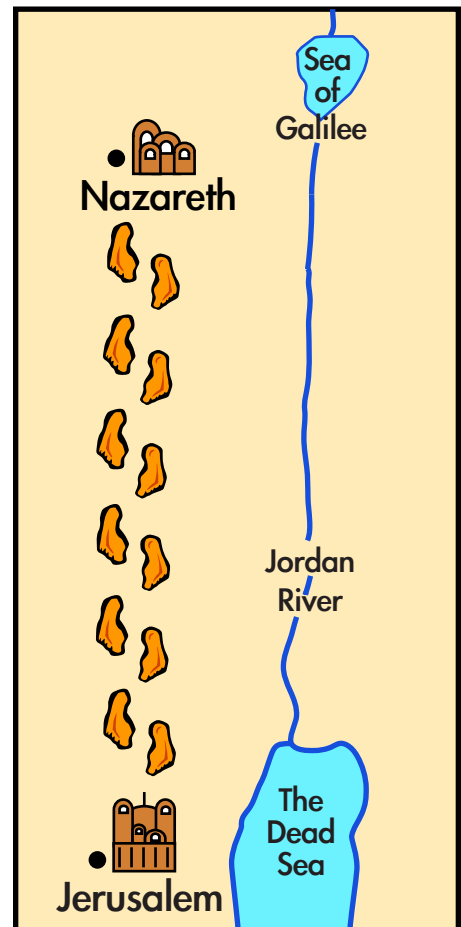


# Tour of the Holy Lands - The Temple



Jesus came here to the Temple when he was a boy. He could have stood quite close to us (Luke 2:40-52). The Temple looked much different than this mosque, however. Look, I brought a picture from a model located in the city. Mary and Joseph used to come all the way from Nazareth to attend the important feasts at the Temple. Women didn't have to come, but men did. When Jesus was 12 years old, he traveled with them. When they entered, Mary would have gone to the Women's Court, since women were not allowed to stand by men. Joseph and Jesus would have gone to the front of the Temple. They attended festivities and sacrificed a lamb.





In that day they often traveled in caravans. Traveling in large numbers was safer than in small groups. Mary would have joined the caravan ahead of Joseph since women moved more slowly than men. Joseph would have started later and caught up to the women. The young people formed their own traveling party, checking in with their parents when they got hungry. But Jesus didn't show up for dinner that day.



Mary and Joseph began looking for Jesus among their relatives and friends. Jesus made friends easily, so he could be anywhere. They couldn't find him. Mary and Joseph decided that the next day they would return to the last place they had seen him – the Temple. In the Passover season, the teachers, called "doctors," would meet in the court, outside where we are standing. That's where they would discuss religious questions so that all could listen. The teachers would teach by question, answer and discussion. The Bible says, "They found him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors both hearing them and asking them questions." This showed how thirsty he was for knowledge. He wanted to take every opportunity to learn from these teachers before going home to his little town of Nazareth. Those watching were amazed at his intelligence, his sharpness. Maybe he was able to find answers never thought of before.



His parents could hardly believe their eyes. His mother took him aside, "Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere." Jesus' words to his mother are the first words he speaks in the Bible. "Why did you have to look for me? Don't you know I must be in my Father's house?" Very gently, Jesus takes the name "father" from Joseph and gives it to God. He had been with his Father all this time under His care. His parents wouldn't understand all that he said that day until he grew up.



The Bible tells us Jesus went home with his parents and was obedient to them until he grew up and left home. In addition, Mark 6:3 tells us that Joseph taught Jesus to be a carpenter during those growing-up years.

As we leave, we see arches along the outside of the Temple Mount. In Jesus' day, they called the area "Solomon's Porch." We wonder, did little Jesus ever imagine that he would someday be teaching under arches such as these?



Before we leave the Temple, we have an important story to tell. Let's walk to the south down these stairs. In Jesus' day, this area of the Temple Mount was called the Court of the Gentiles, a large place where both Jews and Gentiles were welcome to come and worship God. Jesus loved to teach in this area. Just as he came here at Passover with his family as a boy, he came for three Passovers during his teaching years. He felt this court was just as holy as the Holy Place in the center. At least one time, maybe twice, Jesus became quite angry when the priests allowed some noisy sellers of animals and changers of money into this court. It was pretty handy to buy a sacrifice – ox, sheep, pigeon or dove – so close to the altar. And, it was simple to change your foreign coins into Tyrian shekels to pay your yearly tax to the Temple. Then, too, the priests must be paid their share for each sale (Matt 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, John 2).



When he needed to, Jesus could use strong words, such as “that fox,” or “ye serpents,” or “woe you hypocrites”! But before Jesus said anything to anyone that day, he acted. Quickly, he made a whip, called a “scourge” [skurge], out of ropes or leather, and drove them all out of the Temple. Then he flipped the tables of the money-changers. Can you imagine animals bawling and running around, coins ringing and spinning right and left, and men scrambling in the dust after their animals and coins? Jesus shouted: “Get these things out of here! Don’t turn my Father’s house into a shop!” Not only were the sellers and the priests angry, but as soon as he said, “my Father’s house,” they knew he was claiming to be the Messiah. And even he knew he’d get into trouble for that. Then Jesus quoted the prophets, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for everyone” (Isa 56:7). “But you have made it into a den of thieves” (Jer 7:11). I wonder how long the Temple remained quiet after those words.

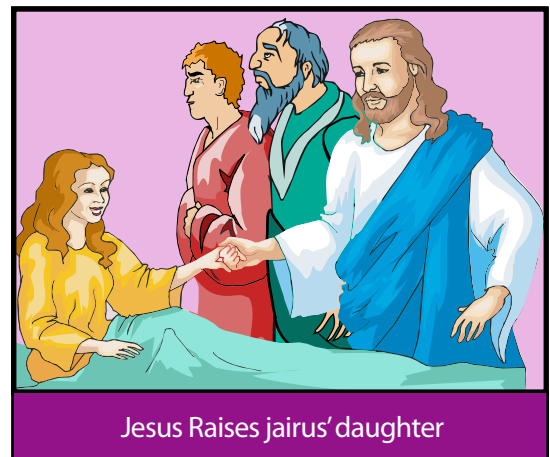
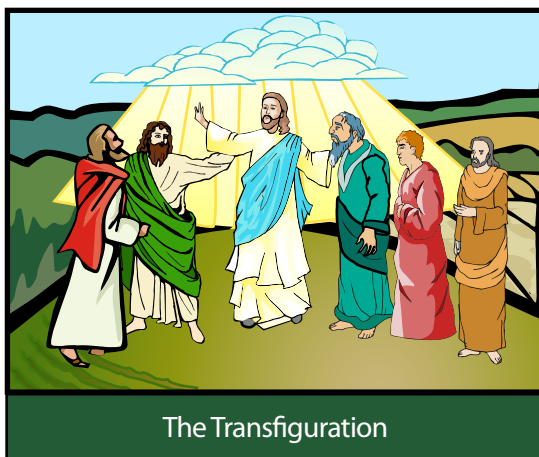


The last Temple story takes place at one of the gates leading to the Temple (Acts 3). The most popular of the gates were the ones to the South. They had a grand stairway leading to them. But our story happens at the gate on the Eastern wall. It's blocked up these days, but we can still see it. It's called the Eastern Gate, the Beautiful Gate, the Golden Gate – any of those names. Let's sit across the street and review the story.



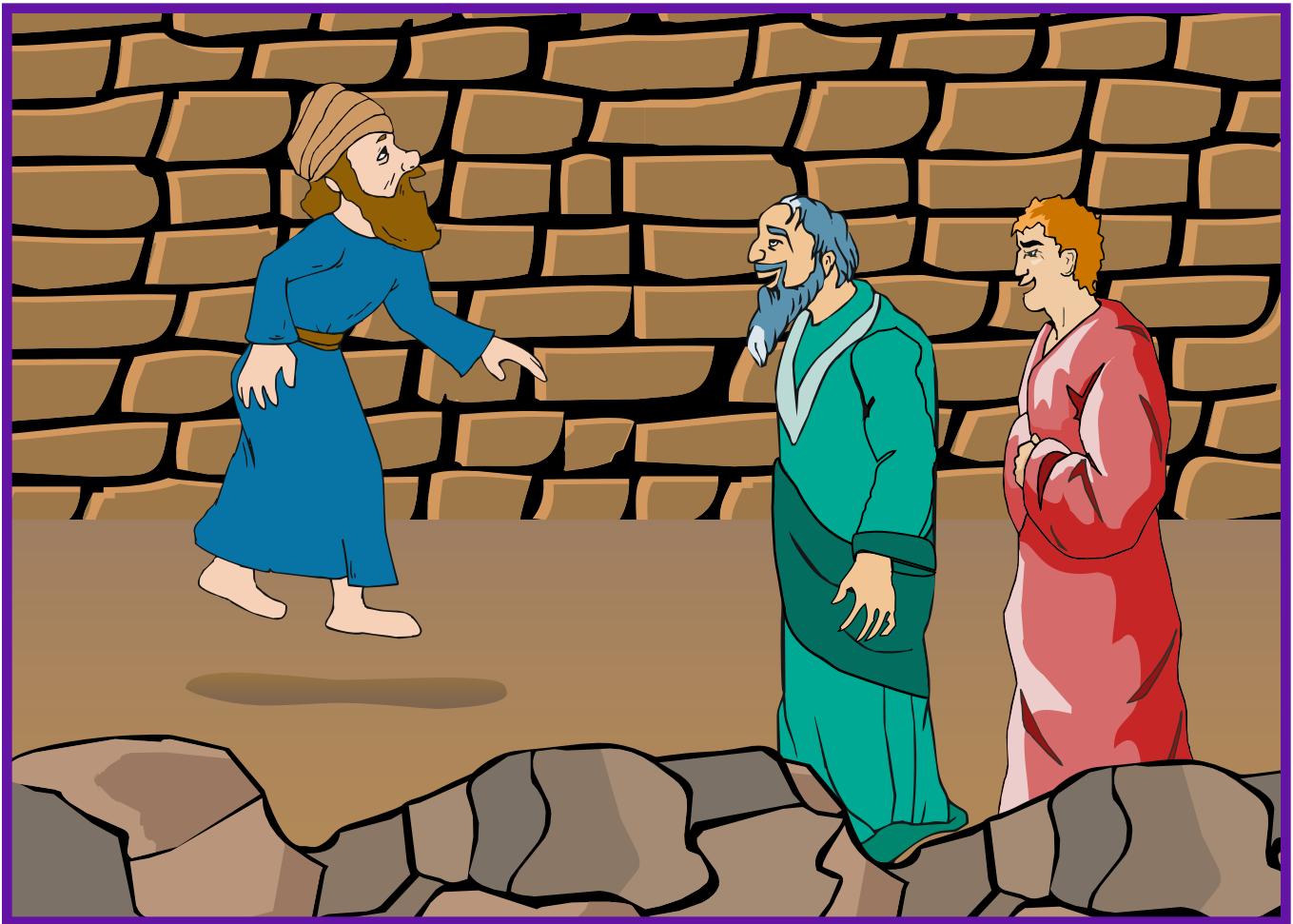


The heroes of the story are Peter and John. You remember them – two of Jesus’ favorite disciples. Look closely and you can tell which one is Peter. He does all the talking here while John (who is still young) watches. Jesus had chosen them to watch the transfiguration and the raising of Jairus’ daughter. But, at the time of this story, Jesus was gone. He had died, resurrected, and ascended. Yet, he expected his disciples to continue his healing work.





It's 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Peter and John are going up together, as they usually do, to pray in the Temple. They are approaching the beautiful brass Temple gate, the one with richer and thicker plates of silver and gold than the others. By that shiny gate is sitting a ragged beggar. His relatives carry him there every day because he is sure to find a few kind hearts to give him coins. Jesus, Peter's Master, is gone. What would the Master do? What will Peter do? Instead of turning his eyes away from the beggar, Peter looks him straight in the eye. The man is looking hopeful. Peter says, "I have no money, but I'll give you something better, something you didn't ask for." Peter has something special that he is compelled to share. He says, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Peter uses every power he can think of in Jesus' name: "Jesus" meaning Savior; "Christ," meaning the power of the Messiah. He even includes names that were not that powerful, like "The Nazarene." It doesn't matter what you call him; in his name, you shall see wonders take place.



Peter takes hold of the man's right hand with a firm grip and gently pulls him to his feet, as he had watched Jesus do to Peter's mother-in-law. And immediately those unused feet and ankles become strong and steady. The man's face breaks into a wide grin. For 40 years he had been a helpless cripple and now he is on his feet. Wow! He begins leaping and jumping. He doesn't even question his strength. He runs circles around them. Jesus would have been so grateful.



Now, let's run around the outside of the Temple to the south and see that pinnacle where the devil took Jesus on his second temptation. Remember, this is where the devil suggested that Jesus should leap off (Matt 4:5-7). Did you notice that the devil never succeeds in making Jesus do anything? He only makes suggestions. It's been a full day of good lessons for us all. We'll come back tomorrow, but now let's head back to the hotel. There's still time for a swim in the pool before dinner.

