

God's Unfailing Promise:
Biblical Theology Summarized

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Dedicated to Faith and Grace Carlson

May this book strengthen your faith, and help you to see God's purposes in history and how you fit into God's incredible plan for you, and for this world. God does have a purpose for all that we see, and has revealed that purpose to us in His Word.

Jesus loves you, and I love you ... more than words could ever say.

God loves you so much. He has a plan for you, and a plan for the world from before the beginning of time.



God has always existed, and always will. God is eternal and everlasting. He is the great I AM. (Exodus 3:14)



God is not created, has always existed, and reveals Himself to us in His word, and in creation.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God spoke creation into existence where nothing had existed before. God created everything in six literal 24 hour days, and He rested on the seventh day. God looked at his creation, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:1 – Genesis 2:3)



Part of God's creation: the sun, plants, and a waterfall.

On the sixth day God created the first man, Adam. Using one of Adam's ribs God also created the first woman, Eve. God created them male and female as companions for each other. They lived in a garden that God had prepared for them named the Garden of Eden. They walked with God in the garden every day and they worked taking care of the garden. God allowed Adam and Eve to eat from every tree and plant in the garden except for one. They were forbidden to eat from one tree known as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:4 – Genesis 2:25)



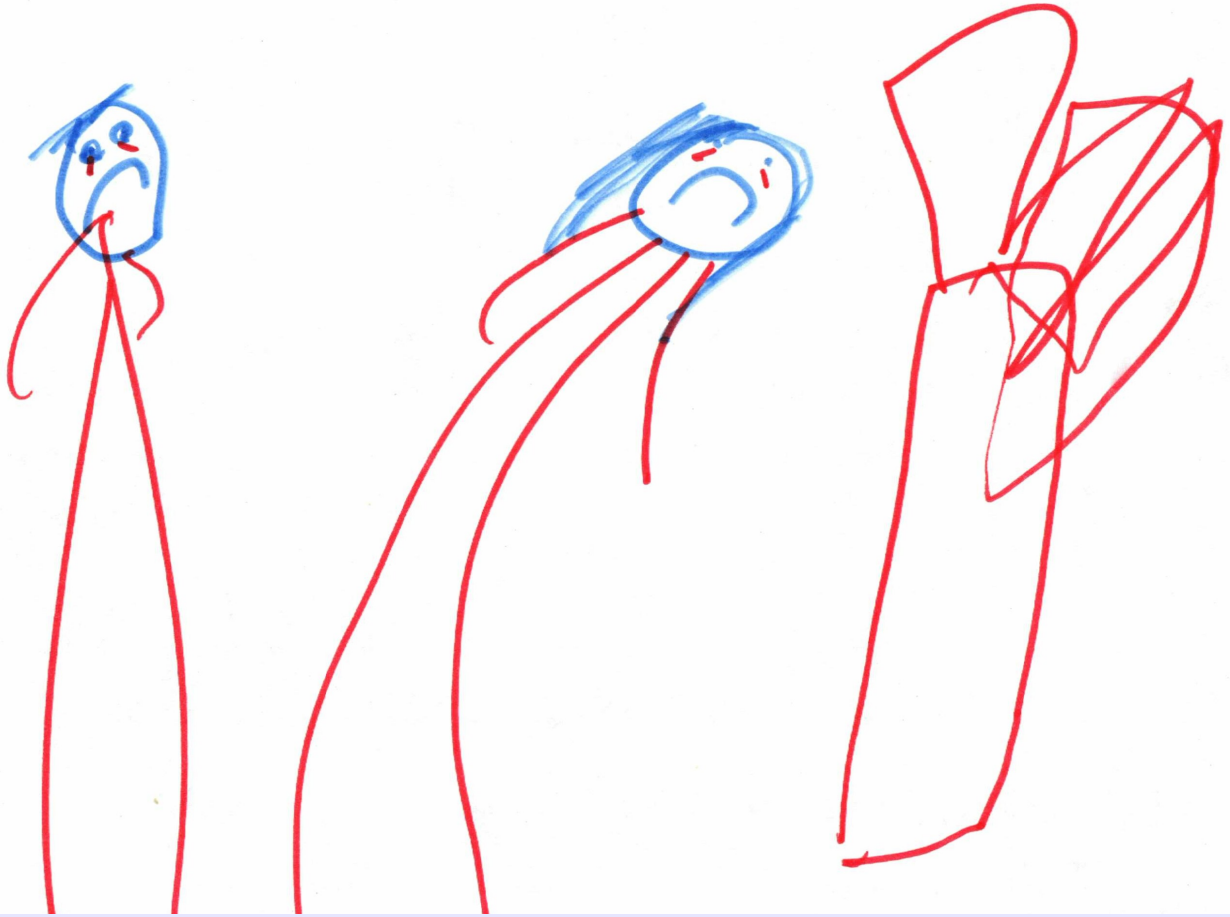
Adam naming the animals, including elephants and tigers.

There was a serpent that also lived in the garden. The serpent deceived Eve into eating from the tree that God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat from. Adam joined Eve in disobeying God and also ate from the forbidden tree. After they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve knew that they had sinned by disobeying God and they were ashamed. (Genesis 3:1-7)



Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent, disobeyed God, and ate from the tree they were commanded by God not to eat from.

As a consequence of their sin, Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. Creation was cursed. Death, evil, suffering, and decay entered into the world as a consequence of Adam and Eve's sin. But, not all hope was lost. God had a plan for redemption and promised that one day a child of Eve would crush the head of the serpent, while the serpent would injure that child on the heel. (Genesis 3:15) This is the first hint God gives us to His remarkable plan to redeem creation from our sin, through a coming descendant of Eve. (Genesis 3:1-24)



Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden as a consequence of their sin.

Adam and Eve's descendants filled the world, and the world was full of sin and evil. There was only one man God saw as righteous. His name was Noah. God warned Noah that He was going to judge the world with a flood, and that Noah should build an ark, and use it to save his family and “kinds” (roughly equivalent to family in modern taxonomic classification) of animals from the coming judgment. (Genesis 6:1–7:9)



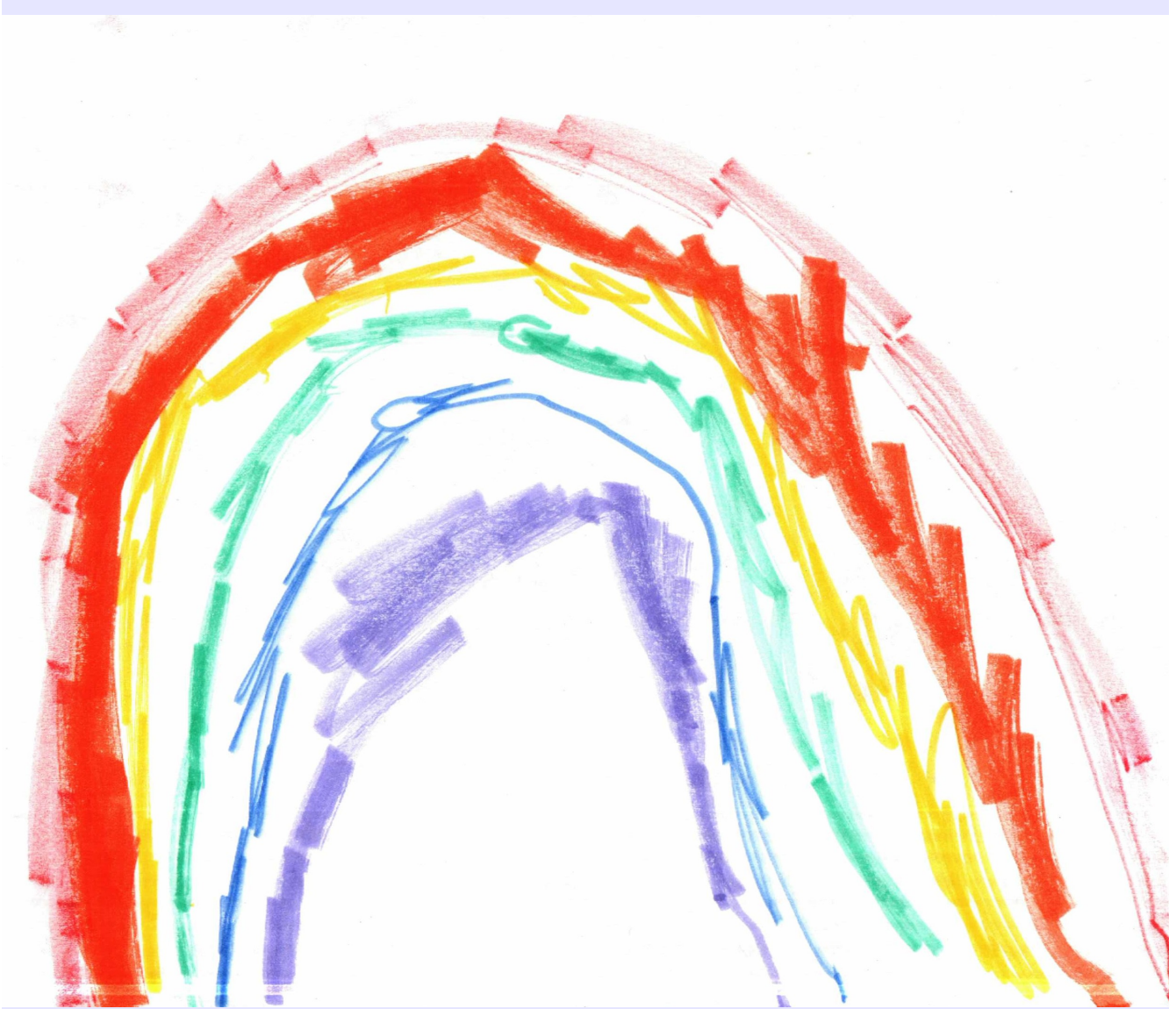
Noah was obedient to God's plans, and built an ark.

God flooded the earth in judgment of humankind's wickedness. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and the fountains of the deep were opened flooding the earth. The whole earth was flooded so that even the tallest mountains were under water. God saved Noah, and every kind of animal using the ark. God remembered His promise to Eve and did not wipe out all of creation in judgment. God kept Noah's family alive so that a descendant of Eve would one day be able to fulfill the promise and crush the serpent's head. (Genesis 7:10 – Genesis 8:22)



Noah and his family were saved from the flood aboard the ark.

God promised that never again would He flood the entire earth in judgment of man's sin. God gave us the rainbow as an eternal sign of the unconditional covenant that God made with Noah that the earth will not be judged in this way again. (Genesis 9:9-17)



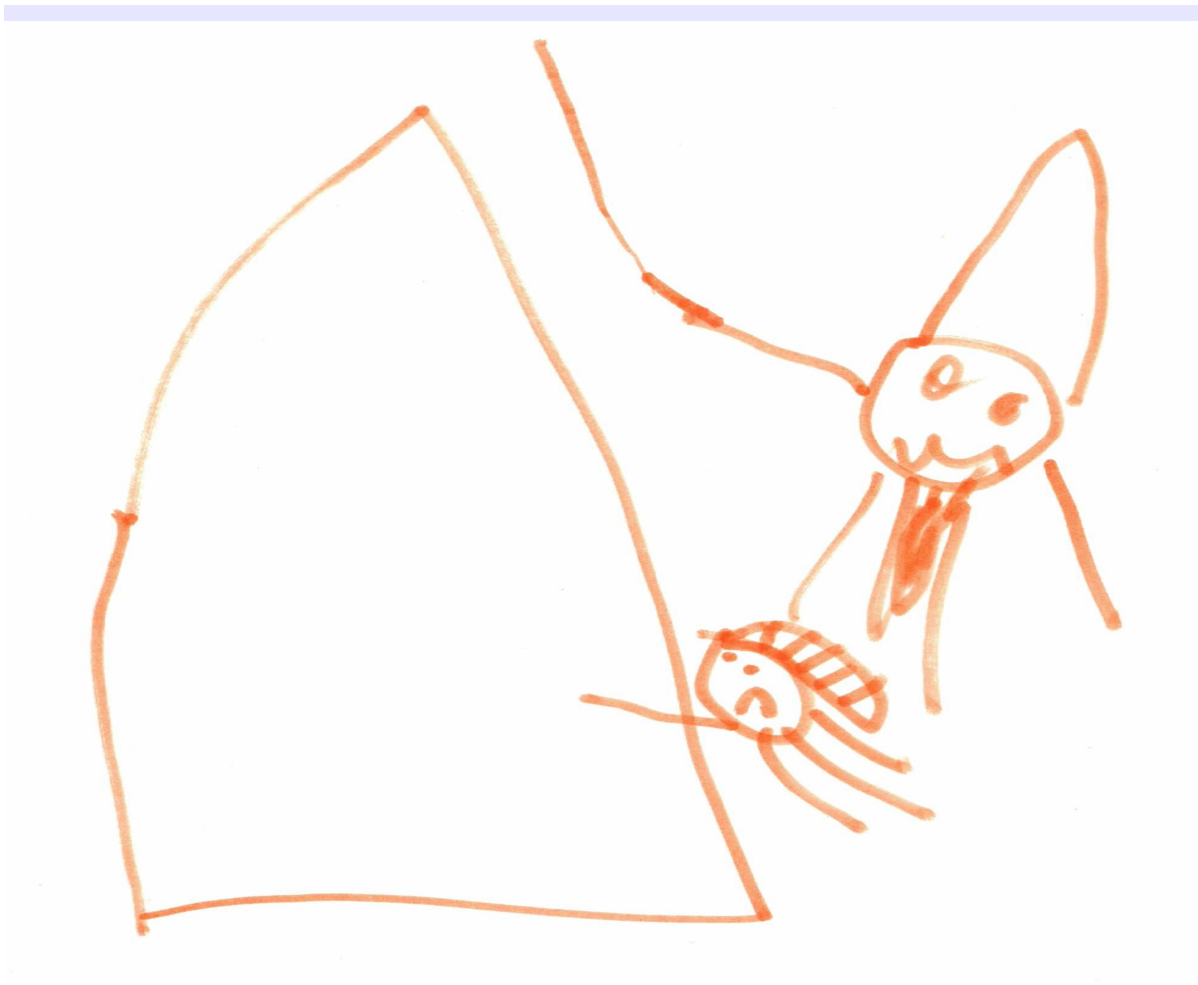
The rainbow - the sign of the Noahic covenant.

One of Noah's descendants was named Abraham. Abraham was very old and did not have any children. Abraham fearfully respected God. The Lord decided to make a promise to Abraham called a covenant. God's promise to Abraham was an unconditional covenant. Unconditional means the covenant was not based on anything that Abraham had to do, but that the covenant is something that God would carry out based solely on who He is. The Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the beach or the stars in the sky. God promised to make Abraham the patriarch of a great nation that would inhabit a land that God would show to Abraham. The land would be an everlasting possession to Abraham's descendants. The Lord also promised that through one of Abraham's descendants all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham believed God's promise, and this faith was counted to him as righteousness. (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:1-21) This unconditional promise of land, seed, and blessing is known as the Abrahamic covenant.



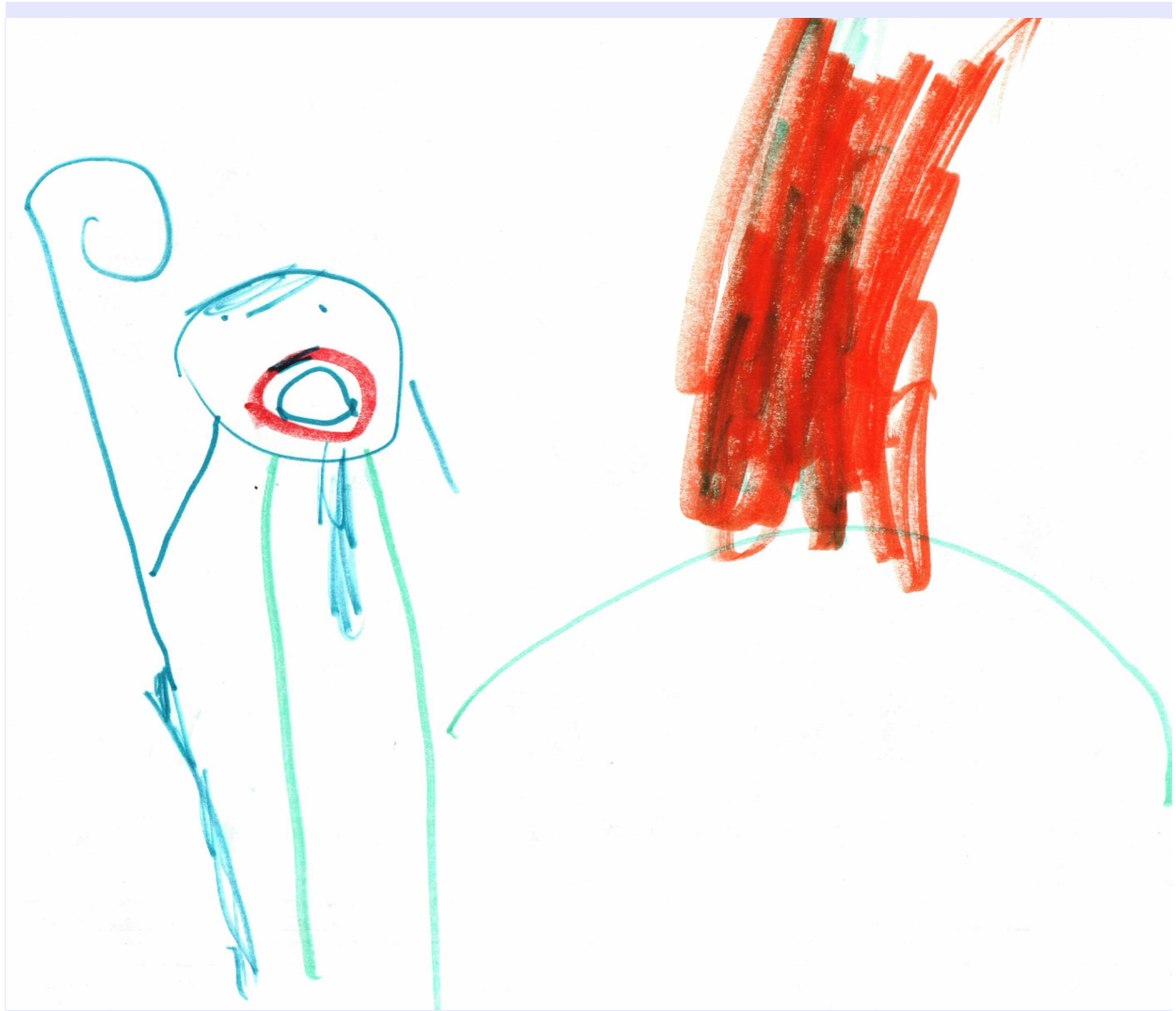
God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

As God promised, Abraham had a son who was named Isaac. Isaac had a son, who was named Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons who became the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. One of these sons of Jacob was Joseph. Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt after they became jealous of him. God allowed Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. In the dreams, God showed that there would be seven years of prosperity in the land, followed by seven years of great drought. During the seven years of prosperity, Joseph and Egypt saved the surplus food to prepare for the seven years of drought. During the drought, Jacob sent Joseph's brothers to Egypt to purchase food. God used Joseph to save his Dad and brothers. Joseph saw God's purpose in all that had happened and forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery. Jacob along with Joseph's brothers and their families moved to and settled in Egypt. After many years, a pharaoh that did not know Joseph came to power, and he made all of the descendants of Joseph and his brothers slaves. (Genesis 22:1 – Exodus 1:14)



The people of Israel became slaves in Egypt.

God remembered His covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:24-25) and chose a man named Moses to lead the tribes of Israel out of their captivity in Egypt to the land that God had promised to Abraham. Moses approached Pharaoh and asked him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refused many times resulting in God punishing Egypt with a plague each time that Pharaoh refused. Pharaoh had a hardened heart, stubbornly refusing to obey God and to free the Israelites. (Exodus 3:1-4:20)



God remembers Israel and calls Moses as the deliverer through the burning bush.

Moses warned Pharaoh about the worst plague to come. God would cause the death of all the firstborn sons in Egypt if Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go. Moses also warned the Israelites about this plague and instructed them to sacrifice a lamb and to spread its blood on their doorposts to identify them so that this plague would pass over their houses. Pharaoh did not listen to God and let the Israelites go. That night all of the firstborn sons who were not protected by the lamb's blood were killed, including Pharaoh's firstborn son. This plague was so terrible that Pharaoh finally released the Israelites.

God provided for a miraculous escape from Egypt after Pharaoh changed his mind again after releasing the Israelites. Pharaoh and his armies took up chase to recapture the Israelites. God miraculously parted the Red Sea so that the Israelites could walk across on dry land. When Pharaoh and the Egyptian army tried to follow, they were drowned. These events are remembered and celebrated by the Jewish people to this day as the Passover Feast. Thanks to God's miraculous intervention the Israelites escaped and followed Moses into the desert on their way to returning to the land that God had promised to Abraham. (Exodus 4:21 – 14:31)



Moses leads the Israelites to safety from pursuing Pharaoh after God parts the Red Sea

In the desert on the way to the promised land, Moses obeyed God and climbed Mount Sinai. God gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai. The Law includes some sets of rules for the Jewish people to live with each other (moral laws), to dwell with God in their camp and the land of Israel (ceremonial laws), and laws meant to distinguish Israel from the Canaanites who were very evil and currently occupying the promised land. The Jewish people and God agreed to a covenant to keep the Law. The conditions of the covenant summarized that if Israel would obey the Law, they would receive many blessings from God. But, if Israel did not obey the law then they would be judged for their disobedience and suffer a set of curses. One of the major curses was that the people of Israel would be removed from the promised land. This curse would not negate the unconditional covenant with Abraham that the land would be an everlasting possession of his descendants, but would be a temporary judgment. (Exodus 19:1-6; Leviticus 26:1-45; Deuteronomy)



Moses receives the Law on Mount Sinai

When Israel was approaching the promised land, Moses sent Joshua, Caleb, and ten other spies into the promised land to bring back a report of what they saw. All of the spies except for Joshua and Caleb did not believe God's promise to deliver the land to them, and came back and said that the land was full of huge walled cities and giants that Israel and God could not conquer. Caleb and Joshua were faithful and reported that God would allow them to defeat the Canaanites and that God would lead them to conquer the promised land. The Israelites were disobedient and believed the ten spies, and did not believe God would deliver the land to them. Because of their disbelief, all of the Israelites except Joshua and Caleb were punished and would not be allowed to enter the promised land. God said that their children instead would be the ones to enter the promised land. (Exodus 19; Leviticus; Numbers 13)



Joshua and Caleb were faithful in reporting that God will deliver the promised land, while the other spies bring reports of giants and have little faith.

Joshua and Caleb led the new generation of Israelites into the promised land, where God led them to conquer the walled cities and giants of the Caananites. The nation of Israel began to dwell in the land promised to Abraham (Joshua). But, they didn't follow God's plan completely and eliminate all of the Canaanites, and this led to many problems.

After Joshua died, God anointed many leaders for Israel as the times warranted. Israel followed a pattern where they would be disobedient to the Law and begin to experience the curses spoken of in the Mosaic covenant, such as invasions from foreign countries. Israel would then repent and turn back to God and be restored as God stated He would do in the Mosaic covenant. This cycle happened through many generations, and God continued to be faithful to the Mosaic covenant both in blessing and cursing Israel based on their obedience to the covenant.(Judges) Eventually, Israel decided that they wanted a king to rule over them, just like all of the other nations surrounding them. God heard their desire and a man known as Saul was established as their king. (1 Samuel)



Joshua and the tribes of Israel obeyed God's battle plan, marched around, and then conquered Jericho.

Saul started well as king, but then did not walk in the ways of the Lord. God chose David to replace Saul and be king of Israel. David was a man after God's own heart, and one example of David's faith was killing the giant Goliath while he was a boy. David trusted God to defeat Goliath and God miraculously delivered the victory. (1 Samuel)

While David was king, God made an unconditional covenant with David. God promised David that His seed and kingdom would be established and endure before the Lord forever. (2 Samuel 7:1-29) This was an unconditional covenant that helped narrow the promise that God had made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant regarding the seed who was going to be a blessing to all of the nations of the world. Israel now knew that their Messiah would also be a descendant of David based on this unconditional covenant with David.



David trusted God and defeated the Philistine giant Goliath

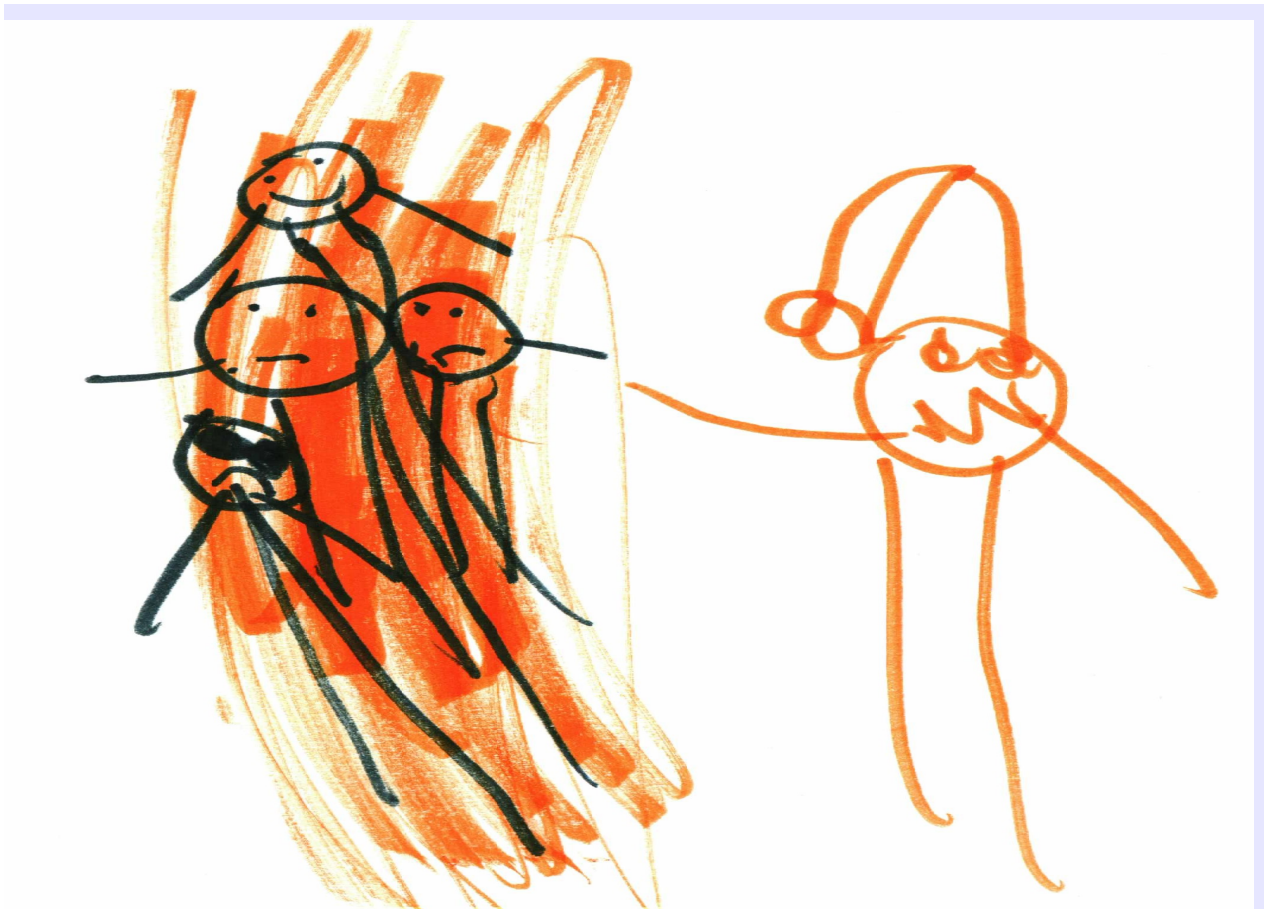
David also had his share of failures that are recorded for us. David recorded his thoughts and feelings after many successes and failures, and they are preserved for us in the Psalms. After David died, David's son Solomon became king. Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he could rule God's people wisely. Solomon built a temple for God to dwell in, and wrote the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon in which much of his wisdom is preserved for us. But, Solomon also did some unwise things in disobedience to God and did not finish as king well. He disobeyed the Mosaic Law, and married foreign women who brought with them foreign idols that some people in Israel began to worship.

One of the first judgments from God for this was splitting the nation of Israel into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah after Solomon died. All of the kings of Israel, and many from Judah did not follow the Mosaic covenant. God sent prophets to Israel and Judah who warned that they were disobeying the Mosaic Covenant with God, and that they would face judgment because of their disobedience. With only a few kings of Judah who were exceptions and were faithful to God, the two kingdoms did not listen to the warnings from God through the prophets and repent. The northern kingdom of Israel was the first to be cursed with exile from the land according to the Mosaic covenant, and they were conquered by the Assyrian empire and taken into captivity. God showed great patience with Israel, but ultimately their disobedience required God to fulfill His part of the Mosaic covenant and remove them from the promised land. (1 Kings, 2 Kings)



The northern kingdom of Israel was continually disobedient to God. God was faithful to the Mosaic covenant, and the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrian Empire and was exiled from the land.

God sent the prophet Jeremiah to warn the southern kingdom of Judah about forthcoming judgment for their disobedience to the Mosaic covenant. Jeremiah's message also included hope for the future. God told Jeremiah of the new unconditional covenant He would make with the people of Israel and Judah. God promised that He will write His law upon the people's hearts. All the people of Israel and Judah will know and obey God. God will forgive them and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-33) God was speaking of a time in the future when this covenant will be carried out with the people of Israel and Judah. The people of Judah did not listen to the warnings, and did not repent and turn back to God. As a result, they were cursed and conquered by the Babylonian armies of Nebuchadnezzar. They were taken into exile in the land of Babylon, and Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.



The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faithful to God in exile, and He saved them when they were thrown into the fiery furnace for their faith.

One other prophesy from Jeremiah was the end of the exile after 70 years (Jeremiah 25:8-12; Jeremiah 29:10-14). When it was close to the end of the 70 years, a prophet named Daniel prayed to God, asking God to forgive Israel and Judah's disobedience and to restore them to the land. (Daniel).



God saved Daniel from the lions when King Darius was forced to throw Daniel in the Lion's den.

In response, God showed to Daniel a great vision of the future, and how God was going to be faithful to the unconditional covenants He had made with Abraham and David. God told Daniel of 70 weeks of years that would happen in the future. The first 69 weeks of years (483 years) would come after the command to rebuild Jerusalem was decreed and that at end of this 483 years the Messiah - the one promised to Eve to crush the serpents head, the descendant of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed, and the branch of David's lineage who would rule and sit on David's throne forever - would be revealed. (Dan 9:24-27)



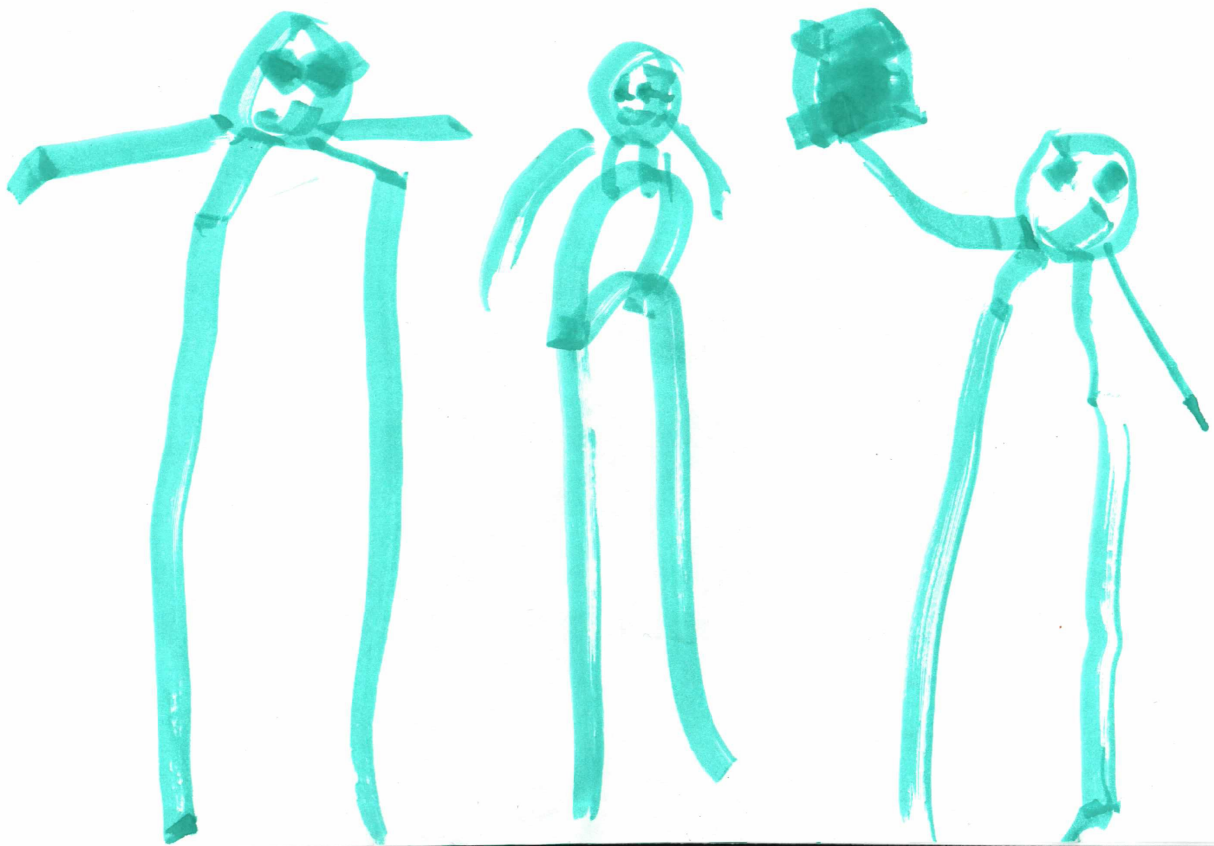
The angel Gabriel telling Daniel the 70 weeks of years prophecy.

The 70th week of years talked about a time in the future, when the antichrist will be revealed who will deceive all of the nations and lead them in a rebellion against God. The Messiah will conquer this evil deceiver and the bad angel Satan whom is leading the deceiver, and then the Messiah will rule for 1000 years before another rebellion. After this final rebellion, the Messiah will finally conquer evil once and for all and rule forever. (Dan 9:27; Rev 3-21)



Jesus Christ, King of Kings, Lord of Lords - Messiah

The recurring themes in the prophets are warnings to Israel and Judah pointing out that they are violating the Mosaic Law and that judgment would come as the consequence. God fulfilled this judgment with the exile. Despite carrying out that judgment, God did not forget the unconditional covenants He made with Abraham and David. The prophets spoke of future hope and redemption for the people of Israel, through the seed promised to Eve, Abraham, and David. The future hope and redemption would come to Israel in the person of the Messiah.



The prophets warned Judah of its disobedience to the Mosaic covenant, and that they would soon face judgment. They also reminded Judah of the coming hope in promised seed - the Messiah.

A handful of the specific prophecies of the Messiah given in the prophets are:

He will be born of a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

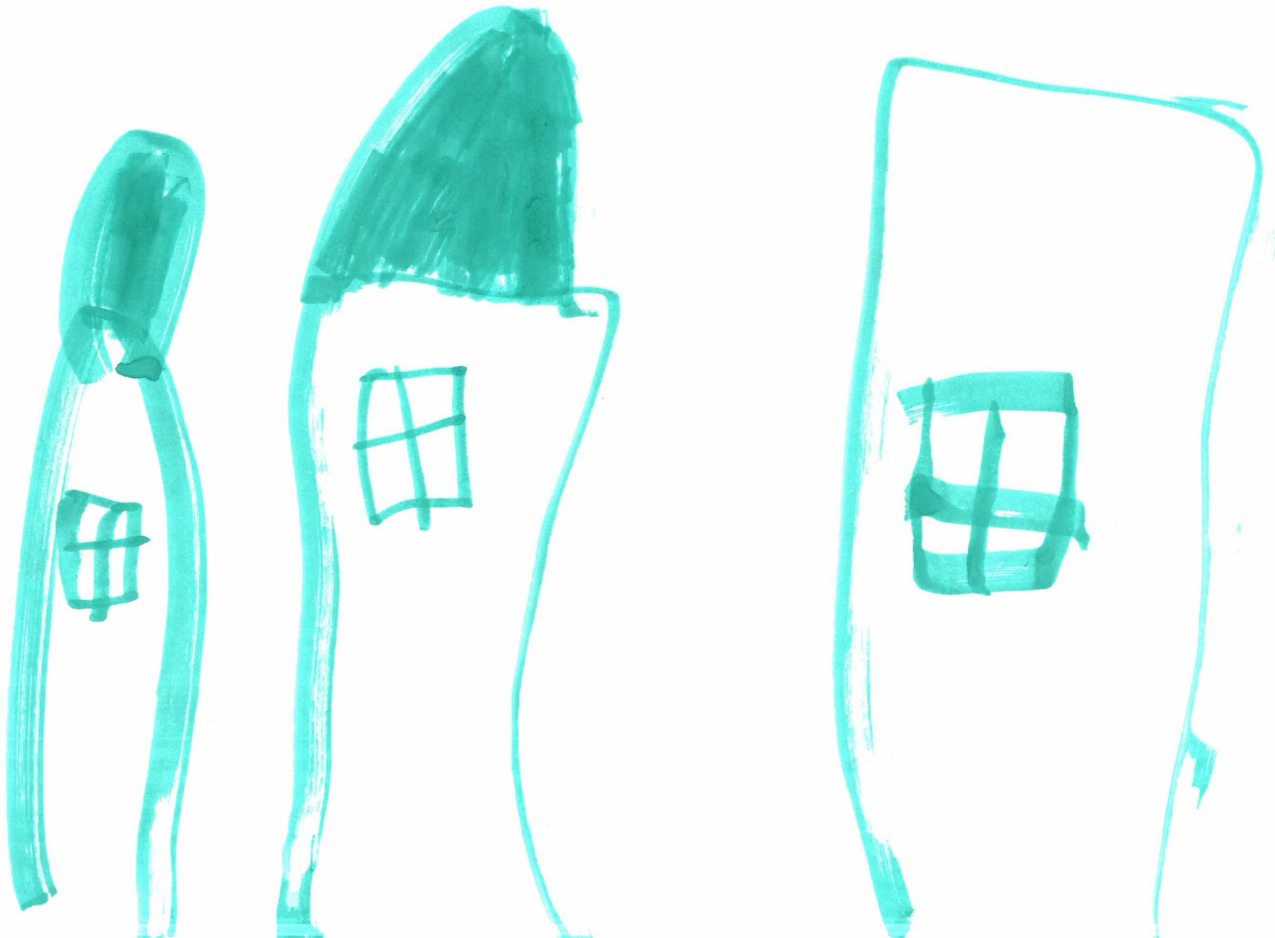


The virgin Mary being told that she would be the mother of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.”



Prophecy was fulfilled. Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem.

The Messiah will suffer and die for the forgiveness of our sins.

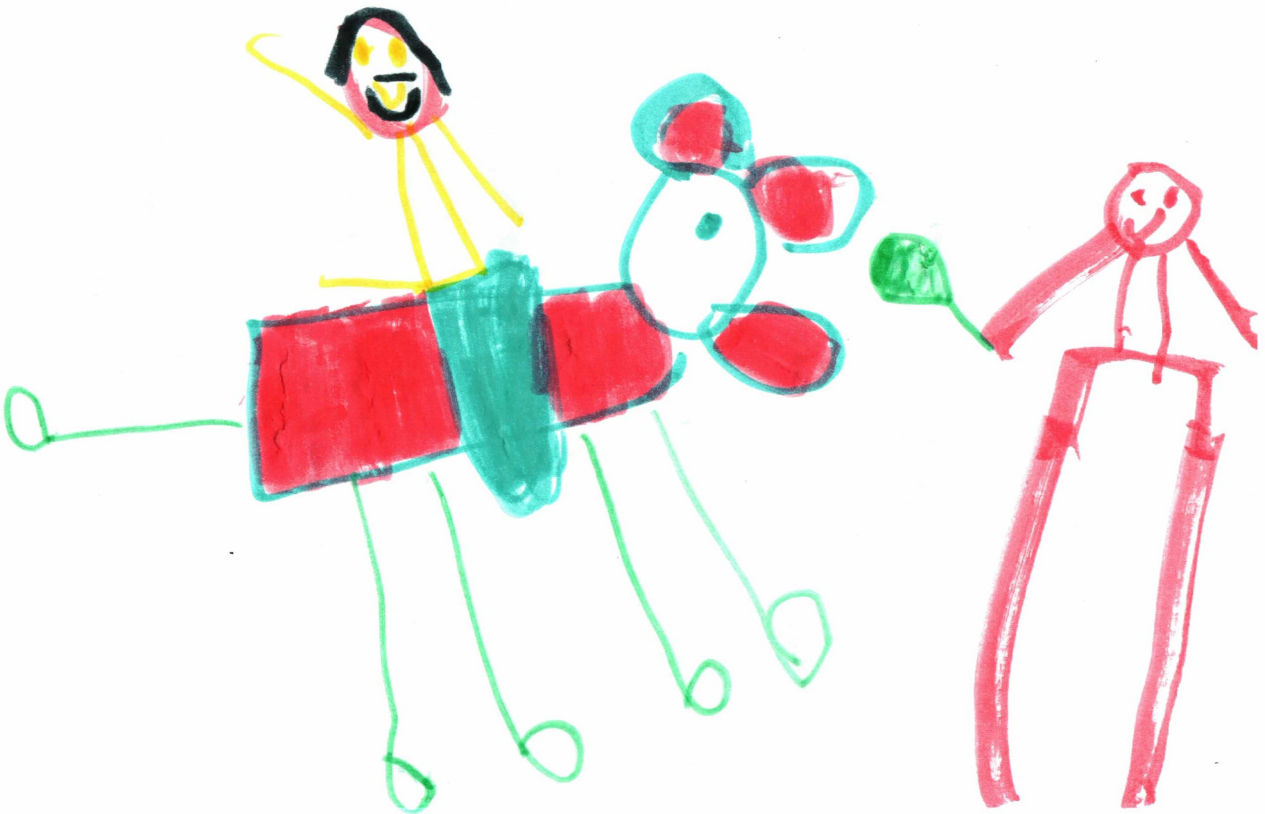
Isaiah 53:3–12

- 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried;
yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
- 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities;
the chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.
- 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;
but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.
- 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth;
like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
so He did not open His mouth.
- 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered
that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people,
to whom the stroke *was due*?
- 9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death,
because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.
- 10 But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; if He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering,
He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days,
and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.
- 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied;
by His knowledge the Righteous One, my Servant, will justify the many,
as He will bear their iniquities.
- 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong;
because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

The Messiah will reveal Himself as King by riding humbly into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”



The Messiah would show his identity as King by humbly riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The people of Israel and Judah did return from exile, as God promised to Jeremiah. Ezra led a group of people back to Jerusalem and they rebuilt the temple. Nehemiah, cup bearer to King Cyrus, asked to return to Jerusalem so that the city also could be rebuilt. King Cyrus gave the decree allowing Nehemiah to return and rebuild Jerusalem. This decree was the start of the 483 prophetic years that Daniel spoke of in the 70 weeks prophecy (Daniel 9:24-29). Nehemiah returned with a group that rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, and along with Ezra led a great revival where the people of Judah returned to obedience to the law of the Lord for a time. (Ezra, Nehemiah)



Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and led rebuilding the walls of the city.

But, the pattern continued. After the revival, Israel and Judah turned away from God and to their own, sinful ways. The prophets Micah, Haggai, and Malachi warned Israel and Judah that they were not adhering to the Mosaic covenant. Finally, God stopped speaking through prophets to Israel and Judah. Israel and Judah experienced close to 400 years where they did not hear directly from God through a prophet.



The people of Israel again began neglecting the Mosaic covenant again even after the exile.

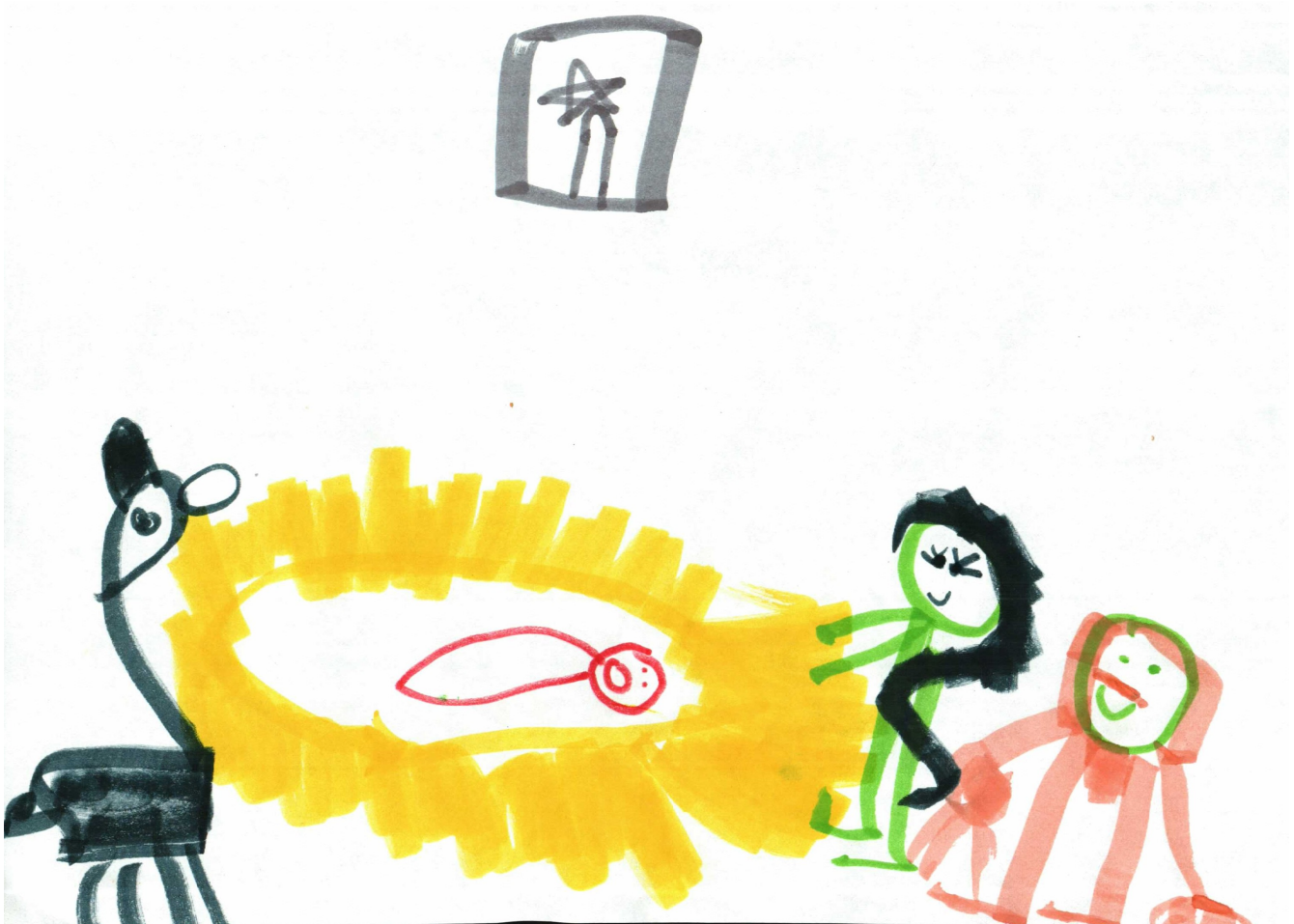
At the right time, God was faithful in His prophecy to Daniel, and an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, a righteous man in God's sight. The angel told Zechariah that even at his advanced age, he would be the father to a child who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Zechariah was to name the boy John.

An angel of the Lord also appeared to a young woman named Mary, telling her that the Lord had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah, and she was to name Him Jesus. Mary was a virgin and betrothed to a young man named Joseph. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived a child. Both Mary and Joseph were descendants of King David, who was a descendant of Abraham. God was fulfilling His unconditional promises to both Abraham and David that the Messiah would be their descendant. (Luke 1) God also fulfilled the prophecy to Isaiah that Jesus would be born of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14)



An angel telling Zechariah that he was going to be the father of one whom would prepare the way for the Messiah.

Joseph and Mary lived in Galilee. Because they were of the house and lineage of David, they were required to travel to their ancestral town of Bethlehem to take part in a census that had been decreed by Caesar Augustus. While they were in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus. (Luke 2) This fulfilled the prophecy to Micah regarding where the Messiah would be born. (Micah 5:2)



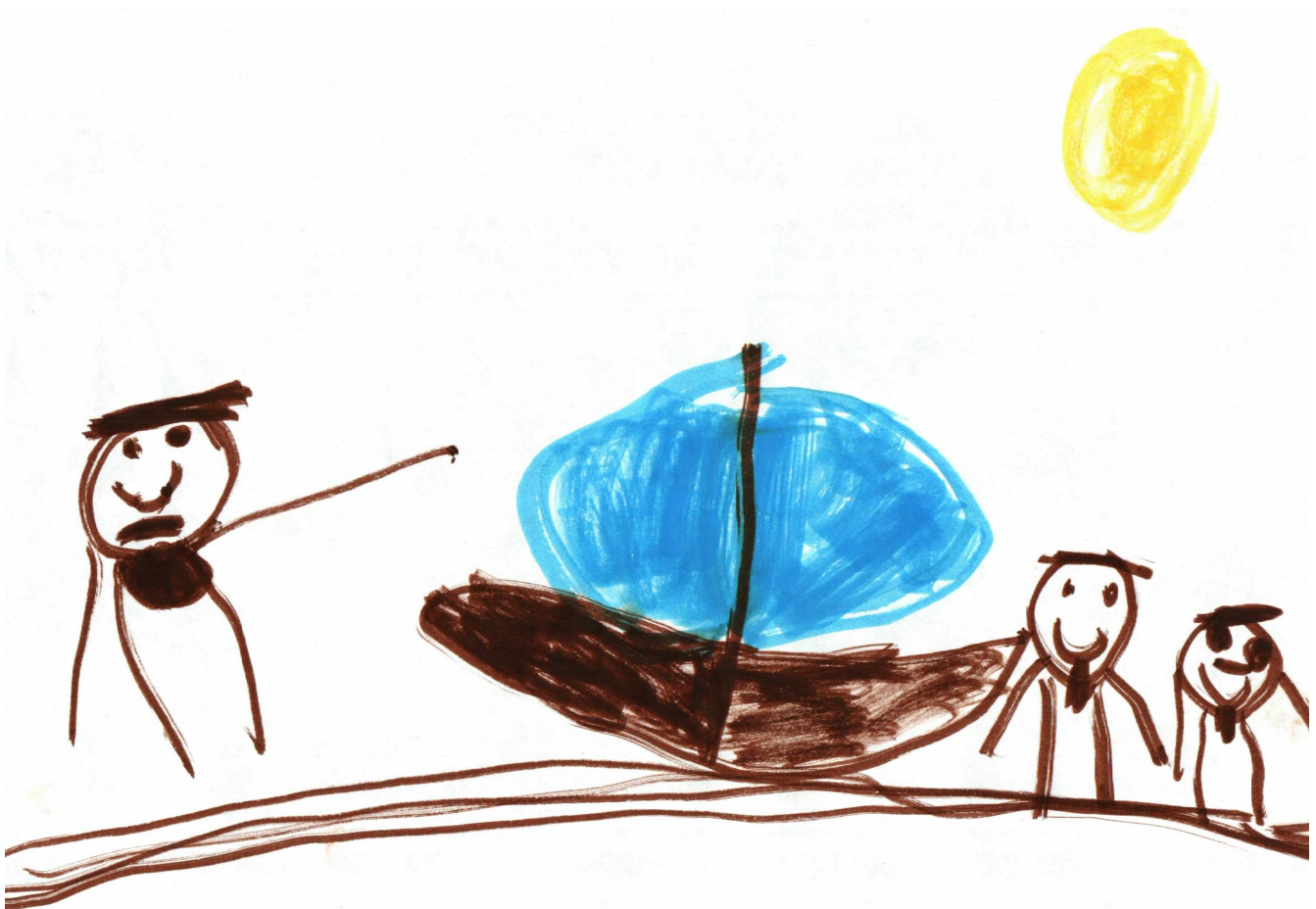
Because there was no room in any of the inns, Mary and Joseph lodged in a stable where Jesus was born.

Zechariah's son grew up and became known as John the Baptist. John the Baptist walked in the ways of God and had a ministry baptizing people who wished to repent of their sins. John knew that his role was to prepare the way for Jesus. John knew that Jesus was the Son of God, and had no sin, but Jesus requested that John baptize Him anyway. This was the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. (Luke 3)



Jesus had no sin to repent from, yet still asked John the Baptist to baptize Him.

Jesus performed many miracles during His public ministry, and taught many people. Jesus chose twelve men as His disciples, and they were witnesses to His public ministry. The disciples were chosen by Jesus to be witnesses, and sent to tell others about Jesus. Jesus showed through His teaching, and through the miracles He performed that He indeed is the Son of God and the one promised to Eve, Abraham, David, and the prophets. The gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – record Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. The gospel authors wrote their gospels with different intended audiences, and were selective in the narratives they included to reveal Jesus to the chosen audience where they are not all identical in the events they include.



Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James, and John to become fishers of men as His disciples.

One subject Jesus taught His disciples about was His upcoming death and resurrection. 'And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved.'¹ (Matthew 17:22-23) The disciples did not fully understand yet what Jesus was teaching them regarding his death and suffering though. They did not believe the Messiah had come to die, even though the prophets had testified to this. They and the rest of the Jewish people were expecting a political leader whom would save them from the Roman occupation, instead of accomplishing God's greater purpose at the cross.

During the third year of Jesus' public ministry, Jesus knew that the time was quickly approaching when it would be time for God's plan of salvation to be fulfilled.



Jesus repeatedly taught the disciples that He was going to suffer and die to fulfill God's incredible plan.

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (Mt 17:22–23). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

The religious leaders of the time also knew of the promises to Abraham and David, and the prophecies of Daniel and the other prophets regarding the Messiah, yet still did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They also presupposed the Messiah as a political leader and conqueror to free them from the Romans that were occupying Israel and Judah instead of as a servant and teacher. They decided that Jesus' teaching was very dangerous to them, and they decided that they needed to put Jesus to death. They began looking for opportunities to accomplish this. (Matthew 26:1-5)



The Jewish religious leaders did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and began seeking ways to put him to death.

Jesus knew of the plans of the religious leaders to put Him to death. Jesus knew that this must happen in order to fulfill God's plan. Jesus knew He must journey to Jerusalem for the Passover in obedience to the Law. While on the way to Jerusalem for this final Passover celebration, Jesus sent two disciples ahead to fetch a donkey for Him to ride into Jerusalem on. By doing this, Jesus fulfilled the very specific prophecy given to the prophet Zechariah, and it was an unmistakable sign to the religious leaders and to the people that Jesus was telling them that He is the Messiah (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, to the praises of

“Hosanna to the Son of David;
BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;
Hosanna in the highest!”²

from the people lining the road. (Matthew 21:1-11) This public announcement of Jesus as the Messiah happened exactly 483 prophetic years to the day after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem as God had promised Daniel. This public pronouncement of Jesus as Messiah exactly fulfilled the time bound prophecy given to Daniel. But, the people still did not understand that the Messiah had to die in order to fulfill all that God had promised.



Jesus rode humbly into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, letting everyone know that He was the Messiah.

² *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* 1995 (Mt 21:9). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Jesus continued to teach His disciples. On the Mount of Olives, Jesus taught His disciples about things which were to come in the future. Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple in AD 70 at the hands of Titus Vespasian. Jesus also told the disciples that He was going to come back, after a time of great tribulation which would occur during Daniel's 70th week. Jesus gave the disciples signs of His return, and told them they should live so that they are ready for Him to return. (Matthew 24-25)



Jesus will return to earth in the future in glory and conquer evil once and for all.

One of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot, had decided to betray Jesus to the religious leaders so that they could put Him to death. Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray Him. Jesus gathered all of the disciples together in the upper room of a house to eat the Passover meal together. Jesus sent Judas away to do what he was planning to do.

Jesus taught the other disciples that what was about to happen was the inauguration of the new covenant based on His blood being shed, and body being broken. Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread, broke it, and explained to the disciples that His body had to be broken and that the broken bread was a symbol of His body. Jesus also took a cup of wine, and explained to the disciples that the wine represented His blood, and by Jesus' blood the new covenant promised to Jeremiah would be made possible. Jesus commanded that we are to eat bread and drink the wine so that we would remember what He was about to do for them, and for us. This is why those who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior participate in communion today, in obedience to Jesus' command to remember this evening and the new covenant He was going to ratify at the cross where His blood would be sacrificed to satisfy God's wrath for our sins. (Matthew 26:17-35)



Jesus taught the disciples about the new covenant that was about to be inaugurated at the cross with His broken body and blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

After the Passover meal, Jesus and the disciples journeyed to the Mount of Olives where Jesus - accompanied by John, James, and Peter - went to pray. The disciples were commanded to keep watch and pray, but they could not stay awake. After Jesus had finished praying, a large crowd of soldiers approached led by Judas. They had been sent by the religious leaders to arrest Jesus. Judas approached Jesus and kissed Him on the cheek to identify Him as the one they were to arrest, in fulfillment of prophecy. (Matthew 26:36-56)



Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples and arrested in the garden of Gethsemane in fulfillment of prophecy.

Jesus went willingly with the soldiers and was put on trial by the religious leaders. Jesus had not done anything wrong. The head priest approached Jesus, and asked Him if He is indeed the Messiah - the Son of God. Jesus said to him, "You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."³ The religious leaders became very angry at this statement. They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. They believed that Jesus was violating God's law and committing blasphemy by making this statement, which was a crime in the Mosaic Law punishable by death. But, Jesus is the Messiah, and told the truth, so He did not violate the Law and deserve death. (Matthew 26:57-68)



Jesus told Caiphas that soon He would be glorified and that they would see Him sitting at the right hand of the Father in Heaven.

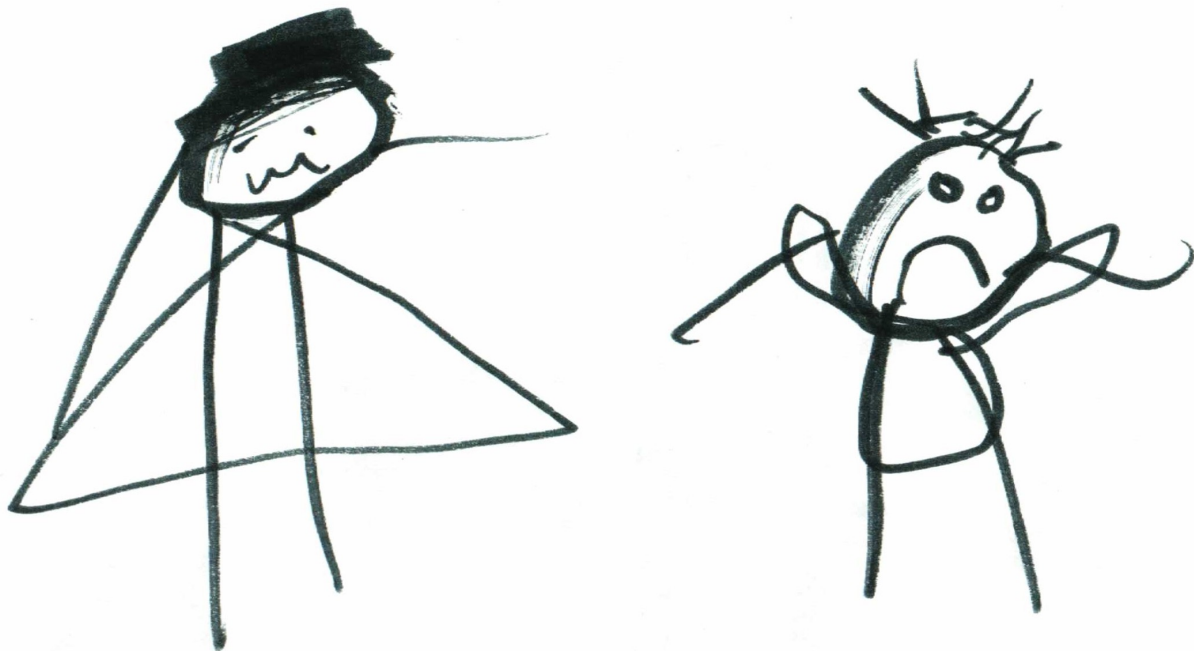
3 *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (Mt 26:64). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Under Roman law, the Jewish authorities did not have the authority to put Jesus to death. The Jewish authorities took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of the territory that included Jerusalem. Pilate questioned Jesus, and found no reason that He should be put to death. Pilate did learn that Jesus was from Galilee, which was governed by Herod. So, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, where He was questioned again. Herod also found Jesus innocent and not deserving death, mocked Him, and returned Jesus to Pilate. (Luke 23:1-12)



The Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for a trial so that Jesus could legally be put to death.

Pilate had Jesus viciously beaten and scourged, hoping that would satisfy the wrath of the crowd. Pilate's primary concern was to keep the Jewish people from revolting so that he could keep order in the province. To keep the people happy, the Roman government every Passover offered to free one prisoner to the Jews as a sign of goodwill. Pilate, still finding no fault in Jesus, offered to free either Jesus or a murderer known as Barabbas. The crowd, led by the Jewish religious leaders, screamed for Pilate to free Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate obliged, and asked the crowd what should He do with Jesus then? The crowd screamed, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate took a bowl of water, washed his hands to signify that Jesus' death was not on his hands, and turned Jesus over to the crowd to be crucified. (Luke 23:13-25)



Pilate did not find Jesus guilty of anything deserving death, but his primary concern was keeping order in the province so he washed his hands signifying he had no guilt in the death, and turned Jesus over to be crucified.

Jesus was led through the streets, forced to carry His own cross upon which He was to be crucified, to a hill just outside of Jerusalem known as Golgotha (with eventual help from Simon of Cirene). There Jesus was nailed to the cross and crucified between 2 criminals. Jesus knew that His mission on earth had been accomplished. Jesus asked for a drink and with His last breath exclaimed, "It is finished!"

What was Jesus referring to as being finished? God's plan of redemption was finished. We are all sinners (Romans 3:23). We have not kept God's law perfectly (Romans 3:1-20). Sin separates us from God, and God has declared that all sin should be punished by death (Romans 6:23). Jesus died in our place, fulfilling our punishment. Jesus substituted Himself in our place and bore the death penalty we deserve at the cross. (Romans 5:8-19) The Mosaic law also provided for the sacrificial system for atonement for sin. This means that animals sacrificed would allow for God to not see sin. Jesus shed His blood as a perfect and everlasting offering for our sin, so that God's wrath against our sin would be satisfied according to the Mosaic law and our sin forgiven and seen no more by God. (Hebrew 9-10) This is the task and plan of redemption that Jesus was referring to when He said "It is finished" on the cross.



Jesus willingly laid down His life at the cross, substituting Himself in our place to satisfy God's wrath and death penalty that we deserve for our sin.

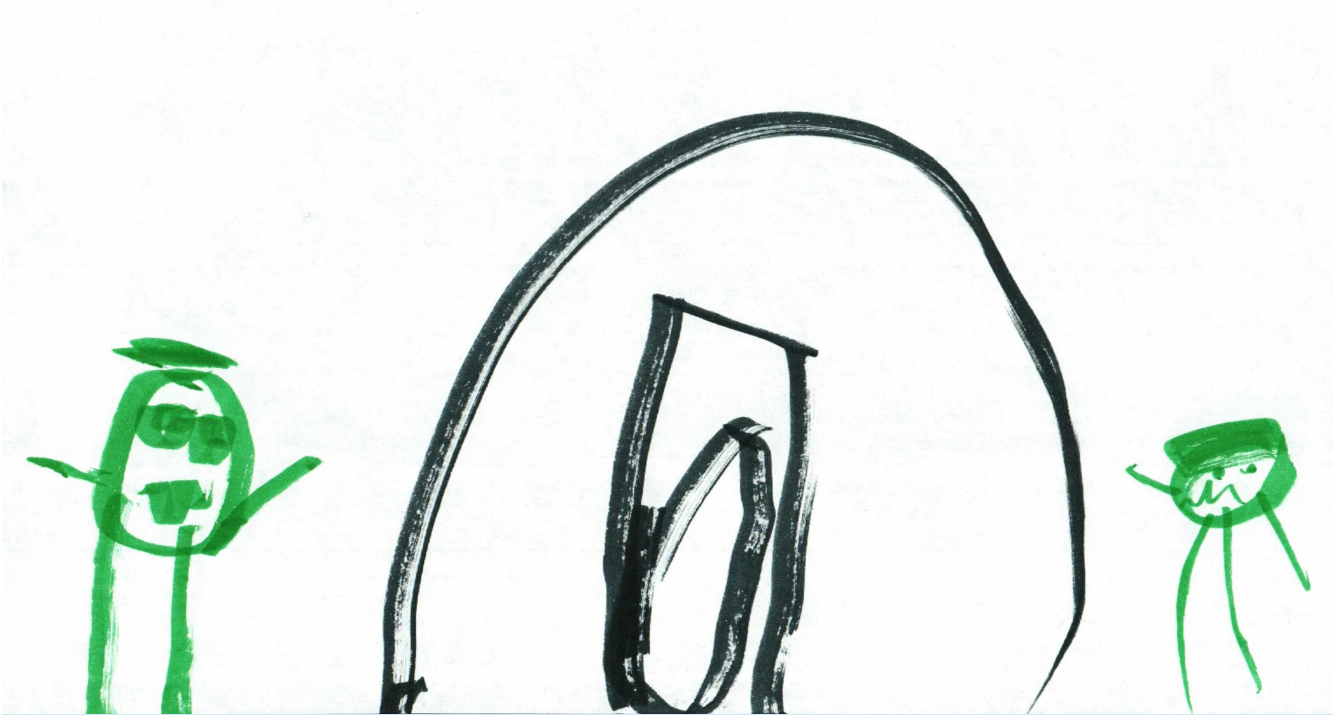
To help you to believe, there are many details and prophecies that were fulfilled precisely while Jesus was on the cross. A few of them to highlight are:

1. The Messiah would be betrayed by one of His close friends (Psalm 41:9)
2. The method of death for the Messiah – crucifixion was described in detail before it was practiced as a form of torture and death (Psalm 22:16)
3. The Messiah would not have a bone broken during His death (Psalm 34:20)
4. The soldiers would gamble for His robe (Psalm 22:18)



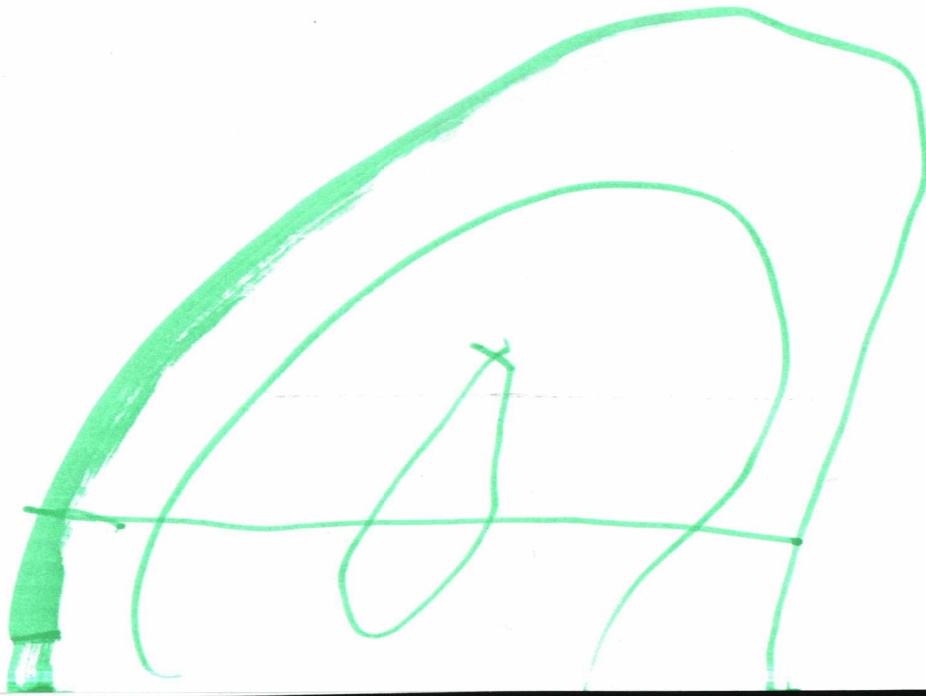
Many prophecies were fulfilled at the cross when Jesus died for us.

Joseph of Arimathea approached Pilate and received permission to take Jesus' body down from the cross and to place the body in his tomb. The Roman and Jewish authorities knew of the prophecy that Jesus would rise from the dead, although they did not believe it. Therefore, they assigned guards to guard the tomb to ensure that the body could not be stolen. (Matthew 27:57-66)



Jesus was taken from the cross and buried in a tomb. Guards were placed outside of the tomb because the Romans and Jewish leaders were aware of Jesus saying He would rise from the grave. They did not believe Jesus would rise from the grave, but were worried that someone would steal His body to make it look like that prophecy was fulfilled.

Early Sunday morning, on the third day within the tomb, by God's miraculous power, Jesus was resurrected from the dead. An angel descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone from the tomb, and the guards fainted as if they were dead. (Matthew 28:1-15) Jesus had predicted His resurrection from the dead, and the resurrection was also in fulfillment of Psalm 16:10.



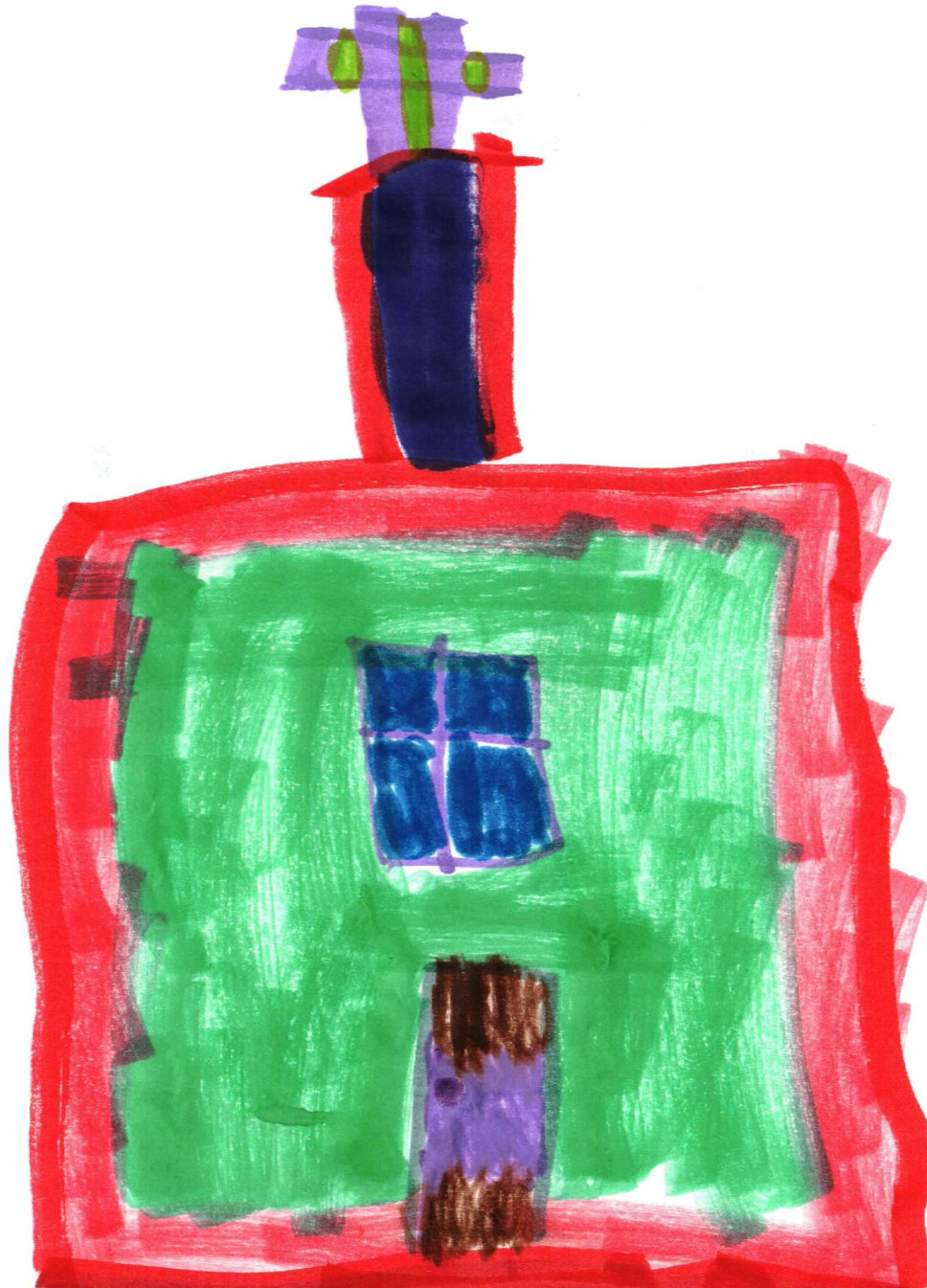
Jesus did indeed rise from the grave as He had promised, in fulfillment of prophecy. This is a picture of the empty tomb.

Jesus appeared to his disciples, and continued to teach them before ascending to Heaven. (Luke 24:13-53) Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has accomplished much of what God had promised to Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets. But, there is an aspect to all of those promises that still has some future fulfillment also. Jesus has won victory over the serpent at the cross, but the devil is not yet condemned to eternal punishment. Jesus is the seed by which all nations are blessed with the opportunity for salvation, but the land promise to Abraham is not completely fulfilled and the nation of Israel does not occupy the land fully as an everlasting possession. Jesus does not yet rule from the Davidic throne in Jerusalem, but He is exalted at the right hand of the Father and we are promised He will. Many of the promises are fulfilled, but God's incredible plan is not fully completed yet.



Jesus ascending into heaven.

We are between Daniel's sixty ninth and seventieth weeks, in the age where the church is being built. Jesus promised that He is going to build the church. The apostle Paul describes the church as a mystery which God has made manifest at the appropriate time to show God's wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:1-10)



God is currently building His church in the age between the first and second advents.

God sent the disciples to begin building His church. Jesus had promised the disciples that when He ascended to heaven, He would send a helper to them. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. (Acts 2) Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples, and they began a preaching and teaching ministry to the world telling people about Jesus and building the church as recorded for us in Acts.



Peter receiving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

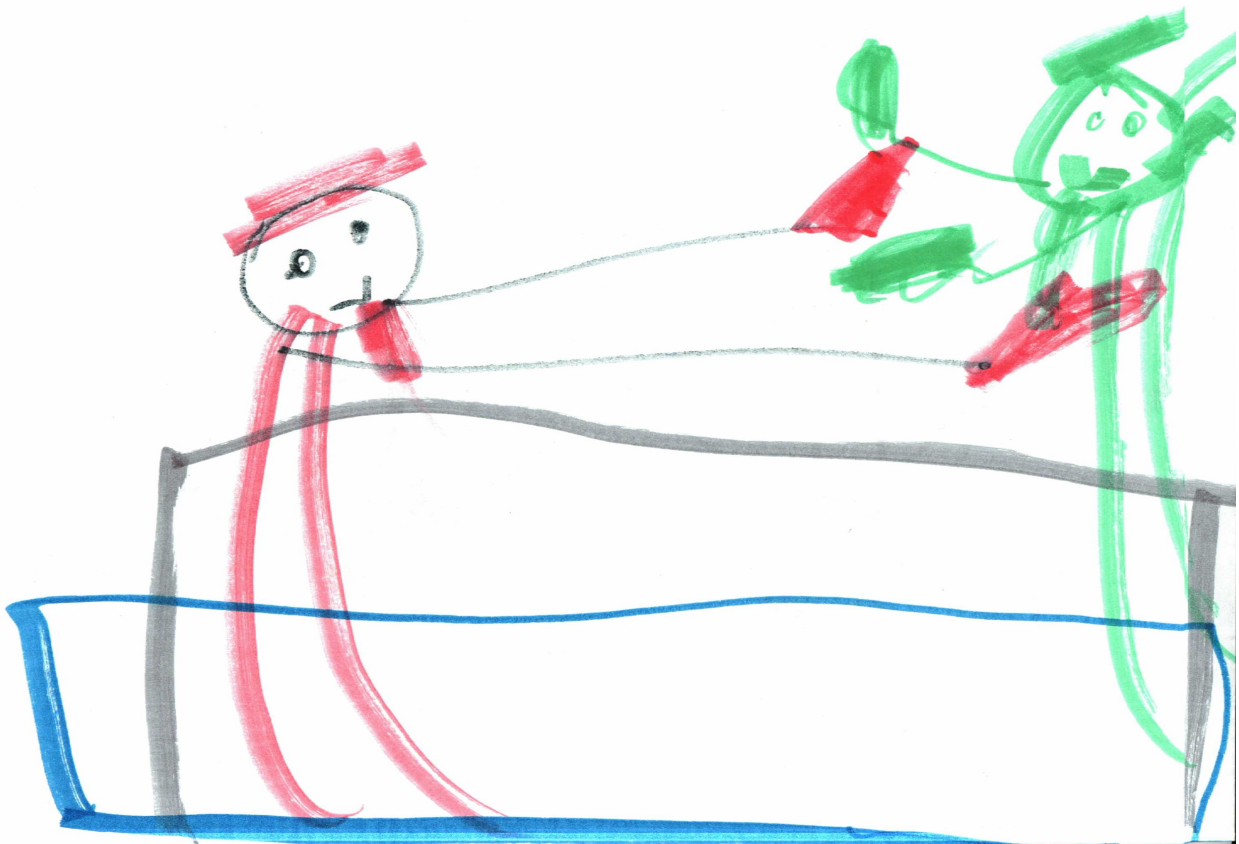
There are many examples of the apostles preaching in the New Testament. They tailored the preaching to the audience's background and worldview. The common message in the preaching is God's incredible promises, culminating in the Gospel. The preaching is known by the Greek word, kerygma. They preached that God is the only God, that He is our Creator, and that Jesus Christ is God's Son and the Messiah who died on the cross in our place bearing the death sentence we deserve for our sins. Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected on the third day from the grave, conquering death and He is our source for eternal life. The apostle Paul summarizes the preaching in 1st Corinthians 15 when He reminds the Corinthians of the Gospel that he preached to them, which they believed and by which they are saved:

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

The Fact of Christ's Resurrection

- 1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,
- 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
- 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
- 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
- 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.
- 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;
- 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;
- 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.
- 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
- 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.
- 11 Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The apostles taught that one is saved by God's grace, through faith in the Gospel. Our justification before God is by faith alone in what Jesus has accomplished for us, and not because we can do anything to earn salvation through our own good deeds or works. But, that was not the end of their message. They also taught new believers how they should live as a consequence of being saved from their sin, now that they have a new life in Christ. This teaching is known by the Greek word, *didache*. They used many analogies for this teaching such as taking off old clothes, and putting on new clothes. Or, running a race, or fighting a good fight. Paul describes the new life you have as a Christian as walking worthy of the calling you have received. The apostles then go on to describe this new life, and provide moral teaching on what is right and wrong for a believer in Christ, and how we should then live as a result of the gift of salvation we have been given as believers. This moral teaching does not describe how we are saved from our sin, but is there to teach how we should relate to other believers, and the world in order that we will be separated and distinct from the evil of this world, living as God's adopted children.



One of the analogies the disciples taught for how we should then live as a result of the salvation we are given as believers is fighting a good fight. (illustrated here as 2 boxers fighting)

The disciples spread out into the world from Jerusalem and preached the Gospel, and then taught new believers how to live together as the church. The best example of this we have recorded for us in the Bible is the apostle Paul. The book of Acts records Paul journeying into Asia Minor and Europe, preaching the Gospel to those he encounters, and then establishing churches in the cities he has visited as he instructs them in the didache. Paul would return to those churches and continue to teach them and strengthen them. Paul also wrote many letters to those churches when he couldn't physically revisit them, so that he could correct misunderstandings in the preaching, and continue to teach and establish the churches in their new faith.



Paul went to great lengths to teach and strengthen the believers in the churches he helped to found, including sending them teaching letters when he could not be there in person to correct misunderstandings of the kerygma and didache.

We are still part of this age where the church is being built and we are eagerly awaiting Jesus' return. We are given many prophecies describing the times before Jesus would return. Daniel spoke of the 70th week during which a man of great evil would deceive the world during a time of tribulation. Signs of the end times leading up to Jesus' return are described by the apostles and prophets. Paul tells us that people will stop listening to sound teaching. Ezekiel describes the nation of Israel being reformed and regathered into the lands that God promised to Abraham. Ezekiel also describes an attack on Israel by a coalition of nations that includes the modern countries of Russia and Iran in which God fights for Israel and miraculously defeats these enemies. Jesus himself describes a time of wars and rumors of wars throughout the world. The apostle John goes into great detail describing what will happen, and the judgments the world will face during the tribulation in the book of Revelation. No one but God knows the exact timing of when all of this will be fulfilled. But, we do know that all of this could happen at any time, and we eagerly anticipate Jesus returning for His church – for all those whom have believed the Gospel and are actively trusting in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.



Satan and his followers will eventually face eternal punishment in a lake of fire.

Are you ready? Do you believe God's incredible plan for history? Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah - the one God promised to Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets? Do you believe that Jesus lived a perfect life, without sin, and laid down His life on the cross in your place as the payment for your sin, fulfilling God's judgment and wrath that you deserved? Do you believe that Jesus died and was then buried, and on the third day brought back to life by God's power, conquering death once and for all? I truly hope and pray that this is the case. History, archaeology, science, and all of human knowledge testifies to God as our Creator, Lord, and Savior. God loves you so much that He came to earth as a man and suffered and died for you in your place for your sin. God has fulfilled many promises to us, and is continuing to fulfill this incredible plan that He has given and revealed to us in the Bible. We are so blessed to be witnesses to all He has done, and is continuing to do to His glory. I sincerely hope and pray that you have trusted Jesus as and for your salvation, and that we will one day be able to eternally rejoice, worship, and praise God together for all He has done and is continuing to do in His incredible plan for His creation.

In Christ, and to Him all glory,

Kevin Carlson