



From Creation to Easter





What a wonderful world it was in the very beginning, in the beautiful Paradise of the lovely Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived in absolute beauty, peace & plenty.

When God created the world, everything was perfect. There was no sin. Adam and Eve loved each other, and they loved God. There was no sickness or death. This was the way God wanted the world to be.



Satan spoke through the snake in the garden in order to deceive Eve. Then she and Adam sinned against God. Because they sinned, everyone on earth gets sick and everyone dies.

Because Adam and Eve sinned, something even more terrible happened. The relationship between God and people was broken by sin. But God had a plan to restore that relationship.



Hundreds of years later, God spoke to a man named Abraham. God told him, "Leave your country and family and go to the land I will show you. I will bless you and make you a great nation. All families on earth will be blessed because of you."

So Abraham obeyed God. He took his wife, Sarah, together with all of his servants and everything he owned and went to the land God showed him, the land of Canaan.



Many years went by, but Abraham and Sarah still did not have a son. God spoke to Abraham and promised again that he would have a son and as many descendants as the stars in the sky. Abraham believed God's promise.

God kept His promise. Sarah, Abraham's wife, bore him Isaac, the forefather of the Jews [Israelites]. And Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar, bore him Ishmael, forefather of the Arabs.

God told Abraham, "All the people groups of the earth will be blessed through you." Jesus was a descendant of Abraham. All the people groups are blessed through him, because everyone who believes in Jesus is saved from sin, and becomes a spiritual descendant of Abraham.

Now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you. (Galatians 3:29, NLT)



God made a covenant with the Israelites. Then God wrote Ten Commandments on two stone tablets and gave them to Moses. God also gave many other laws and rules to follow. If the people obeyed these laws, God promised that he would bless and protect them. If they disobeyed them, God would punish them.

Anyone who disobeyed God's law could bring an animal to the altar in front of the Tent of Meeting as a sacrifice to God. A priest would kill the animal and burn it on the altar. The blood of the animal that was sacrificed covered the person's sin and made that person clean in God's sight.



Throughout the history of the Israelites, God sent them prophets. The prophets heard messages from God and then told the people God's messages.

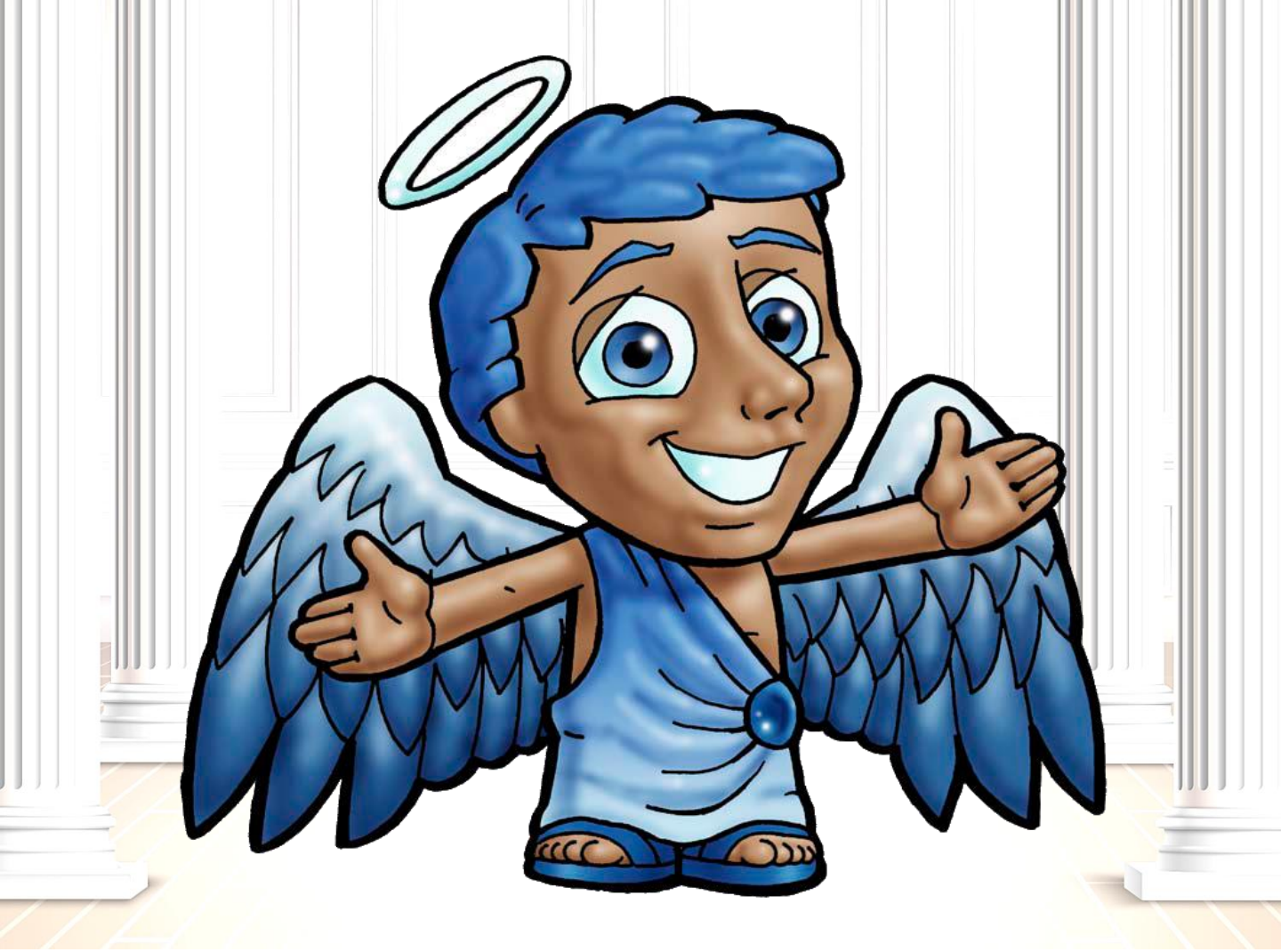
Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised that he would make a New Covenant, but not like the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. In the New Covenant, God would write his law on the people's hearts, the people would know God personally, they would be his people.



The prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would live in Galilee, comfort broken-hearted people, and proclaim freedom to captives and release to prisoners. He also predicted that the Messiah would heal sick people and those who could not hear, see, speak, or walk.

The prophet Isaiah also prophesied that the Messiah would be hated without reason and rejected. Other prophets foretold that a friend would betray him. The prophet Zechariah predicted that the friend would be paid thirty silver coins as payment for betraying the Messiah.

The prophets also told about how the Messiah would die. Isaiah prophesied that people would spit on, mock, and beat the Messiah. They would pierce him and he would die in great suffering even though he had not done anything wrong.



Hundreds of years later, an angel came with a message from God to an old priest named Zechariah. Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were godly people, but she had not been able to have any children.

The angel said to Zechariah, "Your wife will have a son. You will name him John. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and will prepare the people for the Messiah!"



John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, grew up and became a prophet. He lived in the wilderness, ate wild honey and locusts, and wore clothes made from camel hair.

Many people came out to the wilderness to listen to John. He preached to them, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near!"

Some Jews asked John if he was the Messiah. John replied, "I am not the Messiah, but there is someone coming after me. He is so great that I am not even worthy to untie his sandals."



The next day, Jesus came to be baptized by John. When John saw him, he said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world."

John said to Jesus, "I am not worthy to baptize you. You should baptize me instead." But Jesus said, "You should baptize me, because it is the right thing to do." So John baptized him, even though Jesus had never sinned.

When Jesus came up out of the water after being baptized, the Spirit of God appeared in the form of a dove and came down and rested on him. At the same time, God's voice spoke from heaven, saying, "You are my Son whom I love, and I am very pleased with you."



Then Jesus went throughout the region of Galilee, and large crowds came to him. They brought many people who were sick or handicapped, including those who could not see, walk, hear, or speak, and Jesus healed them.

Jesus felt great compassion towards the people. To Jesus, these people were like sheep without a shepherd. He didn't advise people to perform complicated ceremonies or keep difficult rules. All He did was teach love and show love.

Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love—to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." And the second is "like it"—it's almost equal, almost the same: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).



Every year, the Jews celebrated the Passover. This was a celebration of how God had saved their ancestors from slavery in Egypt many centuries earlier. About three years after Jesus first began preaching and teaching publicly, Jesus told his disciples that he wanted to celebrate this Passover with them in Jerusalem, and that he would be killed there.



One of Jesus' disciples was a man named Judas. Judas was in charge of the apostles' moneybag, but he loved money and often stole money out of the bag. After Jesus and the disciples arrived in Jerusalem, Judas went to the Jewish leaders and offered to betray Jesus to them in exchange for money. He knew that the Jewish leaders denied that Jesus was the Messiah and that they were plotting to kill him.

The Jewish leaders, led by the high priest, paid Judas thirty silver coins to betray Jesus. This happened just as the prophets had predicted. Judas agreed, took the money, and went away. He began looking for an opportunity to help them arrest Jesus.



In Jerusalem, Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples. During the Passover meal, Jesus took some bread and broke it. He said, "Take and eat this. This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." In this way, Jesus said that his body would be sacrificed for them.

Then Jesus picked up a cup and said, "Drink this. It is my blood of the New Covenant that is poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Do this to remember me every time you drink it."



Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, please let me not have to drink this cup of suffering. But if there is no other way for people's sins to be forgiven, then let your will be done."

Judas came with the Jewish leaders, soldiers, and a large crowd. They were carrying swords and clubs. Judas came to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Teacher," and kissed him. This was the sign for the Jewish leaders to know whom to arrest. After Jesus was arrested, all the disciples ran away.



The Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. They hoped that Pilate would condemn Jesus as guilty and sentence him to be killed.

After speaking with Jesus, Pilate went out to the crowd and said, "I find no guilt in this man." But the Jewish leaders and the crowd shouted, "Crucify him!" Pilate replied, "He is not guilty." But they shouted even louder. Pilate became afraid that the crowd would begin to riot, so he agreed to have his soldiers crucify Jesus.



Jesus didn't have to die on the cross, but He chose to die. — For you and me!

All of us at times have done wrong and our mistakes and sins separate us from God, Who is perfect. In order to bring us to God, Jesus, the Son of God, took the punishment for our sins, that through His sacrifice, we can be forgiven and saved.



But even His death did not satisfy His jealous enemies. To ensure that His followers couldn't steal His body and claim He'd come back to life, they placed a huge stone over the entrance of His tomb and posted a group of Roman soldiers there to guard it.

This was a scheme that proved futile, however, as three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in that cold tomb, Jesus rose from the dead, the victor over death and Hell forever!



After His resurrection, Jesus personally appeared to literally hundreds of His followers, encouraging, strengthening, and comforting them. He told them that He was going to return to be with His heavenly Father, but that He would always be with them in spirit, living in their hearts forever. He also gave His followers a wonderful promise, saying, “One day I will come again.”

Though many great teachers have spoken and taught about love and God, Jesus is the only one who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead.

If you haven't yet met Jesus or received His forgiveness and gift of eternal life, you can right now by praying the following:

Thank You, Jesus, for paying the price for my mistakes and wrongs, so I can be forgiven. I ask You now, dear Jesus, to please come into my heart, forgive me, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Amen.

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