

# The Promise

*Illustrated Stories From God's Word*





The Promise: Illustrated Stories from God's Word

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All of the pictures used in this book were created by local artists in Patna, a city in the state of Bihar, located in eastern India.

Stories in this book come from the S-T4T core story set, used by missionaries all over the world to help non-literate societies come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. S-T4T (Storying - Training For Trainers) is an intentional church-planting strategy founded on stories from God's Word. It makes his Word available to all people in a way they can understand, respond to, and reproduce.

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# Creation

In the beginning there was God. He spoke and when he did, he created the whole world and everything in it. God made light and water. He made the dry ground and all kinds of plants and trees. God made the sun, the moon, and the stars. He made all kinds of fish, birds, and animals. And then, God created people. He patterned them after himself.

God formed a man's body from the soil of the ground and breathed into him and he began to live. Then God placed the man in a garden. God planted all kinds of trees in the garden. They were beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden he placed two trees - the tree which gave life and the tree which gave the understanding of good and evil.

God told the man, Adam, "You may eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree which gives the understanding of good and evil. If you eat this tree's fruit, you will die."

And God said, "Man shouldn't be alone." So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs and made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam.

"At last!" Adam exclaimed. "She has flesh and bones like me!" Adam and his wife, Eve, were naked, but neither of them was ashamed.

God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals." Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way. God had created the world and everything in it in six days.

The next day, the seventh day, God stopped working. God set apart one day of the week for himself because he finished creating the world.





# Disobedience

Now the snake was the most cunning of all the animals God had made. Satan entered into the snake. He asked Eve, “Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?”

“Of course we may eat it,” Eve told him. “It’s only the fruit from the tree which gives the understanding of good and evil that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die.”

“You won’t die!” the snake hissed. “God knows that when you eat this fruit you will become just like him, knowing everything, both good and evil.”

Eve was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Adam ate it, too. At that moment, something inside them changed, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they put leaves together to cover their nakedness.

Toward evening Adam and Eve heard God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. God called to Adam, “Where are you?”

Adam replied, “I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

“Who told you that you were naked?” God asked. “Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

“Yes,” Adam admitted, “but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.”

Then God asked Eve, “How could you do such a thing?”

“The snake tricked me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

So God said to the snake, “Because you have done this, you will be punished. You will crawl in the dust as long as you live. From now on, your descendants and the descendants of the woman will be enemies. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head.”

Then God said to Eve, “You will give birth to children with intense pain and suffering.”

And God said to Adam, “Because you ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to live from it. It will grow thorns and thistles. You will sweat to produce food, until you die.”

Then God said, “Now people know everything, both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree that gives life? Then they will live forever!” So God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden and prevented them from returning to the tree that gave life.





*Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-6*

# Abraham

Adam and Eve's disobedience separated them from God. Yet God did not forget his special creation. God wanted relationship with people. Many years passed. Eventually God chose one man from whom to raise a people that would be his. This is the story of Abraham.

God said to Abraham, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make a huge people from your descendants. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

So Abraham left as God had instructed. Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left his homeland. He took his wife, Sarah, and all his wealth - his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household - and headed for the land that God would show him. When they arrived there, Abraham traveled through the land. When he eventually stopped, he set up camp beside a great tree.

Then God appeared to Abraham and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abraham worshiped God, who had appeared to him.

Some time later God spoke to Abraham in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid. I will protect you, and you will receive a great reward."

But Abraham replied, "O God, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, a servant in my household will inherit all my wealth. You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir."

Then God said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." Then God took Abraham outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

And Abraham believed God, and God considered him to be in right relationship with him because of his trust.





1 Samuel 16:1-13 ~ 2 Samuel 5:4; 7:1-28

# David, The King

God did keep his promise to Abraham, and his descendants became a huge people group. God raised up many leaders for his people. One of these leaders was a man named David. This is how he became king.

One day, God said to Samuel, his spokesman, "Go to Bethlehem. Find a certain man who lives there, for I have selected one of his sons to be my new king. Invite him to worship me and I will show you which of his sons to anoint for me." So the spokesman did as God instructed him, and invited them.

When they arrived, God's spokesman took one look at the first son and thought, "Surely this is the one God wants as king!"

But God said to him, "I have rejected him. I do not make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but God looks at a person's thoughts and intentions."

All seven of the sons were presented to God's spokesman. But the spokesman said, "God has not chosen any of these." Then he asked, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," the father replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep."

When this son was brought in, God told his spokesman, "This is the one I choose." So as David stood there among his brothers, the spokesman anointed his head with oil, and the spirit of God came on David.

Many years passed and David did become the new king. God had brought peace to his land. One day, David summoned Nathan, another of God's spokesmen. God told Nathan to say to David, "I chose you to lead my people when you were just a shepherd boy, tending your sheep out in the pasture. I have destroyed all your enemies. Now I will make you famous throughout the earth! I will build a house for you - a dynasty of kings! One of your descendants will rule, and if he sins, I will use other nations to punish him. But my love is unfailing. Your kingdom will continue for all time."

When David heard this message from God, he praised God. He believed God, saying, "O God, do as you have promised. For you are God, your words are truth."





## David & Bathsheba

One time, in the spring, the time of year when kings go to war, David sent his army to fight. But David stayed behind.

Late one afternoon, David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a beautiful woman taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the wife of one of your most trusted soldiers." Then David sent for her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. Then she returned home. Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent a message to David to let him know, and there was no doubt that the baby was his.

So David sent word to the commander of his army, to send her husband home. When he arrived, David asked Bathsheba's husband how the war was going. Then he told him to go home and relax. But he didn't go home. He stayed that night at the palace entrance with some of the king's other servants. When David heard what he had done, he asked him, "Why didn't you go home last night after being away for so long?"

He replied, "The army is sleeping out in the fields. How could I go home and relax?" So David told him to stay another night. David invited him to dinner and got him drunk. But even then he couldn't get the soldier to go home to his wife. Again he slept at the palace entrance.

So the next morning David wrote a letter to the commander of his army and gave it to Bathsheba's husband to deliver. The letter told the commander, "Place this soldier on the front lines where the battle is fiercest. Then pull back, so that he will be killed." So, the commander did as he was told. And Bathsheba's husband was killed along with several other soldiers.

Then the commander of the army sent a messenger with a battle report to David. He told him that Bathsheba's husband had been killed along with others. "Well, tell the commander not to be discouraged," David said. "People are killed in battle! Fight harder next time."

When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. When the period of mourning was over, David brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Later she gave birth to a son. But God was very displeased with what David had done.





# Nathan's Story

Because God was displeased with what David had done, he sent his spokesman Nathan to tell David this story: "There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. The rich man owned many sheep and cattle. The poor man owned nothing but a little lamb. He raised and took care of it as if it were one of his own children. One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing one of his own lambs, he took the poor man's lamb, killed it, and served it to his guest."

David was furious. He said, "Any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he has stolen."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! God says, 'I anointed you king - I gave you an entire kingdom. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you disobeyed me and done this horrible thing? You murdered a man and stole his wife. Because you have treated God with contempt, from this time on, violence will always be in your family. What you did secretly will happen to you in the open.'"

Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against God."

Nathan replied, "Yes, but God has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin. But because of what you have done, your child will die."

After Nathan returned to his home, God made Bathsheba's baby very sick. David begged God to heal the child, but seven days later the baby died.

David comforted Bathsheba, and then slept with her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. And God loved him.





# Promise

The kings of Abraham's descendants continued to disobey God, and finally God allowed the surrounding nations to overcome them as punishment for their disobedience. The people were scattered throughout the land. Yet God continued to send spokesmen to reveal himself to his people. One of these spokesmen was named Isaiah. This is the message of hope that Isaiah brought to the people. A Savior would come to free them, in more ways than one.

God's Promised Savior will grow up in his presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry ground. There will be nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance. We will turn our backs on him and look the other way. He will be despised, and we won't care.

We will think his troubles are a punishment from God for his own sins! But he will be crushed for our sins. He will be beaten that we might have peace; whipped, and we will be healed!

All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's path to follow our own. Yet God will lay on him the guilt and sins of us all.

He will be treated harshly, yet never say a word. He will be led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he will not open his mouth.

After his suffering, he will see life again, and he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, the Promised Savior will make it possible for many to be counted as having right relationship with God, for he will bear all their sins.

God will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because exposed himself to death.





*Matthew 1:18-25 ~ Luke 2:21-34, 39-40*

# Birth

After many years, God did finally send this Promised Savior. This is his story.

This is how Jesus was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of God's Spirit.

Joseph, her fiancé, did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel from God appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, descendant of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. The child inside her was conceived by God's Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel commanded and took Mary as his wife, but he did not have sexual relations with her.

A few months later, a son was born to Mary in Bethlehem. Eight days after his birth, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel. Several weeks after that, his parents took him to Jerusalem, the special city where they worshiped God, to present him to God in their place of worship. When they got there, they met an old man who had been waiting for the Promised Savior to come and save his people. When he saw Jesus, he took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "I have seen the Savior you have given to all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations."

Joseph and Mary were amazed at what was being said about Jesus. Then the old man blessed them, and he said to Mary, "This child will be rejected by many, and it will be their undoing. But he will be the greatest joy to many others."

Jesus' parents returned home. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.





*Luke 3:1-3, 10-22 ~ Matthew 3:7-9. 13-15*

# Jesus' Baptism

Jesus grew to be a young man. God sent a spokesman ahead of him to prepare the way for the people to receive him as the Promised Savior.

After some time, a message from God came to a man named John who was living out in the wilderness. Then John went from place to place, telling people that they should be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

Some religious leaders came to hear John, and he said, "You snakes! Who warned you to flee from God's coming wrath? Prove by the way you live that you have turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are the descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing. God can change these stones here into the descendants of Abraham."

Then the crowd asked, "What should we do?"

John replied, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with the hungry."

Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?"

"Show your honesty," he replied. "Make sure you collect no more taxes than the government requires."

"What should we do?" asked some soliders.

John replied, "Don't extort money, and don't accuse people of things you know they didn't do. And be content with your pay."

Everyone was expecting the Promised Savior to come soon, and they were eager to know if John was him. John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am - so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. He will baptize you with God's Spirit and with fire."

One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself came to be baptized by John - even though Jesus had never sinned. John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him.

Afterwards, as Jesus was praying, the heavens opened and God's Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my Son, I love you, and I am very pleased with you."





*John 10:14-39*

# Assurance

Jesus continued to teach the people. Some people believed him, others did not. One day, Jesus was speaking to those who did not believe he was the Promised Savior.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, the people who believe in me, and they know me. The Father loves me because I voluntarily give my life for my sheep. No one can take my life from me. I give it voluntarily. I can give it when I want to and also take it again.”

Again, Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of an important religious festival. He was walking in their place of worship. The people surrounded him and asked, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Promised Savior, tell us plainly.”

Jesus replied, “I have already told you, and you don’t believe me. You don’t believe me because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to me; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

The people picked up stones to kill him, saying, “You, a mere man, claim to be God.”

Jesus answered, “Why do you say I show disrespect to God when I say, ‘I am the Son of God’? But if I do my Father’s work, believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done, even if you don’t believe me.” Once again they tried to arrest him, but he got away and left them.





*Mark 5:1-20*

# Possessed Man

The news about Jesus had spread far and wide, and many people came to see him for themselves. And some people chose to follow Jesus. Jesus himself called out twelve men that he taught and with whom he traveled. They became his closest followers.

Jesus and his closest followers came by boat to the other side of the lake. Just as Jesus was climbing from the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit ran out from a cemetery to meet him. Whenever the man was put into chains and shackles - as he often was - he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to control him. All day long and throughout the night, he would wander among the tombs and in the hills, screaming and hitting himself with stones.

When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him. He ran to meet Jesus and fell down before him. He gave a terrible scream, shrieking, "Why are you bothering me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? For God's sake, don't torture me!" For Jesus had already said to the evil spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit."

Then Jesus asked, "What is your name?"

The evil spirit replied, "Many, because there are many of us here inside this man." Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place. There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. "Send us into those pigs," the evil spirits begged. Jesus gave them permission. So the evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of two thousand pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake, where they drowned.

The men guarding the pigs fled to the nearby city and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. Everyone rushed out to see for themselves. A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, but they were frightened when they saw the man who had been possessed by evil spirits, for he was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane. Those who had seen what happened to the man and to the pigs told everyone about it, and the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone.

When Jesus got back into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the evil spirits begged to go, too. But Jesus said, "No, go home to your friends, and tell them what wonderful things God has done for you and how merciful he has been." So the man started off to visit the ten towns of that region and began to tell everyone about the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.





*Luke 18:15-17, 31-42*

# Sight

One day some parents brought their little children to Jesus so he could touch them and bless them, but Jesus' closest followers told them not to bother him. Then Jesus called for the children and said to his followers, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! Anyone who doesn't have their kind of belief will never experience a relationship with God."

Gathering his twelve closest followers around him, Jesus told them, "As you know, we are going to Jerusalem. And when we get there, all the predictions of the ancient spokesmen concerning me will come true. I will be handed over to soldiers to be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will whip me and kill me, but on the third day I will rise again." But they didn't understand a thing he said.

As they approached a nearby town, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road. When he heard the noise of a crowd going past, he asked what was happening. They told him that Jesus was going by. So he began shouting, "Jesus, descendant of David, have mercy on me!" The crowds ahead of Jesus tried to hush the man, but he only shouted louder, "Descendant of David, have mercy on me!"

When Jesus heard him, he stopped and ordered that the man be brought to him. Then Jesus asked the man, "What do you want me to do for you?"

"I want to see!"

Jesus said, "All right, you can see! Your belief has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all who saw it praised God, too.





*Luke 19:28-44, 47-48*

# Triumphal Entry

From there, Jesus and his closest followers continued their journey toward the city of Jerusalem. As they came near Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of his closest followers ahead. “Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that young donkey?’ just say, ‘The Teacher needs it.’”

So they went and found the young donkey, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, “Why are you untying that young donkey?”

His closest followers simply replied, “The Teacher needs it.” So they brought the young donkey to Jesus and threw their coats over it for him to ride on.

As he rode along, the crowds spread out their coats on the road ahead of him. When he reached the place where the road started, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. “Blessings on the Savior who comes in the name of God! There is peace in heaven. Praise God!”

But some of the religious leaders among the crowd said, “Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!”

He replied, “If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!”

But as Jesus came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late - peace is hidden from you. Your enemies will crush you because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you!”

After that, he taught daily in the place of worship, but the religious leaders began planning how to kill him. But they could think of nothing, because all the people hung on every word he said.





*Luke 22:1-20 ~ John 13:3-17 ~ Matthew 26:30*

# Last Supper

Jesus and his closest followers arrived in Jerusalem. It was nearing the time of an important religious festival, and many people were in the city.

Then Judas, one of Jesus' twelve closest followers, went over to the religious leaders to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and promised him a reward. So Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him quietly when the crowds weren't around.

Jesus and his twelve closest followers, including Judas, sat down together at the table to celebrate the meal for the religious festival. Jesus said, "I have looked forward to eating this meal with you before my suffering begins." Jesus knew that God had given him authority over everything. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash his closest followers' feet, and to wipe them with the towel he had around him.

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again, sat down, and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and you are right, because it is true. And since I, your Master and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do for each other what I have done for you. It's true that a servant is not greater than the master. You know these things - now do them!"

Jesus also took a loaf of bread, thanked God for it, and gave it to his closest followers to eat. He said, "This bread represents my body, given for you. Do this in order to remember me." After supper, he took a cup of wine and said, "This wine is a symbol of God's new promise to save you - an agreement sealed with the blood I will shed for you."

Then they sang a song of praise and went out to an olive grove on a hill just outside of the city.





# Arrest & Trial

Accompanied by his closest followers, Jesus said, "Sit here while I go on ahead to pray."

A little later, he returned to his closest followers and said, "Look, the time has come. My betrayer is here!" Judas, one of his twelve closest followers, had arrived with a mob that was armed with swords and clubs. They grabbed Jesus and arrested him, and all Jesus' closest followers deserted him and fled.

They led Jesus to the home of the head religious leader, where the teachers of religious law and other leaders had gathered. Inside, they were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death.

Then the head religious leader stood up and said to Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges?" But Jesus remained silent. Then the head religious leader said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God that you tell us whether you are the Promised Savior, the Son of God."

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say."

Then the head religious leader tore his clothing to show his horror, shouting, "Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard him dishonor God with his words." They began to spit in Jesus' face and beat him with their fists.

Early in the morning, the religious leaders met again to discuss how to persuade the government to sentence Jesus to death. Then they bound him and took him to the governor.

Jesus stood before the governor. "Are you these people's King?" the governor asked him.

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say."

When the religious leaders made their accusations against him, Jesus remained silent. "Don't you hear their many charges against you?" the governor demanded. But Jesus said nothing, much to the governor's great surprise.

The governor called together the religious leaders, along with the people, and he announced his verdict. "You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. So I will have him whipped, but then I will release him."

Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, "Kill him!" The governor argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. But they shouted, "Kill him! Kill him!"

The governor saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this man. The responsibility is yours!"

And all the people yelled back, "We will take responsibility for his death - we and our children!"

So the governor ordered Jesus whipped with a leather-tipped whip, then turned him over to the soldiers to execute him.





*Luke 23:32-56*

## Execution

Jesus and two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed. They were taken to a place called The Skull. There they drove nails through his hands and his feet and nailed him to a cross, two planks of wood. And he was raised up - on his right a criminal, on his left a criminal.

The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed. "He saved others," they said. "Let him save himself, if he really is God's Promised Savior."

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Promised Savior, are you? Prove it by saving yourself - and us, too, while you're at it!"

But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come back with power to rule."

Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

By this time it was noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. The light from the sun was gone. Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words, he died.

There was a good religious leader who did not agree with what the others had done. He went to the governor and asked for Jesus' body. He took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in a long sheet of linen cloth and laid it in a new tomb that had been carved out of rock.

All this was done late on Friday afternoon. As his body was taken away, the women who had been his followers followed and saw the tomb where his body was placed. A huge stone was placed in front of the entrance of the tomb. Then they went home and prepared spices and ointments to prepare his body for burial according to their custom. But by the time they were finished, their religious day of rest had begun, so they were required by their religious laws to wait until after the day of rest was over before they could go back to the tomb.





*Luke 24:1-7 ~ Matthew 28:19-20 ~ Acts 1:8-11*

# Alive!

Very early on the Sunday morning after Jesus' death, the women went to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body for burial, according to their custom. They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. So they went in, but they didn't find his body. Two men dressed in dazzling robes suddenly appeared to them. The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground.

The men asked, "Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He has risen from the dead! Remember what he told you, that he must be betrayed and executed, and that he would rise again on the third day."

Later when the followers were gathered, they were talking about these things. Suddenly, Jesus himself was standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. But the whole group was frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. "Why do you doubt?" he asked. "Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies."

Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything to eat?" They gave him a piece of fish, and he ate it.

Then Jesus explained to them that all this took place to fulfill God's plan, that he, the Promised Savior, would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. "This is the Good News you must take to all peoples," he told them. "Therefore, go and make followers of all people groups, baptize them, and teach these new followers to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always."

He told them, "You will receive power when God's Spirit comes. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere - right here, and to all parts of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained their eyes to see him, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men," they said, "why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"





Acts 2:1-47

# God's Spirit

The followers of Jesus stayed in the city to await the promised Spirit, just as Jesus had instructed. On the day of an important religious festival, seven weeks after Jesus was raised from the dead, those who followed Jesus were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with God's Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as God's Spirit gave them this ability.

There were people in the city from all over the world for the festival. They came and heard his followers speaking. They said, "These are local people, and yet we hear them speaking the languages of the lands where we were born, about the wonderful things God has done!" They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.

But others in the crowd were mocking. "They're drunk, that's all!" they said.

Then Peter stepped forward with the other closest followers and shouted to the crowd, "Some of you are saying these people are drunk. It isn't true! It's much too early for that. People don't get drunk by nine o'clock in the morning. No, what you see this morning was predicted centuries ago.

"Listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus by doing wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But you murdered him. However, God raised him back to life again. Now he sits at the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him God's Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. So let it be clearly known that God has made this Jesus whom you murdered to be both Master and Promised Savior!"

Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the others, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, the Promised Savior, for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of God's Spirit. This promise is to you and your children, and even to those who are not Abraham's descendants."

Then Peter continued speaking for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners. Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church - about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to Jesus' closest followers' teaching and fellowship, sharing the meal Jesus had told them to remember him by and in prayer. And those who had been Jesus' closest followers performed many miraculous signs and wonders, and each day God added to their group those who were being saved.





*Acts 8:26-38*

# African

Before Jesus went to heaven, he had promised his followers that they would have power to share about him throughout the world. Those who believed in Jesus went everywhere, telling people the wonderful news about Jesus. One of these followers of Jesus was named Philip.

An angel from God said to him, "Go south down the desert road that begins at Jerusalem." So he started out, and he met a treasurer of an African nation, who was returning to his homeland. Seated in his carriage, he was reading from the book of the spokesman Isaiah.

God's Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

Philip ran over and heard the man reading, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth."

The African man asked Philip, "Tell me, was the spokesman talking about himself or someone else?" So beginning with this message from God's spokesman, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

As they rode along, they came to some water, and the African man said, "Look! There's some water. Why can't I be baptized?"

"You can," Philip answered, "if you truly believe."

The African man replied, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God!"

The African man ordered the carriage to stop, they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.





## Philippian Jailer

Jesus' followers continued to travel throughout the world, telling people the Good News about Jesus. Two of these followers, Paul and Silas, went from city to city, sharing the Good News.

On one of these trips, Paul and Silas went to the city of Philippi. On the day of worship they went a little way outside the city to a river bank, where they thought people would be meeting for prayer, and they sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. One of them was Lydia, a merchant of expensive cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to them, God opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. She was baptized along with other member of her household, and she asked them to be her guests. "If you believe I am a true believer in Jesus," she said, "come and stay at my home." And they agreed.

One day as Paul and Silas were going down to the place of prayer, they met a slave girl who was possessed by an evil spirit. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. She followed Paul, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."

This went on day after day, until Paul got so tired of it that he turned and said to the evil spirit within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the marketplace. "The whole city is in an uproar because of these men!" they shouted to the city officials. "They are teaching the people to do things that are against our customs."

A mob quickly formed. Paul and Silas were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and chained them.

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off. The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." And they shared the Good News about Jesus with him and with all who lived in his household. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. The jailer fed them at his house and they rejoiced because they all believed in God.

The next morning, the city officials released Paul and Silas. When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left to go to another town.





*Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; 2:17-18; 3:2-8; 4:16-18*

## Return

Paul and Silas then continued to travel throughout the area near Philippi. One day they came to the city of Thessalonica. There, Paul told many people, who were descendants of Abraham, about Jesus. He said, “This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Promised Savior.” Many of them believed, but others were jealous, so they gathered some worthless fellows from the streets to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of a follower of Jesus, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd.

Not finding them there, they dragged out some of the other believers instead, and took them before the city authorities. “Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world, and now they are disturbing our city,” they shouted. “One of these men here has allowed Paul and Silas to stay in his home.” Although the city was thrown into turmoil by these reports, the city authorities finally released these believers. For their protection, that very night the believers sent Paul and Silas away.

But Paul never forgot about the believers in Thessalonica. In fact, he tried again and again to visit them, but he wasn’t able. So Paul sent a friend named Timothy to encourage the believers in Thessalonica. When Timothy returned to Paul and gave a report, Paul was overjoyed to learn that these believers were continuing to follow Jesus in spite of persecution. So, he decided to write a letter to the believers in Thessalonica - a letter from himself, Silas, and Timothy.

He said, “We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly. You received the message about Jesus with joy from God’s Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. As a result, you became an example to all the believers in the area. These believers speak of how you turned away from idols to serve the true and living God. And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God’s son from heaven - Jesus, who God raised from the dead.

“And when Jesus comes back, he himself will come down from heaven with a loud shout. First, all the believers who have died will rise. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be taken up in the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. We will be with him forever. So, encourage each other with these words.”





# Would you like to know the God of these stories?

You've read these stories, and you've met a God who loves people very much. Have you ever considered having a relationship with Him? As you've seen in the Creation story, God made us so that we could live with him forever. But, as you've also seen in the Disobedience story, we have turned away from His will. We have disobeyed God; this disobedience is called sin. Sin keeps us from being able to have a relationship with God. Because of our sin, we have no choice but to spend eternity separated from Him.

However, God had another plan. In this book, you have also read about Jesus. He is God's Son, and was sent to earth to pay the price for our sin. Jesus led a perfectly sinless life, and then died in order to take away our punishment. But the best news of all is that Jesus didn't stay dead! You have read in *Alive!* about how God raised him again. Now He is in heaven, talking to God on our behalf. He assures us that if we put our trust in Him, He will take away all the sin that keeps us from having a relationship with God. If we have faith in Jesus, we will spend eternity in heaven, with God our Creator and Father!

YOU can begin this relationship with God by telling Him a prayer from your heart like this:

*"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You died and rose again to purchase a place in Heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone to save me and I accept your free gift of eternal life."*

If you have prayed this prayer from your heart, congratulations! You have just become a member of God's family. So that you can continue to get to know God better, we would encourage you to get involved with other believers around you. They can teach you how to study the Bible, God's holy word, and apply it to your life. They can also pray for you, and encourage you as you begin your new life with Jesus.



