member belongs to all the others.

USE YOUR GIFTS IN A GOOD WAY

⁶Creator's gift of great kindness has been poured out on us in many ways, giving us different kinds of gifts. If your gift is to speak the heart and mind of the Great Spirit in a prophecy, then let trust guide your words. ⁷If your gift is helping others, then give yourself to help others. If teaching is your gift, teach well. ⁸If your gift is to speak courage and strengthen the hearts of others, then speak bravely.

^d12:3 Romans 1:5

1 Corinthians 13

parts of the body do not need this kind of treatment. So the Great Spirit has put the body together in a way that gives more honor to the parts that need it the most. ²⁵*This makes it clear that Creator's purpose is to keep the body of the Chosen One from division. It shows each of us how much we need each other.*

²⁶If one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts. If one part of the body is honored, the whole body celebrates. ²⁷So then, *together* you all form the body of the Chosen One, and each one of you has a place in that body.

²⁸The Great Spirit has set in place those members of his body that he has gifted to care for his sacred family.^a He set in place first message bearers, second prophets, and third wisdomkeepers who teach. After that comes some with miraculous powers, some with healing gifts, some who help and serve, some who bring guidance, and some who have the gift of speaking in other languages.

²⁹Can you see that not all are message bearers, or prophets, or wisdomkeepers? That not all have miraculous powers, ³⁰or healing gifts, or the gift of speaking in other languages, or interpreting those languages?

³¹I want you to set your hearts on the chief gifts, *the ones that will bring the greatest blessing to the sacred family.*

Now I will show you the most beautiful path of all.

13

THE WAY OF LOVE

¹I may have the gift of speaking in both the languages of human beings and of

spirit-messengers, but if I fail to love, my words become like the screech of a cat or the yelping of a wild dog.^b

²I may have prophetic powers and the ability to see into sacred mysteries and understand all things. I might even have faith strong enough to make mountains move. But if I fail to love, I am nothing.

³I may give all my possessions to the poor and give my body to be burned as a sacrifice, but if I fail to love, I have gained no honor.

⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is never jealous. It does not brag or boast. It is not puffed up or big-headed. ⁵Love does not act in shameful ways, nor does it care only about itself. It is not hot-headed, nor does it keep track of wrongs *done to it*. ⁶Love is not happy with lies and injustice, but truth makes its heart glad. ⁷Love keeps walking even when carrying a heavy load. Love keeps trusting, never loses hope, and stands firm in hard times. ⁸The road of love has no end.

The time will come when prophets are no longer needed, when people will stop speaking in unknown languages, and when the need for knowledge will fade away. ⁹For we only know some of the story and can only prophesy small parts of it, ¹⁰but the time is coming when we will know the whole story from beginning to end.

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, and I saw through the eyes of a child. But when I became fully grown, I put my childish ways behind me. ¹²For now, it is as if we are looking at a poor reflection *in muddy water*, but then we will see face to face. For now, my knowledge is full of holes,

^a12:28 Ephesians 4:11-13

^b13:1 Lit. *like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal*

but when that time comes, I will know *the Great Spirit* as well as I am known *by him*.

¹³But until then, these three remain—faith, hope, and love—and love is the greatest!

14

GUIDANCE FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTINGS

¹Above all other things, make love your aim. Keep the desire for spiritual gifts burning in your hearts, but most of all for the gift of prophecy. ²*Prophesying is better than speaking in unknown languages, because* the ones who speak in unknown languages do not speak to human beings, but to the Great Spirit. No one understands them, for they speak mysteries in the Spirit.

³On the other hand, the ones who prophesy speak to human beings *in a language they understand*. They speak words that give strength, courage, and comfort. ⁴The ones who speak in unknown languages give strength only to themselves, but those who prophesy give strength to the whole sacred family gathering.

⁵It is my desire that all of you would speak in unknown languages, and even more that you would prophesy. Now, the ones who prophesy do a greater thing than the ones who speak in unknown languages, unless someone explains the meaning of what is said. Then the sacred family would be strengthened.

⁶So then, my sacred family members, what if I came to you speaking only in unknown languages? What good would it do you? For unless my words reveal something new, or give deeper understanding, or speak a prophecy, or bring forth a teaching, you will learn nothing.

⁷Some things such as drums or flutes, even though they have no *human* life, must make sounds that have the right beats or tones, or no one will know what they are hearing. ⁸If an eagle bone whistle^a is not sounded in the right way, who will prepare for battle? ⁹In the same manner, if you speak in an unknown language, how will the hearers know what is being said? The sound of your voice will be lost in the wind. ¹⁰A great number of languages are spoken throughout this world, and all tribes understand their own language. ¹¹If I do not speak the language of a tribe, they will not know my language and I will not know theirs. Our languages will sound strange to each other.

¹²Here is what I am saying to you: since you have such a strong desire for spiritual powers, desire those powers that will help the sacred family grow stronger. ¹³So the one who speaks in an unknown language should pray for the power to interpret its meaning for others.

¹⁴Now, if I pray in an unknown language, I am praying with my spirit and not in a language my mind understands. ¹⁵So what is the right thing to do? I will pray with my spirit and also with my mind. In the same manner, I will sing with my spirit *in unknown words* and with words I understand. ¹⁶So then, if you only give thanks *in an unknown language*, speaking with your spirit, then how could someone who does not understand say “Aho! May it be so” at your prayer of giving thanks? ¹⁷For you may be praying in a good way, but it does not help others to grow *spiritually* strong.

^a14:8 Lit. *trumpet*, or in Hebrew *shofar*, meaning “ram’s horn”

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stone.^a A rainbow that looked crystal green^b encircled the seat of honor.

⁴Encircling the seat of honor were twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four seats of honor. They wore pure white regalia and golden headdresses.

THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF THE GREAT MYSTERY

⁵From the seat of honor came flashes of lightning and rolling thunder. There were seven torches of fire burning before the seat of honor, which are the seven spirits of the Great Mystery. ⁶Before the seat of honor there was what looked like a great sea, smooth and crystal clear.

Four living *spirit* animals, with eyes in the front and back, closely encircled the seat of honor.

THE SPIRIT ANIMALS ARE REVEALED

⁷The first *spirit* animal was like a lion. The second *spirit* animal was like a young bison. The third *spirit* animal had the face of a human being. And the fourth *spirit* animal was like a soaring eagle.

⁸These four *spirit* animals each had six wings and were covered with eyes all around and even under their wings. Day and night they never stop saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the all-powerful Great Spirit, One Who Is and Was and Is to Come!”

⁹⁻¹⁰The *spirit* animals give shining-greatness and honor and thanks to the one who sits in the seat of honor, all to the one who lived before all days and lives beyond the end of all days. Then the twenty-four elders humble themselves, remove their headdresses, and offer them to the one who sits on the seat of honor.

¹¹“All honor belongs to you, O Great Spirit Chief,” the twenty-four elders say

^a4:3 Lit. *jasper and carnelian*, which are crystalline jewels. Carnelian is clear and sometimes has a red cast. Jasper is red.

^b4:3 Lit. *like an emerald*, a clear, green-colored jewel

with one voice. “For you are the one who made everything there is. It is from your sacred vision that all things came into being and were created!”

5

A SCROLL WITH SEVEN SEALS

¹In my sacred vision, I then saw a scroll resting on the right hand of the one sitting on the seat of honor. The scroll was sealed with seven seals, and full of words inside and out.

²Then I saw a powerful spirit-messenger with a thundering voice saying for all to hear, “Who has gained the honor to take the scroll and break open its seven seals?”

³But no one in the spirit-world above or on the earth below or under the earth was able to open the scroll or see what was inside. ⁴Many tears ran down my face as I wept and cried because there was no one who had gained the honor to open the scroll and look inside.

THE LION WHO IS THE LAMB

⁵But one of the elders *came to me*. “Do not weep!” he said. “Look, there is the Lion from the tribe of Give Him Praise (Judah), *the one who has sprouted from the Root of Much Loved One* (David). He has won the victory and gained the honor to take the scroll and break open its seven seals.”

⁶Then I looked and saw a Lamb that looked as if he had been violently killed standing in the center near the seat of honor. He stood encircled by the four living *spirit* animals and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes. These are the seven spirits of Creator that he has sent out into all the earth.

⁷Then the Lamb stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who sat in the seat of honor. ⁸And when he took the scroll, the four living *spirit* animals and the twenty-four elders all humbled themselves before the Lamb to honor him. They each held a stringed musical instrument and a golden smudge bowl full of sweet-smelling smoke, which are the prayers of Creator's holy people.

A NEW SONG FOR THE LAMB

⁹Then they sang a new song with these words:

“To you belongs the honor to take hold of the *sacred* scroll and break open its seven seals, for you died as a lamb led to the slaughter. You paid the highest price by offering your lifeblood to bring people back to the Great Spirit from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them chiefs of a sacred nation of holy men and women who will give guidance to all the earth as they represent the good road of the Great Spirit.”

SPIRIT-MESSENGERS HONOR THE LAMB

¹¹Then I heard the sound of countless numbers of spirit-messengers, thousands upon thousands of them, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They made a grand circle around the seat of honor, the *spirit* animals, and the elders.

¹²With one thunderous voice, they sang, “The Lamb that was violently killed has been honored with power, riches, wisdom, chiefly rule, respect, blessing, greatness, and praise!”

¹³Then I heard all of creation, those in the spirit-world above, on the earth below, under the earth, and in the sea of great waters.

They were singing, “All blessing, respect, honor, and chiefly rule belong to

the one who sits on the seat of honor and to the Lamb, to the time beyond the end of all days!”

¹⁴Then the four *spirit* animals said, “Aho! May it be so!” And the elders humbled themselves before the Great Spirit and before the Lamb to give them the honor they deserved.

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A WHITE HORSE AND ITS RIDER

¹I watched as the Lamb broke open the first of the seven seals. Then I heard the first of the four *spirit* animals speak.

“Come forth!” it said with a voice of thunder.

²And when I looked, I saw a white horse with its rider holding a bow. He was given a headdress, and he rode out as a conqueror to conquer again.

A RED HORSE AND ITS RIDER

³When the Lamb broke open the second seal, I heard the voice of the second *spirit* animal.

“Come forth!” it said.

⁴Another horse came forth—fiery red. Its rider was permitted to take away peace from the land, so that war and violence would break out among the people. And he was given a great and powerful long knife.

A BLACK HORSE AND ITS RIDER

⁵When the Lamb broke open the third seal, I heard the voice of the third *spirit* animal.

“Come forth!” it said.

I looked, and there before me was a black horse. Its rider had balancing scales in his hand.

⁶From the center of the four *spirit* animals, I heard a sound like a voice.