



The Story of God | Beginnings

Pre-Story Set-up

Does it seem to you that things are working perfectly in the world today? Are things the way that they seem like they should be? Have you ever wondered why? What is wrong with the world?

As we begin to look deeper into the Story of God and humans and this world, we will see that everything did not start out bad; in fact things were amazing and beautiful!

What if we could live in a world where there was no sickness or pain or death? No pollution, poverty, war or hatred? Is it possible that the world that we all want, what we all dream of, is exactly the world that God originally created and intended for us?!

And what if God actually has a plan and a way to set everything right again? The Bible shows us that there is such a way.

Let's start at the beginning of The Story...

Beginnings | Story

Story from... Genesis 1–3; Job 38; Ezekiel 28; Isaiah 14; Psalm 8; Revelation 12

This Story is found in the Bible—the bestselling book in human history—and tells about God, a being that was before all things, and created this earth and everything on it. God alone always does what is good and right and perfect—the Bible calls him holy.

When God set the foundations of the earth, the angels were already there watching – they were his first creation. When the angels saw God's power and creativity, they sang together and shouted for joy, giving praise to God.

But one of the angels named Lucifer, which means “bright morning star”, was not happy. When he saw the other angels praising God, he became jealous and said in his heart, *“I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars... and I will be like God.”* Then Lucifer went and convinced a third of the angels into worshipping him. Although Lucifer had seen God's power in creation, he continued to lead the fallen angels, also known as demons, in a rebellion against God.

All rebellion against God and his ways is called sin.... All rebellion against God and his ways is called sin.

But God, who knows all things, knew what Lucifer was thinking and doing. Because of God's perfect goodness, evil is never allowed to be in his presence. So God showed his disapproval of Lucifer and his followers by casting them down to the earth. At that time, the earth was formless and void, completely engulfed in darkness. Lucifer's name was also changed. Instead of being known as the bright morning star, he was now known as Satan, which means "adversary".



The Story of God | First Humans

First Humans | Story

Story from... Genesis 1-2 Psalm 8

Then God took the earth, which was dark and formless, and prepared it as a place for life.

God's Spirit moved over the surface of the earth as...

He made light – separating it from the darkness...

He divided the oceans and the sky...

He gathered the waters, so dry land would appear...

He grew plants, flowers, and trees... all with seeds in them so they could reproduce themselves...

He created the sun, the moon and the stars... then set the days and seasons into motion...

He filled the seas with fish, the sky with birds, and the earth with all kinds of wild animals!

God put great care and creativity into all of his creation. God looked at this and said, *"This is really good!"*

After he had prepared the earth, God decided he would create another being, one who was lower than the angels.

God said, *"We will make humans in our image, to be like us. We'll put them in charge of the earth, the plants and all the animals that live on it."* So God took dirt from the earth and formed this first human. Then, God breathed his own breath into him, giving him life. This first human would be called Adam.

God placed Adam in a beautiful garden, where he provided everything he needed. In this garden, God planted all kinds of trees that produced delicious fruit so Adam would always have plenty to eat. God gave Adam the responsibility to take care of this garden and all of the creatures that lived there. God even brought all of the animals right to Adam so he could give them names!

In the middle of the garden were two special trees – a Tree of Life, and a tree that could give Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told Adam to enjoy fruit from any tree in the garden – except for one; God warned him, “If you eat fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you will definitely die.”

Then God said, *“It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a partner who will help him.”* So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. While Adam was asleep, God removed one of his ribs and then closed up his side where it was taken from. God used Adam’s rib to form the first woman. When God brought her to Adam, Adam shouted, *“At last!”*

Adam called his new companion Eve, which means “giver of life.”

So God created both the man and woman to be like him – created in God’s own image. God blessed Adam and Eve with the ability to continue his creation by having children. God joined them in a close relationship as husband and wife, where they devoted themselves to each other.

Although Adam and Eve were naked, they felt no shame.

And God would come and spend time with the humans, walking with them in the cool of the day.

They lived under God’s care and protection – a life that was full and complete. As God looked over all of his creation he thought, *“This is excellent in every way!”* After creating all of this, God rested... and set aside a day of rest each week for all of his creation.



The Story of God | Separation

Separation | Story

Story from... Genesis 1-3

One day, Satan came to the woman in the form of a snake. He asked the woman, *“Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?”*

“Of course we may eat it,” the woman told him. *“It’s only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die.”*

The snake lied to her and said, *“You won’t die! God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil.”*

When Eve saw how good and delicious the fruit looked, and that it would make her wise, she took some of it and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, her husband, who was with her, and he ate it! They chose not to believe God and to believe the lie. Instantly their eyes were opened and they became filled with shame and fear. They strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover their nakedness.

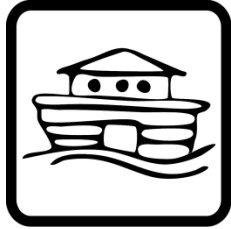
Toward evening they heard God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. God called to them, *“Where are you?”* Adam answered, *“I heard you coming and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”* God answered, *“Why are you ashamed of being naked? Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?”* Adam said, *“It was the woman you gave me. She gave me some.”* Then God asked Eve, *“How could you do this?”* Eve blamed the snake saying, *“The snake tricked me into eating the fruit.”*

So God said to the snake, *“Because you have done this, you will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. You will be the enemy of the woman and her children. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head.”*

God’s heart was broken because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. God always does what is right and true; he could not ignore what they had done. So God punished Adam and Eve by throwing them out of the garden – outside of his care and protection. No longer following God’s ways, Adam and Eve were now subject to sickness, pain, and even death.

God told them, *"The way you have chosen to live will now bring you great struggles...
...women will have sharp pains while giving birth.
...men will have to work hard and sweat just to produce a little food from the ground.
...and you'll both fight to control your relationship.
...then, you'll return to the ground from which I created you."*

Even though God punished Adam and Eve, he did not stop loving them.
He even created clothing for them out of animal skins.



The Story of God | Flood

Flood | Story

Story from... Genesis 4-9

After leaving the garden, Adam and Eve had two sons named Cain and Abel. Because of jealousy and sin in his heart, Cain killed his brother Abel. God could not ignore this first murder, and sent Cain away to wander the earth. Cain was afraid of being killed if he wandered outside of his land, but God promised to protect him.

Not only did sin spread from Adam and Eve to their sons - it spread from generation to generation.

Even though man was created in God's image, everyone chose to disobey God. God saw that humans thoughts were completely evil - all of the time. They acted out in violence against each other. God's heart was broken, and he was sorry that he had ever made man. So God decided to start over by destroying the earth and everyone that lived on it with a flood. But God chose to save one man named Noah.

In order that Noah and his family might live, God instructed him to build a large boat called an ark. This boat would protect Noah's family and pairs of each kind of animal. Just as God said, the rain came and water poured up out of the ground. The waters flooded the earth for 150 days, and every living person, animal or thing that was not on the ark was destroyed.

When the rains stopped and the waters dried up, Noah and his family came off of the ark. Immediately Noah built an altar. He selected pure animals from every species, and sacrificed them to God as a symbol of thankfulness and worship.

God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice and said, "I will never again curse the earth, destroying all living things with a flood, even though people's thoughts and actions are turned toward evil from childhood. As a symbol of my promise I will hang a rainbow in the clouds. When I see the rainbow, I will remember this lasting promise."

God blessed Noah and his sons, telling them to go have many children and once again fill the earth with people.

Then God told Noah and his sons, "You must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in them. And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. Life is in the blood and all life belongs to me... Life is in the blood and all life belongs to me!"



The Story of God | Promise

Promise | Story

Story from... Genesis 11-21

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how he had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick. They said, "*Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are.*"

God saw how the people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of him. At that time, everyone on earth spoke the same language. So, God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then, He scattered them all over the earth.

A few generations later, God made a special promise to a man named Abram. This promise was called a *covenant*—representing the deepest of all agreements between two people.

God made this covenant with Abram...

"I will make you the father of a great nation—famous throughout history.

I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.

I will bless the entire earth through your descendants."

This was an amazing promise that God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family! There was just one problem... Abram's wife, Sarai, was unable to have children. So how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? And besides, they were getting old. Abram was about 75 and Sarai was about 65!

God told Abram, *"Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show to you."*

God led Abram and his family to a land called Canaan. There, God told Abram, *"Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants."*

This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land."

Some time passed, and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child.

Abram asked God, *"What good are all of your blessings if I don't even have a son? I am getting old, and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants."*

God replied to Abram, *"No, you will have a son who will inherit everything that I have promised you."*

Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, *"Look up into the heavens and count the stars. Your family will be like this—too many to count!"*

And Abram believed what God said, so God called him "righteous" because of his faith.

More years passed and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to be a substitute mother for her.

Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai's relationship became strained. During Hagar's pregnancy, she began to despise Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly. Eventually, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abram's family.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again saying, *"I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations.' Remember this... I will always be your God, and you will always be my people."*

Then God added, *"I am also changing your wife's name to Sarah, which means 'mother of many nations.' Very soon, she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac."*

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God's promise.

Abraham wondered, *"How can I become a father at 100 years old?"*

How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?"

Sarah thought, *"How could a worn out woman like me have a baby?"*

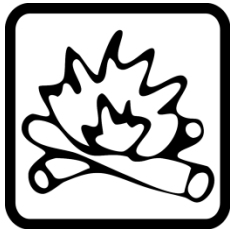
And my husband is even older than I am!"

Abraham asked God, *"Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?"*

But God said, *"Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? About a year from now, you will have a son. It is through Isaac that I will pass on my blessing—not through your servant's child."*

Sure enough, a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means "laughter."

The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.



The Story of God | Sacrifice

Sacrifice | Story

Story from... Genesis 22

You won't believe what happened next.

God gave Abraham a test. He called out to him, *"Abraham!"*

"Yes, I am listening!" he replied.

God said, *"I want you to take your son Isaac, whom you love, up to the top of the mountain and offer him as a sacrifice."*

The next morning Abraham got up early, saddled up his donkey, and chopped some wood for the offering. After everything was ready, Abraham and his son Isaac took two of their servants and set out for the mountain.

About three days into their journey, they saw the mountain in the distance. Abraham told his servants, *“Stay here—Isaac and I are going up the mountain to worship, then we will come right back.”* Abraham took the knife and the fire from the servants and he placed the wood for the sacrifice on Isaac’s shoulders.

As they were walking up the mountain, Isaac became curious and asked, *“Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb we are going to sacrifice?”* Abraham told him, *“God himself will provide a lamb.”*

When they arrived at the top of the mountain, they built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then Abraham tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar over the wood. He took the knife and lifted it up to kill his son as a sacrifice to God.

At that moment the Angel of God shouted to him from heaven, *“Abraham! Abraham!”* *“Yes, I’m listening!”* he replied.

The Angel said, *“Put down the knife. Do not hurt your son. It’s clear that you trust me because you didn’t hesitate to give me what you love the most.”*

Then Abraham looked behind him and saw a ram with his horns caught in a bush. He caught the ram, and offered it to God as a substitute for his son. So Abraham named that place at the top of the mountain *“God Will Provide”*.

Soon after that, God said to Abraham, *“Because you didn’t refuse to give me your son, whom you love, I will bless you greatly! Your family will multiply into millions—like the stars in the sky and the sand on the beaches! Your descendants will defeat their enemies on every side. The entire earth will be blessed through your family—because you chose to obey me.”*

Then Abraham and Isaac went down the mountain, met up with their servants, and returned home.



The Story of God | Deliverance

Deliverance | Story

Story from... Genesis 26-50; Exodus 1-2; 7-12; 19-20

Years later Isaac had a son named Jacob - his name was changed to Israel - meaning “struggler with God”. The Hebrews would then be called the people of Israel after Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. One of his sons, named Joseph, ended up living in Egypt. (Joseph’s story is an interesting one for another time...) Joseph invited his family to join him to escape a horrible famine that covered all the land. While living in Egypt, the people of Israel grew into a large nation. After Joseph died, the King of Egypt named Pharaoh, feared Israel because of their great numbers. He treated them horribly and made Israel his slaves. But God promised he would bless his people...

Years later God inspired a man named Moses to rescue the people of Israel from slavery. He sent Moses to warn Pharaoh that terrible things would happen to the Egyptians if they didn’t release God’s people. Pharaoh was arrogant and didn’t listen, so God sent a series of horrible plagues to punish the Egyptians, but these plagues did not affect the Israelites.

God turned water to blood, filled the nation with frogs, gnats and flies, killed livestock, covered people in boils, destroyed the land with hail and locusts, and brought great darkness over the land.

In spite of these horrific events, Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. So God sent one more plague... a plague that would take the life of every firstborn male and animal in Egypt. But God provided a way for the firstborn of Israel to be spared.

He instructed them to take a first-born male lamb without defect, and sacrifice it to him without breaking any of its bones. Then, they were to take the blood from the lamb and put it on the doorposts of their homes. So the people of Israel did what God told them to do.

At midnight God sent an angel of death through Egypt taking the life of all the firstborn, but passing over the homes that had blood on their doorposts. The Egyptians wept over this tragedy and begged the Israelites to leave, releasing them from their slavery. And now Israel, a large nation of over two million people, set out to return to the Promised Land.

But Pharaoh wanted revenge – he sent his armies after Israel to catch them and kill them. When the Israelites approached the Red Sea they thought they were trapped by the waters and would be caught by the Egyptians. But God split the waters so that the Israelites could cross the river on dry ground. When Pharaoh’s armies tried to cross behind them, God brought a huge wind that blew the waters back over them. The Egyptian Army was completely wiped out!

The Israelites became nomads, wandering the desert for forty years trying to get back to the Promised Land. As they were traveling, God called Moses into his presence on the top of a mountain. God gave Moses instructions on how the people could return to following his way of living.

The Bible calls these instructions the Ten Commandments, which were God’s basic rules for living life close to God and out from under slavery and oppression.

*“I am your God who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.
Put me above everything else. Do not worship other things.
Do not misuse or disrespect my name.
Remember to set aside a day each week to rest and worship me.
Honor your parents. Don’t murder or steal or lie.
Do not sleep with anyone but your husband or wife—be faithful.
Don’t lust after what others have—be satisfied with what I give you.”*

But the people did not want to live within God’s boundaries and rebelled again, calling these instructions a new kind of slavery. Even those who tried to obey these rules found they could not keep them perfectly.

Because God is perfect and good, he could not overlook their sins and his punishment was death. A life must be given to pay for each person’s disobedience. But God loved his people, so he provided a way for them to substitute the life of an innocent animal in place of their own.

People would bring pure animals to God, asking him to transfer their sins to the helpless animal. The animal was killed and its blood was given in place of the guilty person.

This system of sacrifice continued for hundreds of years. Sacrifices for sins had to be given day after day, year after year. And God accepted this, but only as a symbol of what was to come. He was preparing a final sacrifice that would pay for the world’s sins once and for all.



The Story of God | Kings & Prophets

Kings & Prophets | Story

Story from... Joshua; 1 & 2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Kings; Isaiah 53; The Prophets

After wandering the desert for forty years, God led the people of Israel to recapture the Promised Land from their enemies. God gave them many victories in battle, and completely honored his promises to them - but the people rejected him and worshipped false gods. This false worship led them into many other sins.

Because of their sin and disobedience, God removed his protection and allowed them to be overpowered and punished by foreign nations. When the people suffered they would come back to God and beg for his help and forgiveness. Then God graciously forgave them and sent judges that led them to defeat their enemies. After their victories, the people once again worshipped God.

Unfortunately, this became a pattern and new generations forgot about God's goodness and blessing. They returned to worshipping false gods. This was a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Since kings ruled other nations, the people of Israel complained to God saying, "We want a human king that we can see to rule over us." God gave the people what they wanted and appointed a king, named Saul to rule Israel. However, because of his disobedience, God eventually removed his blessing from Saul and replaced him as king. God chose a king "after his own heart."

The new king God chose was anointed while he was still just a boy. He was the youngest of seven brothers. But he was courageous and passionate for God. David grew up and the kingdom became his. He defeated the enemies of Israel on all borders. God loved David and told him that one of his descendants would always rule over Israel - his kingdom would never end.

Solomon succeeded his father David. He was the wisest and richest king Israel had ever known. He wrote books of the Bible like Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Dignitaries came from far and wide to see the brilliance of Solomon and to hear his wisdom. But Solomon married many foreign wives, and they led him astray, and eventually he was not fully devoted to God.

His failure brought many serious consequences. When he died the kingdom did not remain united. Instead Israel divided into 10 tribes in the north, called Israel, and two tribes in the south, called Judah. The kings of these kingdoms, for the most part, forgot about the one true God. They followed false gods and even built altars and shrines to them. Because of their pattern of rebellion, God removed his protection from them. Other nations came and conquered Israel, taking the people away to be slaves or forcing them out of their Promised Land.

During the time of these kings, God sent prophets to be his messengers. God spoke through the prophets, calling people to return to his ways and follow his commandments. The prophets warned Israel of what would happen if they continued to rebel against God. Prophets also pointed people to a coming Messiah, an eternal king who would save them and rule forever. God gave the prophets visions of what the Messiah would be like when he came. They foretold that...

... A virgin would give birth to him in Bethlehem.

... He would be from the line of King David, who was a descendent of Abraham.

... He will do no wrong, living a life without sin.

... He would be beaten, killed like a criminal.

... He would establish a kingdom like no other Israel had ever known.

... He would fulfill every promise God had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

... God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him.

... His life would be made an offering for our sin.

... Because of Him, many will be made right with God.

Despite the warnings of the prophets, the people of Israel stopped listening to God. And God did not speak to humans again for 400 hundred years ...



The Story of God | Birth of Jesus

Birth of Jesus | Story

Story from... Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2

400 years had passed since God had spoken to his people. The Israelites, called Jews, had been under the control of other nations for hundreds of years. They were now ruled by the Romans, the most powerful empire that had ever existed. The Jews were still waiting and hoping for a king who would come to save them and lead them into victory.

Finally, God sent an angel to a young woman named Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph who was a descendant of King David.

The angel, named Gabriel, appeared to her and said, *“Don’t be afraid Mary, God has chosen to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son and you are to name him Jesus. (which means ‘God saves’). He will become a king whose kingdom will never end!”*

Mary asked the angel, *“But how can I have a baby, I am still a virgin?”*

The angel replied, *“This will happen supernaturally by God’s Spirit, so this baby will be called God’s Son. Remember... nothing is impossible with God!”*

Mary said, *“I am God’s servant. May everything you have said come true!”*

After that Mary sang to God thanking him for choosing to bless her.

And just as the angel had said, Mary became pregnant.

When Joseph found out that Mary was expecting a child, he decided to break off their engagement quietly. The law would have permitted him to have her killed if she had an affair.

But one night Joseph had a dream. An angel appeared to him and said, *“Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child in her is from God. You are to give him the name Jesus for he will save the people from their sins.”*

So Joseph took Mary as his wife, but he did not sleep with her until after the baby was born.

Months later, as Joseph and Mary were traveling to Bethlehem; the time came for Mary to give birth. No rooms were available for them at the local inns so they found an animal stable, and that is where their baby was born. They named the boy Jesus, meaning “one who saves”, just as the angel had told them. Mary wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a feed trough.

That night a group of shepherds were out in the fields taking care of their sheep when an angel suddenly appeared and frightened them. The angel said, *“Don’t be afraid, I am bringing good news for everyone! The one who will save you, the Messiah, has been born tonight in Bethlehem! You will know it’s him when you find a baby in a stable wrapped in strips of cloth.”*

The shepherds said to each other, *“Let’s go to Bethlehem as fast as we can to see the miracle God told us about.”* When the shepherds ran into town they found Joseph, Mary and the baby in the stable just as the angel had said. After this they went and told everyone what they had heard and seen—and the people were truly amazed!

A few months later, wise men traveled from distant lands to find the newborn king.

A star had guided them from the east to Bethlehem and stopped over the place where Mary and Joseph were living. As the wise men entered the house they were overcome with joy and knelt down and worshipped Jesus. They brought him expensive gifts of gold, spices and perfumes.

Eventually Joseph and Mary moved back to Nazareth where Jesus grew strong, wise and full of God’s grace. When Jesus was twelve years old, he and his family attended the annual Passover Festival in Jerusalem. *(Do you remember the first Passover?)*

On the way home, Joseph and Mary assumed that Jesus was in their caravan but traveling with some of their other relatives. Later, when they stopped to sleep for the night, they realized he was nowhere to be found.

In a panic, Joseph and Mary went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Three days later they finally found him—he was in the temple courts discussing deep questions with the religious teachers. The teachers were all amazed at his understanding and insights. His parents didn’t know what to think.

“Son!” his mother said to him. *“Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic and have searched for you everywhere.”*

“But why did you need to search?” Jesus asked. *“You should have known that I would be in my Father’s house.”* But Joseph and Mary didn’t understand what he meant.

So Jesus returned to Nazareth with his parents and was obedient to them. His mother thought deeply about what had happened.

Jesus grew in both height and wisdom and was loved by God and everyone who knew him.



The Story of God | Life of Jesus

Life of Jesus | Story

Story from... Mark 2-5 & 21; Luke 3; John 1

The people of Israel were still waiting and hoping for their coming Messiah. They had been under the control of other nations for hundreds of years, and hoped that the Messiah would come soon and rule as their king.

God sent a messenger named John to tell people to get ready because the Messiah was coming soon. John was a distant cousin of Jesus, born just six months before him. He was a rugged man who lived in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothes made out of camel hair.

John boldly challenged the Jews, *“Don’t just say that you love God—prove it with your life. Turn from your sins and turn to God!”*

He became known as John the Baptizer as he dunked those who had confessed their sins in the Jordan River. Baptism was a symbol of being washed clean from your sins and choosing a new way of living.

One day John was teaching and baptizing people in the Jordan River and Jesus came to him to be baptized. When John looked up and saw him he said, “Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” God revealed to John that Jesus was the Messiah he had been waiting for.

Soon after, Jesus began teaching people in ways they had never heard before - he said, “turn from your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of God has come”. He drew many followers and crowds swarmed him wherever he went. He spent most of his time with a few close followers called disciples, showing them how to live in the ways of God.

Jesus lived a most remarkable life – a life lived without ever sinning. He was faced with the same temptations to rebel against God as all men before him had, but he always chose to obey his father and to live in his ways.

Jesus also performed miracles among the people. His teaching and miracles concerned the Jewish leaders; they were not comfortable with some of Jesus unusual methods.

Crowds surrounded him everywhere he went. Once, when Jesus was teaching in a house where he was staying, so many people came to hear him that the house was completely packed - not one more person could get inside. Four men were trying to bring their paralyzed friend to see Jesus, believing he would heal him. But the only way they could get him in the house was to dig through the clay roof and lower him down! Jesus was impressed with their efforts and faith. He told the paralyzed man, *"Don't worry, your sins are forgiven."*

The religious leaders became upset and thought, *"Who but God can forgive sins?"* But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, *"Would you rather I would have said to this man 'your sins are forgiven' or 'pick up your mat and walk'?"*

I will prove to you that I have the authority to forgive sins." Then Jesus told the paralyzed man, *"Now, get up take your mat and walk home - you are healed."*

The man was no longer paralyzed; he jumped up and pushed his way out the door. Everyone there was amazed saying, *"We've never seen anything like this before!"*

Another time, Jesus was exhausted after teaching all day. He suggested that he and the disciples go to the other side of the sea. As they took off, Jesus went to the back of the boat and fell asleep.

A fierce storm came up suddenly. No matter how hard they tried, the disciples couldn't keep the boat from filling with water. When it became obvious to them that they were going to sink, they woke Jesus up in a panic and said, *"teacher, don't you care if we drown?!"*

Jesus stood up, and said to the wind and waves, *"Quiet, be still now."* And the wind stopped blowing and the sea became calm. Jesus asked them, *"Why are you still afraid? Don't you believe in me yet?"*

When the disciples saw this they looked at each other and said, *"Who is this man that even the wind and the waves obey him?"*

When Jesus went back across to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. A leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, came and fell down before him, pleading with him to heal his little daughter. *"She is about to die,"* he said in desperation. *"Please come and place your hands on her; heal her so she can live."* Jesus went with him, and the crowd followed behind.

Then a group of friends arrived from Jairus's home with the message, *"Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now."*

But Jesus ignored their comments and said to Jairus, *"Don't be afraid. Just trust me."*

When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw the people outside the house wailing and crying. Jesus asked them, *"Why are you crying? The girl is not dead, she's only asleep."*

The crowd laughed at him, but he told them all to go outside. Then he took the girl's father and mother and three of his disciples into the room where the girl was lying. Holding her hand, he said to her, *"Get up, little girl!"* And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! Jesus said not to tell anyone what had happened, and told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were absolutely amazed!



The Story of God | Death & Resurrection

Death & Resurrection | Story

Story from... Matthew 26-27; John 20

Everywhere Jesus went he had compassion on people and met their needs. He performed many miracles... he freed people controlled by evil spirits, healed deadly illnesses, and he even raised people from the dead!

Jesus continued to tell people that he could forgive their sins. This enraged the Jewish leaders - they saw this as the ultimate disrespect to God. They gathered together to plan how they could stop Jesus and have him killed. These Jewish leaders, called Pharisees, looked for many ways to trap Jesus, but he was always too wise for them. They were afraid to take Jesus by force, because he was surrounded by crowds of people who loved him.

During the Passover celebration, Jesus told his disciples that he would soon face death, but would rise from the grave to be with them again. He revealed that one of them would betray him that very night. Jesus knew that Judas was the one who would lead Jewish soldiers to him later when no one was around.

After the meal Jesus went to pray, for he knew that he was facing arrest and death. He prayed to God, *“Father, if there is another way besides my death, please let that happen. But I will do whatever you ask.”* When he finished praying, Judas came to him and greeted him with a kiss. This was a sign to the Jewish soldiers that this was Jesus. The guards arrested him and drug him away.

Jesus was beaten and brought before the Jewish leaders for questioning. They asked him, *“Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?”* Jesus answered them, *“I am, and you will see me seated next to God in power and coming back on the clouds of heaven.”* When Jesus said this, the High Priest tore his clothing in horror and said, *“Any man who claims to be God must be put to death.”*

Then the Jews took Jesus to the Roman governor since they could not execute anyone without government approval. Roman guards brutally beat him and took him to the place where he would die called, “Skull Hill”.

Like a criminal, Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross between two thieves. While hanging on the cross, Jesus cried, *“Father, please forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.”* Then Jesus breathed his last breath and died. *(Pause)*

To make sure he was dead, a soldier pierced him with a spear and blood poured from his side. Jesus was buried on a Friday and a large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb. Guards were posted there to insure that nothing happened to his body.

On Sunday, some of the women who followed Jesus went to prepare his body for burial. However, when they arrived at the tomb they saw the stone rolled away and the soldiers were gone. Suddenly two angels appeared. They said, *“Why are you surprised? You are looking for Jesus, but he is not here, he has been raised from the dead.”* The women went and told the disciples the amazing news. Some of them ran to the tomb and looked inside for themselves...

Jesus was not there!



The Story of God | The Church

The Church | Story

Story from... Matthew 28; John 14, 20; Acts 1-2; 1 Corinthians 15

In the weeks that followed Jesus' death, he appeared to his disciples many times and was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. Quickly, the news about his resurrection spread throughout the land.

One of Jesus' disciples named Thomas said, *"I won't believe he is alive unless I can put my fingers into the holes where his hands were nailed to the cross."*

A few days later, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said to Thomas, *"Put your fingers here—feel the hole in my hand. Put your hand into the wound on my side."*

Thomas shouted, *"It is you, Jesus—my God!"*

Then Jesus said, *"I will bless those even more who haven't seen, but still believe!"*

Soon after that, Jesus met with his disciples over a meal. He said, *"John baptized you in water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with God's Spirit. This will give you power to live in my ways and tell the entire world about me."*

Jesus commanded them, *"Go! Make disciples all over the world. Teach them to walk in my ways and obey me. I am leaving now to be with my father in heaven, but you will never be alone. God's Spirit will come and live inside of you—giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth."*

As the disciples watched, Jesus went up into the sky, disappearing in the clouds right in front of them!

A few weeks later, a group of 120 of Jesus' followers gathered to pray together in Jerusalem. All of sudden, they heard a loud sound—like a roaring windstorm—that filled the house where they were meeting. Each of them was filled with God's Spirit and started speaking in languages that were not their own! They went out into the street and began to tell people about the great things that Jesus had done.

At that time, Jews from all over the world were living in Jerusalem. This roaring sound was heard throughout the entire city, and a large crowd had gathered outside the house to see what was going on.

When the people heard Jesus' followers speaking, they said, *"How can this be? They're from Galilee, but they're speaking in our own languages. This is amazing!"*

One of Jesus' disciples, named Peter, stepped forward to explain to the crowds what was happening. He said, *"This is part of God's prophecy being fulfilled. We are eyewitnesses of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah!"*

Then Peter explained how Jesus had fulfilled everything the prophets said about the Messiah. He told the crowd, *"Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God. In Jesus, you will find forgiveness— he is the final sacrifice for everyone's sin. This is God's new covenant offered not just to the Jews, but to all who want to be part of God's family."*

That day, thousands believed what Peter had said and turned from their sins to follow Jesus. They found forgiveness in Jesus - realizing that he exchanged his life for theirs, as the final sacrifice for all of man's sins. His blood became their covering. They were baptized and became a part of God's family—once again empowered to live out God's promise to be a blessing to all people.

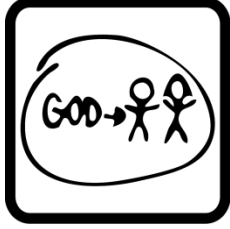
God's new covenant was not written on tablets of stone like before, but on the hearts and minds of his people, so they would always know how to live in his ways.

These followers of Jesus were deeply committed to God and each other... sharing everything they had, praying, learning God's ways together, and helping anyone in need—all with great joy and generosity. Daily, they ate together to honor and remember Jesus' life given for them.

They saw God do amazing things through them—miracles and healings—as he added people to their group each day.

This was the beginning of what the Bible calls the Church—a community of people all over the world who, because of Jesus, once again enjoy a life that is full and complete—as they follow in the ways of God.

We can join this great story... the story can continue with us!



The Story of God | Epilogue: Restored

STORY FROM... Luke 17 Acts 3 1 Corinthians 15 Revelation 21

Jesus promised to come back one day, saying, *“When I return again, everyone will know I am here. It’ll be like a huge flash of lighting that fills the sky!”*

Jesus will return to destroy all evil, sin and rebellion. There will be no more sickness, pain, or death— He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. The world as we know it will be gone forever.

God will once again live with his people and enjoy a close relationship. Humans will receive new bodies and live on a new earth, restored back to the way God designed it. God’s Kingdom will come in fullness, and everything will live under his rule.

As God’s community on earth, we wait with great anticipation for this amazing day. *Until then, may we live in God’s ways, giving people a glimpse of what life is like in the coming Kingdom.*