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**T H E   F E W E R   T H E   W O R D S ,  
T H E   B E T T E R   T H E   P R A Y E R .  
~   M A R T I N   L U T H E R**



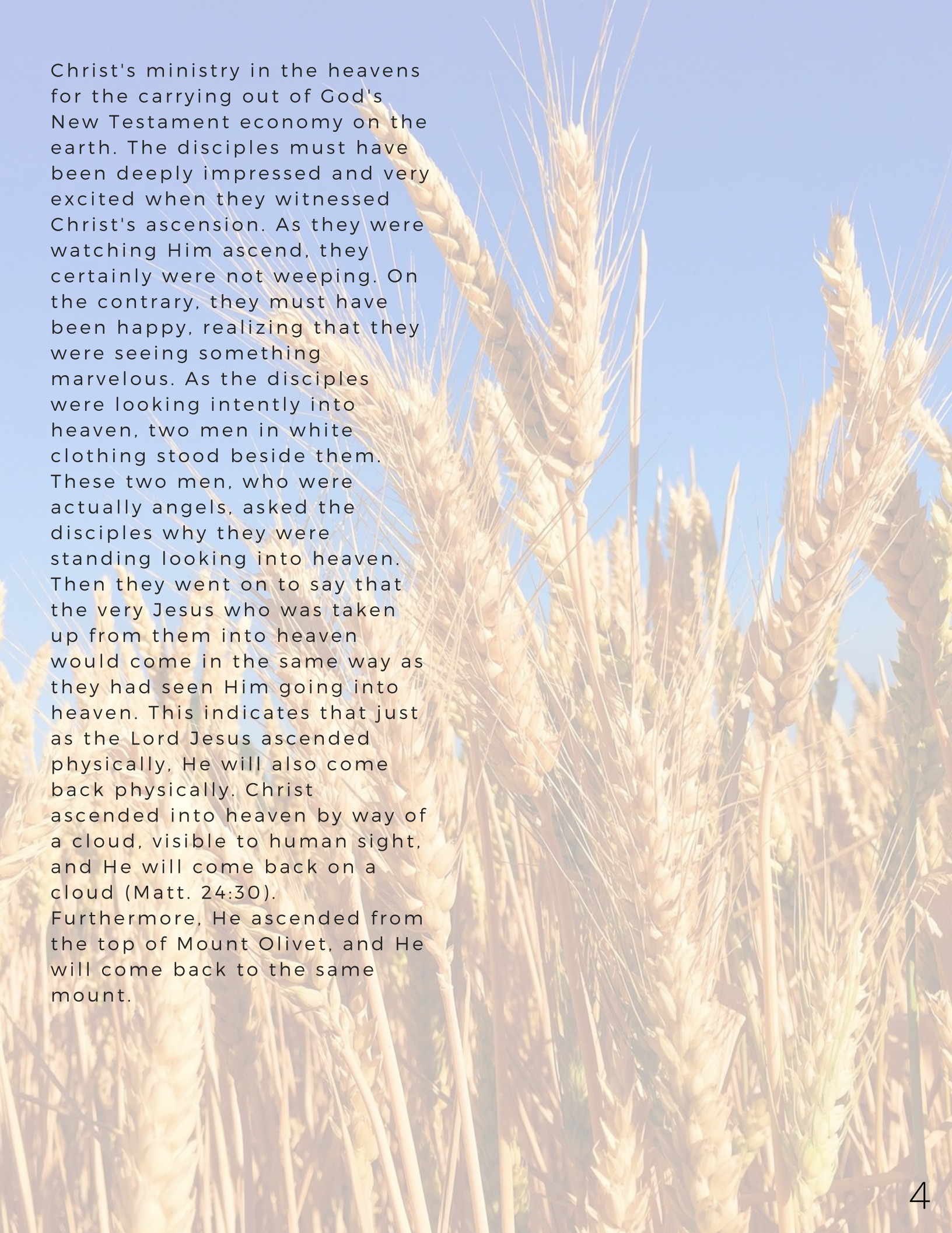
# CHRIST'S ASCENSION

**Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.**

**Eph 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, (12) For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.**

Luke's Gospel ends with the Lord's ascension into heaven, and his Acts begins with it. His Gospel is a narrative of the ministry of the incarnated Jesus on earth. His Acts is a record of the succeeding ministry of the resurrected and ascended Christ in heaven carried out through His believers on earth. In the Gospels, the Lord's ministry on earth, carried out by Himself, only sowed Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God into His believers, with no church built up yet. In Acts, the Lord's ministry in heaven,

carried out through His believers in His resurrection and ascension, spreads Him as the development of the kingdom of God for the building up of the church (Matt. 16:18) throughout the entire world to constitute His Body, His fullness (Eph. 1:23), to express Him, even the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19) for God's expression. The Lord's ascension points to His coming back. Between His ascension and His coming back there is the dispensation of grace so that He as the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), may apply His all-inclusive redemption to God's chosen people for their full salvation, that He may produce and build up the church, as His Body, for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. The vision of Christ's ascension into heaven strengthened the disciples' faith in Him and in what He had done for them through His death and resurrection. It broadened their view of God's heavenly economy, which had brought them into cooperation with



Christ's ministry in the heavens for the carrying out of God's New Testament economy on the earth. The disciples must have been deeply impressed and very excited when they witnessed Christ's ascension. As they were watching Him ascend, they certainly were not weeping. On the contrary, they must have been happy, realizing that they were seeing something marvelous. As the disciples were looking intently into heaven, two men in white clothing stood beside them. These two men, who were actually angels, asked the disciples why they were standing looking into heaven. Then they went on to say that the very Jesus who was taken up from them into heaven would come in the same way as they had seen Him going into heaven. This indicates that just as the Lord Jesus ascended physically, He will also come back physically. Christ ascended into heaven by way of a cloud, visible to human sight, and He will come back on a cloud (Matt. 24:30). Furthermore, He ascended from the top of Mount Olivet, and He will come back to the same mount.



## P E R S E V E R I N G   I N P R A Y E R

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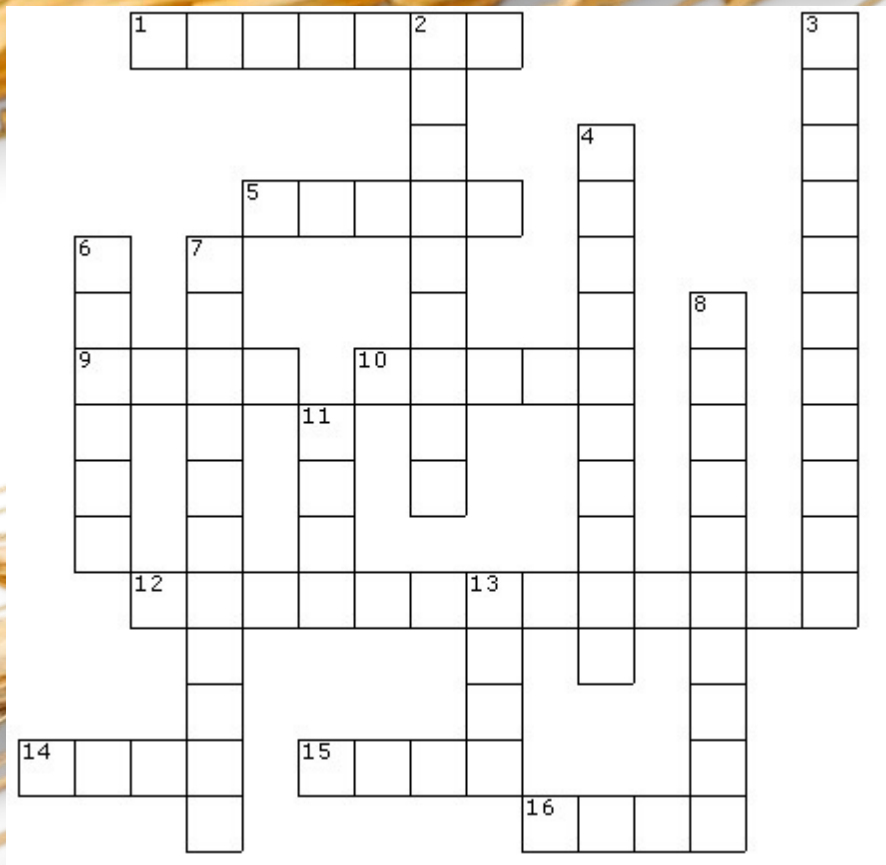
**Acts 1:12-14 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet... (13) And when they entered, they went up to the upper room where they were residing... (14) These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

Before the Lord's death, the disciples had no interest in prayer for spiritual things (Luke 22:40, 45-46). Rather, they contended among themselves as to which was considered to be greater. But now, after the Lord's resurrection and ascension, their spiritual condition radically changed. They did not contend among themselves, but were burdened to pray perseveringly with one accord, even before the day of Pentecost, when they would receive the outpoured Spirit of power economically. This is a strong sign and proof that they had received the indwelling Spirit of life essentially on the

day of the Lord's resurrection (John 20:22). It was a great matter for the one hundred and twenty to pray in one accord for ten days. They were able to pray in one accord for such a long time because they had Christ within them as their life and person. Furthermore, they were Galileans staying in Jerusalem, and they were under the threatening of the Jews, who were persecuting the followers of Jesus. Nevertheless, they were not afraid of the Jews' threatening, but stayed in Jerusalem and prayed in one accord. This certainly could not have been done by human effort. They had been transferred essentially from the old being into the new being. As a result of this transfer, they had Christ as their life and person and could pray in one accord and not be afraid of persecution.

# BIBLICAL CROSSWORD PUZZLE

## NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS



### ACROSS

- 1 named for a tax collector
- 5 1st and 2nd \_\_\_\_ are named for Jesus' main disciple
- 9 Rhymes with "hark"
- 10 Named for Jesus' brother
- 12 1st and 2nd \_\_\_\_
- 14 Fourth Gospel
- 15 Book Named in a Beatles song?
- 16 1st, 2nd, and 3rd

### DOWN

- 2 Letter to Ephesus
- 3 Letter to Philippi
- 4 Letter to Colosse
- 6 Sixth
- 7 Paul's letter to the \_\_\_\_
- 8 Last

# GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL - COMPOSER OF MESSIAH

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By 1741 George Frideric Handel was a failure. Bankrupted, in great physical pain, and the victim of plots to sabotage his career, the once-great opera composer scheduled a “farewell” appearance in London in April. To the London elite, it looked like this “German nincompoop,” as he was once called, was through. That summer, however, he composed Messiah, which not only brought him back into the spotlight, but is still deemed by some to be “an epitome of Christian faith.”

Handel's fellow countryman and contemporary Johann Bach (the two were born the same year but never met), Handel never had a musical family. George's father was a practical “surgeon-barber” who discouraged his son's musical career at every turn. His son was to be a lawyer. Indeed, George studied law until 1703, even though his

father (who finally allowed his son to take music lessons at age 9) died when he was 11. By age 12, Handel was substituting for his organ teacher and had written his first composition.

After musical studies in Germany and Italy, Handel moved to England, where he stayed for the rest of his life and became a composer for the Chapel Royal. His greatest passion was for the opera—an ill-timed passion, for the form was quickly falling out of fashion in England. The most popular work was the 1728 Beggar's Opera, which satirized the form itself. Still, Handel continued to pen operas into the 1740s, losing more and more money.

Handel's friends expressed concern that the concert hall was nearly empty. Never mind, he joked, an empty venue would mean great acoustics. He didn't joke for long. In 1737 Handel's opera company went bankrupt, and he suffered what seems to be a mild stroke. But to make matters worse, his latest musical fascination—the oratorio (a composition for orchestra and voices telling a sacred story without costumes, scenery, or dramatic action)—was his most controversial yet. His

first oratorio (actually, the first of its kind in English), *Esther*, was met with outrage by the church. A Bible story was being told by “common mummets,” and even worse, the words of God were being spoken in the theater!

“What are we coming to when the will of Satan is imposed upon us in this fashion?” cried one minister. The bishop of London apparently agreed and prohibited the oratorio from being performed. When Handel proceeded anyway, and the royal family attended, it was met with success—but the church was still angry.

In 1739 advertisements for *Israel in Egypt* were torn down by devout Christians, who also disrupted its performances. All of this angered the devoutly Lutheran Handel. As his friend Sir John Hawkins commented, “Throughout his life, [he] manifested a deep sense of religion. In conversation he would frequently declare the pleasure he felt in setting the Scriptures to music, and how contemplating the many sublime passages in the Psalms had contributed to his edification.”

Though irritated—and Handel was often irritated, earning a reputation for prolific cursing in five languages—he

dismissed the Puritans' concerns. “I have read my Bible very well,” he said, “and will choose for myself.” In fact, Handel maintained that he knew the Bible as well as any bishop. Financially, however, it did him little good. Once the composer for royalty, he was now threatened with debtor's prison.

Deeply depressed, Handel was visited by his friend Charles Jennens. The wealthy, devout Anglican had written a libretto about the life of Christ and the work of redemption, with the text completely taken from the Bible. A fussy perfectionist, Jennens had written it to challenge the deists who denied the divinity of Jesus. Would Handel compose the music for it? he asked. Handel answered that he would, and estimated its completion in a year.

Soon thereafter, a group of Dublin charities approached Handel to compose a work for a benefit performance. The money raised would help free men from debtor's prison, and Handel would receive a generous commission. Now with a text and a motivation, Handel began composing *Messiah* on August 22, 1741. Within six days, Part One was

finished. In nine more, Part Two. Six more and Part Three was done. It took him only an additional two days to finish the orchestration. Handel composed like a man obsessed. He rarely left his room and rarely touched his meals. But in 24 days he had composed 260 pages—an immense physical feat. When he finished writing what would become known as the Hallelujah Chorus, he said, “I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself.”

Though the performance of the piece again caused controversy (Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels* and then the dean of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, was outraged and initially refused to allow his musicians to participate), the premiere on April 13, 1742, at the Fishamble Street Musick Hall was a sensation. An overcapacity crowd of 700 people attended, raising 400 pounds to release 142 men from prison. (The demand for tickets was so great that men were asked not to wear their swords and women asked not to wear hoops in their skirts, allowing 100 extra people into the audience. Such hoops immediately fell out of fashion for concerts.)

Though it had met rave reviews in Dublin (“the most finished piece of music”), it was not very popular in London after its premiere. By 1745 Handel was again playing to empty houses and nearing poverty. Not until his oratorio *Judas Maccabeus*, which was misunderstood by the English as a veiled nationalistic anthem, did Handel (and with him *Messiah*) reach the pinnacle of his career.

Until his death, Handel conducted 30 performances of *Messiah* (none at Christmastime, for Handel deemed it a Lenten piece), only one of which was in a church, Bristol Cathedral. In that audience sat John Wesley. “I doubt if that congregation was ever so serious at a sermon as they were during this performance,” he remarked.

Handel died on the day before Easter 1759, hoping to “meet his good God, his sweet Lord and Savior, on the day of his Resurrection.” A close friend remarked, “He died as he lived—a good Christian, with a true sense of his duty to God and to man, and in perfect charity with all the world.”

A H Y M N A D A Y K E E P S  
Y O U H U M M I N G A L L T H E  
W A Y



**CHRIST THE LORD IS RIS'N INDEED**

1

Christ the Lord is ris'n indeed,  
Hallelujah!  
He has met His people's need,  
Hallelujah!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high,  
Hallelujah!  
Sing, ye heav'ns and earth, reply,  
Hallelujah!

2

Lives again our glorious King,  
Hallelujah!  
Where, O Death, is now thy sting?  
Hallelujah!  
Dying once He all doth save,  
Hallelujah!  
Where thy victory, O grave?  
Hallelujah!

3

Love's redeeming work is done,  
Hallelujah!  
Fought the fight, the battle won,  
Hallelujah!  
Death in vain forbade Him rise,  
Hallelujah!  
Christ ascended o'er the skies,  
Hallelujah!

4

Soar we now where Christ hath led,  
Hallelujah!  
Following our exalted Head,  
Hallelujah!  
Made like Him, like Him we rise,  
Hallelujah!  
Free from all the earthly ties,  
Hallelujah!



# LUKE 4

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## WEEKLY BIBLE CHAPTER READS

**Lk 4:1** And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, while being tempted for forty days by the devil.

**Lk 4:2** And He did not eat anything in those days, and when they were concluded, He became hungry.

**Lk 4:3** And the devil said to Him, If You are the Son of God, speak to this stone that it become bread.

**Lk 4:4** And Jesus answered him, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone."

**Lk 4:5** And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the inhabited earth in a moment of time.

**Lk 4:6** And the devil said to Him, To You I will give all this authority and their glory, because to me it has been delivered, and to whomever I want I give it.

**Lk 4:7** If You therefore worship before me, it shall all be Yours.

**Lk 4:8** And Jesus answered and said to him, It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."

**Lk 4:9** And he led Him into Jerusalem and set Him on the wing of the temple and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here;

**Lk 4:10** For it is written, "To His angels He shall give charge concerning You to protect You,

**Lk 4:11** And on their hands they shall bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone."

**Lk 4:12** And Jesus answered and said to him, It is said, "You shall not test the Lord your God."

**Lk 4:13 And when the devil had concluded every temptation, he went away from Him until an opportune time.**

**Lk 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. And reports about Him went out through all the surrounding region.**

**Lk 4:15 And He taught in their synagogues and was glorified by all.**

**Lk 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and according to His custom He entered on the Sabbath day into the synagogue and stood up to read.**

**Lk 4:17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,**

**Lk 4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed,**

**Lk 4:19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee.”**

**Lk 4:20 And when He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, He sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.**

**Lk 4:21 And He began to say to them, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**

**Lk 4:22 And all bore witness to Him and marveled at the words of grace proceeding out of His mouth, and they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?**

**Lk 4:23 And He said to them, Surely you will say this proverb to Me, Physician, heal yourself! What we heard happening in Capernaum, do here also in Your own country.**

**Lk 4:24 And He said, Truly I say to you that no prophet is acceptable in his own country.**

**Lk 4:25 But in truth I say to you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;**

**Lk 4:26 And to none of them was Elijah sent, except to the city of Sarepta of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.**

**Lk 4:27 And there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian.**

**Lk 4:28 And all in the synagogue were filled with anger when they heard these things,**

**Lk 4:29 And they rose up and cast Him out of the city and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built so that they might throw Him down the cliff.**

**Lk 4:30 But He, passing through their midst, went away.**

**Lk 4:31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And He taught them on the Sabbath.**

**Lk 4:32 And they were astounded at His teaching, because His word was with authority.**

**Lk 4:33 And in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,**

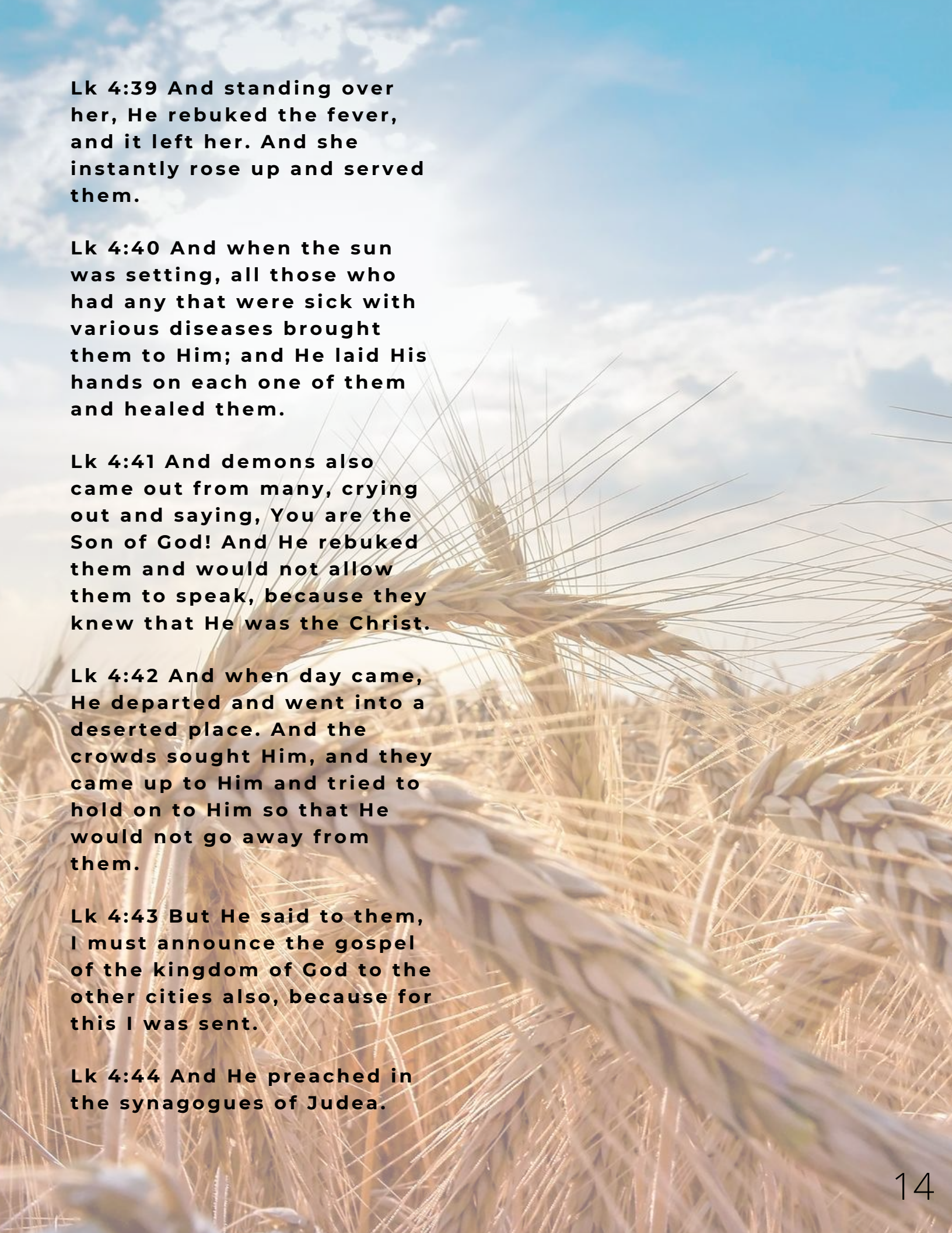
**Lk 4:34 Ah! What do we have to do with You, Jesus, Nazarene? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God.**

**Lk 4:35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be quiet and come out from him. And throwing him down in the midst, the demon came out from him without harming him at all.**

**Lk 4:36 And amazement came upon all, and they spoke to one another, saying, What is this word? For with authority and power He orders the unclean spirits, and they come out.**

**Lk 4:37 And reports went out concerning Him into every place of the surrounding region.**

**Lk 4:38 And He rose up and went from the synagogue and entered into the house of Simon. And Simon's mother-in-law was suffering with a high fever, and they asked Him concerning her.**



**Lk 4:39 And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she instantly rose up and served them.**

**Lk 4:40 And when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on each one of them and healed them.**

**Lk 4:41 And demons also came out from many, crying out and saying, You are the Son of God! And He rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that He was the Christ.**

**Lk 4:42 And when day came, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds sought Him, and they came up to Him and tried to hold on to Him so that He would not go away from them.**

**Lk 4:43 But He said to them, I must announce the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this I was sent.**

**Lk 4:44 And He preached in the synagogues of Judea.**

# BIBLE CROSSWORD: NT BOOKS

