

**THE STORY  
GOD WROTE**



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## **The story God wrote**

**T**he Bible is God's story—a true story of His love for us. It is a story with real people that lived in cities and towns, some of which are still around today. It is a story that began thousands of years ago and carries on into the future. And so the story includes you, and within the story you will find some personal notes from God to you. Although God used different people to write the story, every word is true and comes from Him.

This is how God's story begins.

## **The OLD TESTAMENT**

In the beginning, before there was time, God decided to create a beautiful place called earth. He decorated the earth with trees and plants and grass. God also put the sun, moon and stars in the sky and He created animals of every kind to live on the earth He had made.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image.” So God created man (people) to be just like Him with a spirit inside that can have a close friendship with Him.

He put the first man and woman in a beautiful garden called Eden and allowed them to enjoy fruit from all of the trees, except one tree—the tree right in the middle of the garden. God told them not to eat of that tree. If they did, they would die!

Now the devil—who had been an angel in heaven—was thrown down to earth because he rebelled against God.

The devil hates anything that is good, so he came to Eve as an ordinary serpent and tempted her to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. “Nothing will happen to you,” the devil lied.

Eve listened to the devil and took of the fruit. Then she ate it. She gave some to Adam, and he ate it too. From that very moment, sin entered the world; and sin brought with it sickness, pain and death.

God punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience and sent them out of the Garden of Eden. Life for them would never be the same again. It would never be perfect.

Adam and Eve had children and, as time went by, the number of people on earth grew. But sadly, as the people became more and more, and spread on earth, so did their sin. People started doing very wicked things. It got so bad that, as God looked at His creation, He was

sorry that He had made man. The Lord wanted to have a special closeness with the people He created, but now, sin had destroyed the pure life He had breathed into Adam. Nothing pure and good could ever come from the hearts of such wicked people. So God planned to destroy the world and put an end to the growing ugliness of sin.

But there was one man, Noah, who did right in the eyes of the Lord. He was a good man who believed in God. God wanted to keep Noah and his family safe, so He told him to build a huge boat, called an ark. After many years, when the ark was finally built, God brought pairs of every kind of animal to the ark, and they went inside. Then Noah and his family went in too, and God shut the door. It started to rain; and it rained nonstop for forty days, until the flood waters covered the highest mountains.

After a long time, the water started going down, and after many months the ark came to rest on a

mountain. When the water had dried up, Noah and his family and all the animals came out of the ark and were now free to live on a clean, sinless world.

Over time, Noah's sons Shem, Ham and Japheth had children of their own and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And the children became tribes and nations. But because the heart of man has always been sinful, people started doing bad things again.

But there was one man who was faithful to God. His name was Abram. Because of his faith, God promised to make his children a great nation—a nation that would be God's very own people! God changed Abram's name to Abraham, and when he was very old, his wife Sarah had a son, and they called him Isaac.

Isaac grew up and married Rebecca. They had two sons whom they named Jacob and Esau. Jacob longed for God to bless him, and

although he tricked his father and his twin brother, God saw the longing in his heart and blessed him in a special way.

Jacob married Rachel. He also had other wives, and together they had twelve sons. Joseph, the second youngest of the sons, was sold by his jealous brothers to some traders and taken as a slave to Egypt.

There, Joseph became the faithful servant of an official in Pharaoh's army. However, God had planned that after many years he would be the top leader of Egypt under Pharaoh the king.

There was a famine at that time, and because food was scarce in Canaan, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy food. Now Joseph, who had been put in charge of all the stored-up food, recognized his brothers, but he was kind to them. He gave them food and he also told them to go fetch their father and settle in Egypt. So Jacob and his eleven sons

moved from Canaan to Egypt, and Pharaoh gave them land to farm.

God had changed Jacob's name to Israel, so all the children after him became known as Israelites. There in Egypt, God blessed his twelve sons with big families and they became the twelve tribes of Israel.

After many years there was a new king in Egypt. The Egyptians didn't like the Israelites and worried that they would become so many and so strong that they'd take over their country. So the Egyptians made the Israelites work very hard as slaves. For four hundred years they were treated harshly, and they prayed that God would save them.

God heard their prayers and raised up a leader, Moses, to rescue His people. But Pharaoh would not let the people go because his heart was hard. So God sent ten plagues—like sickness and pests—on the

Egyptians. The last plague was death. God protected all those who believed and were obedient to Him, but the oldest son in all the other families died. Only then did Pharaoh let the Israelites go.

So the Israelites set off for the land God had promised to Abraham, and Canaan would soon be known as the Promised Land. As they traveled through the desert, God led them with a moving cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. The Lord could have led the Israelites the shortest way, but then they would have had to pass through an enemy nation and fight them. God didn't want them to become afraid and go back to Egypt, so He led them towards the Red Sea.

In the meantime, Pharaoh had changed his mind about letting the Israelites go. So he and his army chased after them. But God miraculously open a wide path through the Red Sea for the Israelites to walk through. As the

Egyptian army chased after them, the walls of water on either side came crashing down on them drowning Pharaoh and his whole army. With the sea closed again behind the Israelites, they could no longer return the same way to Egypt.

Although, at first, the Israelites were grateful that God had rescued them from the Egyptians, they soon started complaining about all sorts of things. But God was patient with them and gave them food and water. He let special food flakes, called manna, fall from the sky every night. In the morning they would gather up the manna, which they could bake or boil. This is how God fed them for forty years.

On their journey, the Israelites camped at a mountain called Sinai. There God gave His people rules to live by—the Ten Commandments. These are laws that teach God's people to honor Him, and to respect people.

Even though God had rescued the Israelites from Egypt, they wanted a God they could see. So while Moses was meeting with God on the mountain, they collected everyone's gold and made a golden calf. Then they bowed down and worshiped the idol. God was very angry and punished the people for their sin.

God would speak to Moses like a friend, but the people didn't have a close friendship with God. So God told Moses to build a very special place where He could come down to be with His people. It was a big tent that could be taken down and put up again as they moved from place to place. The Tent, called the Tabernacle, was a very holy place. Only priests could serve in the Tabernacle and offer sacrifices, and the Lord's presence and glory would come down on the Tabernacle in the form of a cloud.

When they got near to Canaan, a place called Kadesh, Moses sent twelve spies into the land. After forty days, when the spies came back and

told them that the people in Canaan were powerful, and their cities well-protected, the Israelites became discouraged and didn't believe that God could help them conquer the land. In fact, they wanted to go all the way back to Egypt. Because of their unbelieving hearts, God kept them in the desert for forty years, so that only their children would enter the Promised Land.

After the forty years, Moses died and Joshua became the new leader. Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land and helped them conquer many cities, like the city of Jericho. God told them to drive out the people from the land because the people who lived in Canaan were evil and worshiped idols.

Judges were chosen by the tribes to make sure that everyone was treated fairly. Some judges like Gideon, became brave, respected leaders that led the Israelites into battle and protected

the weak tribes when they were attacked. However, other judges, like Samson, didn't do such a great job.

Though it took many years, God helped the Israelites drive out the heathen people from the Promised Land, and eventually there was peace. But the Israelites started to turn away from God, and they worshiped the man-made gods of the heathen nations around them. They also wanted a king like the other nations had—a human king instead of God their heavenly King. And so God told Samuel (the last judge) to let the people choose a king. And they chose Saul as their king.

But Saul did not obey God and do what is right, and so God chose someone who would honor Him—David a shepherd. As a boy, David's fearless faith and love for the Lord got him to take on a giant, Goliath, who had dared to challenge God and the army of Israel. David killed Goliath with a sling and a stone, and

Judges 13 -16 • 1 Samuel 8:1-18 • 1 Samuel 10:17-25

1 Samuel 15:1-23 • 1 Samuel 16 - 17

King Saul made him a leader in his army. David won many battles and became so popular that Saul was jealous of him and wanted to kill him. So David and his band of followers fled to the desert of Judah where Saul and his army tried to track him down. Some of David's psalms are about his deep feelings and prayers while Saul was trying to kill him.

Eventually Saul died in battle and David became king. David was a good king, although not perfect. He did something that was very wrong, which caused a lot of problems in his family. After forty years, David's son Solomon became king.

Solomon built a Temple in Jerusalem where people could come and worship God and bring their offerings. It was a time of peace for the Israelites, and Solomon became the wisest and the wealthiest king.

After Solomon died, the nation of Israel was divided. Solomon's son Rehoboam became king of Judah in the South while Jeroboam became king of Israel in the North.

The people of Israel and Judah did not follow God's ways and chose to worship the gods of the heathen nations. God sent many prophets, like Elijah, Elisha and Amos to warn the people of what would happen to them if they turned away from God. But the hearts of God's people grew cold toward Him and they no longer followed His ways.

So God allowed the king of Babylon to attack and conquer them. The Babylonians destroyed the Temple and took many Israelites back to Babylon as slaves.

Among those captured were Daniel and his friends. They loved God and were loyal to Him, even when bad people planned to kill them because of their faith. Daniel was

thrown into a den of lions, and his friends were thrown into a fiery furnace. But God protected them and saved them.

During this time, the Persians conquered Babylon. After seventy years, God worked in the heart of the king of Persia. The king showed favor to God's people (now called Jews). He allowed those who wanted to go back to Judah to do so. Many did. They rebuilt the Temple, and Nehemiah helped them rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, back in Persia, there was a certain man who disliked God's people so much that he thought up a way to get rid of them. He persuaded the king to sign an instruction to kill every Jew. But God used Queen Esther, an orphan from Judah, to help the king realize that he had been tricked. So the king signed another law that allowed the Jews to protect themselves.

God had wanted the Promised Land to be a place where all His people would be blessed and worship Him. But they stubbornly went their own way instead of following God's way, and they were more interested in becoming rich than caring for the needs of others. And so, for four hundred years, God no longer spoke to them through the prophets, as He had done before.

## **The NEW TESTAMENT**

Then, one day, God sent an angel to a young, unmarried woman called Mary. The angel told her the good news that God was sending His Son to earth. The Holy Spirit would let her have this special child—Jesus the Son of God.

The Romans had conquered Judah some years before. Judah became known as Judea and the Romans made the people pay tax. Then Caesar, the Roman governor, ordered that

everyone's name be written down in the town where their forefathers had lived. Although it was near the time when Mary was to have her baby, she and her husband Joseph had to leave their hometown of Nazareth and travel to Bethlehem.

While they were in Bethlehem, Jesus was born. Because of the many people in Bethlehem at that time, there was no room for them to stay, so they spent the night outside somewhere and laid the baby in a hay box for animals. That same night, angels from heaven told a group of shepherds that Jesus had been born on earth. So the shepherds left their sheep and went to Bethlehem to see this miracle. And they found Jesus lying in a manger, just as the angels had said.

After this, some wise men in a country east of Judea saw a very bright star. The star, which was moving, was a sign to them that a very important king had been born. So the wise

men followed it until they came to the house where Jesus was. They laid very special gifts at the feet of Jesus: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then they returned home. Meanwhile, King Herod, who had heard from them that a Jewish king had been born, felt threatened. So he ordered that all the boys in the town of Bethlehem up to the age of two years be killed.

But an angel warned Joseph about Herod's plan and they escaped to Egypt where they stayed for two years. When Herod died, Mary and Joseph returned with Jesus to their hometown Nazareth. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, and at the age of twelve, his parents dedicated Him at the Temple in Jerusalem.

When Jesus was a grown man, He was baptized by John the Baptist. He then went to the desert of Judea for forty days and was tempted three times by the devil, yet He did not sin. Then Jesus chose a team of twelve disciples and went from town to town, doing

good and teaching people. He used stories, called parables, to help people understand the lessons of the kingdom of God.

For three years, Jesus went all over Judea and Galilee, telling people about the love of God and how to have eternal life. He healed the crippled, let the blind see and cured those with diseases. He chased out evil spirits that lived in people, forgave people their sins and blessed little children. But the leaders of the Temple became jealous because many people started listening to Jesus instead of following their rules and respecting them. So they thought up a plan to arrest Jesus and have Him killed.

It was the night before the Passover feast in Jerusalem. Judas, one of the disciples, decided to turn against Jesus for the payment of some silver that the leaders had offered him. Judas led the Temple guards to the garden where Jesus was with the other disciples praying. The guards arrested Jesus and took Him to the

house of the High Priest. Early the next morning, He was taken to Pilate the governor of Judea. Pilate found no fault in Jesus and told the crowd that He had done nothing to deserve death. But because Pilate was afraid of the people, who were shouting to have Jesus crucified, he had Jesus whipped and handed him over to the Jewish leaders. Then the Roman guards led Jesus out of the city to a hill, where they nailed Him to a cross.

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the whole world. God placed all our sin on Him. In this way, Jesus took the punishment we deserved by dying in our place.

After Jesus had died, two of His followers took Him down from the cross, wrapped His body in strips of cloth and laid Him in a tomb (a cave).

On the morning of the third day, something very special happened. God raised Jesus from the dead! This showed that His death was enough

to pay for the sin of the whole world. An angel stood in front of the empty tomb and told the women there, “He is not here - He has risen from the dead.”

Later, Jesus appeared to some of His followers, and to His disciples who were together in a room. He told them to go down to Galilee and meet Him there.

Forty days after Jesus had risen, He told His disciples to go preach the good news all over the world. Then Jesus was taken up to heaven in a cloud, and He now sits on the right side of His Father in heaven. Two messengers from God told the disciples that Jesus will come back in the same way as He went to heaven. When He comes, all believers will be changed and rise up to meet Him in the clouds.

Jesus had promised His followers that when He left earth, He would send someone in His place—the Holy Spirit who would comfort

Luke 24:13-49 • Matthew 28 • Acts 1:1-11

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 • John 16:7-11

and guide them. A few weeks later, while the disciples were together in a room, the Holy Spirit came down on them and they were filled with His power. They went out, boldly preaching about Jesus and doing miracles among the people. Many listened to them and turned to God.

From then on, the believers met in homes and shared all they had with the poor. That is how the church of Jesus started.

The twelve disciples of Jesus became known as the Apostles, and Peter became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. The religious leaders tried to stop the apostles from preaching in the streets and threatened to send them to prison.

Saul, one of the religious leaders, even started killing those who were bold enough to take a stand for Jesus. But one day, while Saul was on his way to Damascus, Jesus spoke to him from heaven and changed his life;

and his name was changed to Paul. He became a bold follower of Jesus and the first missionary. Paul was put in prison many times for preaching, and while he was in prison he wrote letters to friends and to the churches he had started. Many of those letters are now part of the Bible.

Many Christians living in Jerusalem were put in prison and even killed for their faith, so the believers fled to other cities and countries, spreading the good news of Jesus wherever they went.

After many years, John—one of the disciples—had a vision. He saw what heaven is like. Then Jesus gave him messages to write to the seven churches. After this he was taken up into heaven and shown what will happen at the end of the age, when there will be terrible times on earth for those who have chosen in their hearts not to follow God.

At the end, God will judge those who did not ask to be forgiven—those whose hearts are full of sin. Those who are dead will be made alive to stand before God and give an answer for everything they have done. Everyone whose sins are not forgiven will be separated from God for all eternity; for no sin may enter heaven.

Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth where all believers—those who love God and whose sins are forgiven—will live with Him. And there will be no more sadness or pain, for we will have new, perfect bodies and live happily for ever and ever in the most beautiful place you can imagine!



## Here are a few of those special notes God has put in the Bible for you

<b>When you are...</b>	
afraid	Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 41:10
discouraged	Isaiah 40:31, Isaiah 41:13
lonely	Proverbs 18:24, Psalm 68:5-6
sick or in pain	James 5:15, Psalm 103:1-3
sad	Psalm 147:3, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
tempted	1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 1:6-7
worried	Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 6:33-34
<b>When you need...</b>	
God's protection	Psalm 121:7-8, Psalm 91:9-11
God to guide you	Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 32:8
to forgive someone	Romans 12:17-19, Colossians 3:13
hope	Philippians 4:19, Psalm 42:11
peace and rest	John 14:27, Matthew 11:28
an answer to prayer	Mark 11:24, Isaiah 58:9
<b>When you feel...</b>	
unloved	Psalm 103:13, 1 John 3:1
guilty	Isaiah 1:18, Psalm 51:10
worthless	Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:6
like giving up	Philippians 4:13, 2 Chronicles 15:7
<b>When</b>	
people are mean	Matthew 5:11-12, 1 Peter 3:13-15
bad things happen	Romans 8:28, Jeremiah 29:11

