

THE BIG STORY OF THE BIBLE



A FREE ONLINE RESOURCE MADE AVAILABLE BY THE MEANS BAPTIST CHURCH

NOT TO BE PRINTED OR SOLD

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Sometimes the Bible can be hard to understand. The Old Testament Bible was completed over 2400 years ago, and the New Testament Bible was written around 2000 years ago. But don't worry! We have a special time machine we will use to travel back in time, and it will help us understand the Bible and what its Big Story is all about. Hop in, buckle up, and get ready! This is going to be an awesome adventure!



CHAPTER 1 – A JOURNEY BACK IN TIME!

Our first stop in our time machine takes us back to the Ancient Near East. This is where the first parts of our Bible were written. When we investigate the Ancient Near Eastern world, it helps us better understand the first books of the Bible. Let's look at what's happening in the Ancient Near East when we hop out of our time machine!

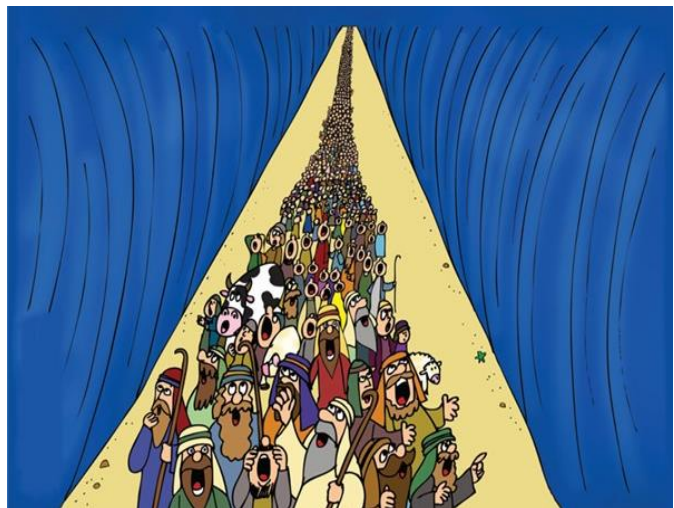


Wow! There's not much around here. We have stepped out into a barren wilderness where life is difficult. We don't see much food, water, animals, plants, or trees. There are a lot of hungry people, a lot of diseases, a lot of violence, and a lot of suffering in the world.

Let's look at some of the people who lived in the Ancient Near East. Just be careful! You'll see a lot of mean people who are very violent. They mistreat each other, take advantage of each other, and they are always fighting with one another. By the way, when we talk about people being mean, selfish, and harmful, we are talking about *sin*. Sin is everything people desire, do, and say that is mean, selfish, and harmful to us, others, and God's creation. Sin is doing the opposite of the good and loving things God wants us to do.



Wow! Look over there at that big group of people. They don't have anywhere to live. They are wandering around the Ancient Near Eastern desert. These people are called Israelites, and they are descendants from a group of people that God had chosen to be His special people and bring His blessings to the whole world. So how did they end up here in the desert wilderness? Great question!



The people of Israel had been in slavery in Egypt for 400 years. But God heard their cry for help, and He delivered them from slavery. God did a great miracle and parted the Red Sea so they could escape the Egyptian army. They are now wandering around the desert, and they are complaining about how bad things are. They are afraid because the other nations around them are mean and violent people. They are upset and asking God why He brought them out here in the desert, and why the world is such a mean and harsh place.

Their questions and complaining are why God gave them the first books of the Bible. In the first books He gave the Israelites, He explained to them how the harsh, cruel world they lived in was broken. It was not the world He originally created or wanted, but it had become corrupted. He gave them a Book of Beginnings, what we call Genesis, and it explained what happened to corrupt the beautiful world He created.



Genesis explained that Yahweh (God) was and is the only true God. He alone created all the world and all the nations. The world they lived in had become harsh and cruel, not because of God, but because people rejected God, lived sinful lives, and sin had corrupted the whole world.

Still to this day, bad and horrible things happen in the world because people choose to live selfishly and reject God. Sin always causes misery and harm and corrupts everything. When we make a bad choice, it hurts us, others, and God's creation.



In the next chapter, we will travel back to when God originally made the world! We will see what the world looked like before sin corrupted it. Later, we will also find out how sin entered the world, and why we all struggle with sin today, just like the Israelites and all other nations did in the Ancient Near East.

CHAPTER 2 – GOD’S SPECIAL GARDEN

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, tells us about the very beginning of God’s relationship with man. God gave Genesis to the Israelites, His special people we learned about in chapter 1, and it helped explain everything wrong with the world. So, buckle up and get ready! We are now traveling all the way back to the beginning of God’s creation of mankind!

Let’s hop out of our Time Machine and look at the world of Genesis 1, before sin corrupted God’s creation.



Wow! How awesome is this place? We have traveled back to a special place in the world called Eden, the Garden of God. It is full of plants, animals, fresh water, beautiful skies, gorgeous mountains, and everything you could ever need! Eden is the total opposite of the cruel world the Israelites lived in.

In Genesis 1, God described this amazing place to the Israelites. This is how God wanted the whole world to be. If only they could have seen it!

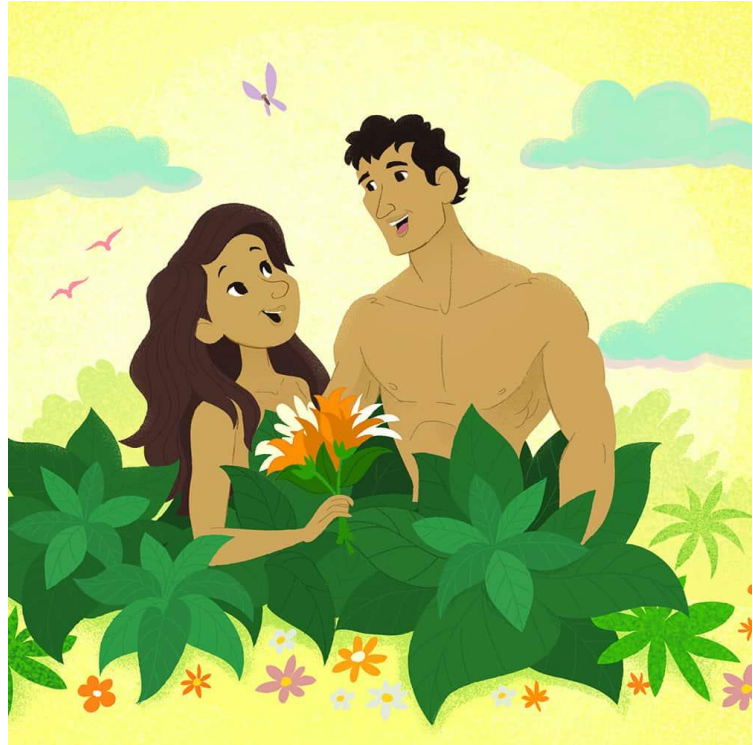
When we look around God's special garden, everything in it was made by God, and everything was good! The sun, moon, planets, stars, animals, fish, birds, fruit, vegetables, and everything else God made was good!

The Garden of Eden was God's temple, and that means it was His special home where He would live on the earth. But Eden wasn't complete. It still needed one thing, and that one thing was people. God wanted a family to live in His special Garden with Him, and to help Him take care of the Garden.



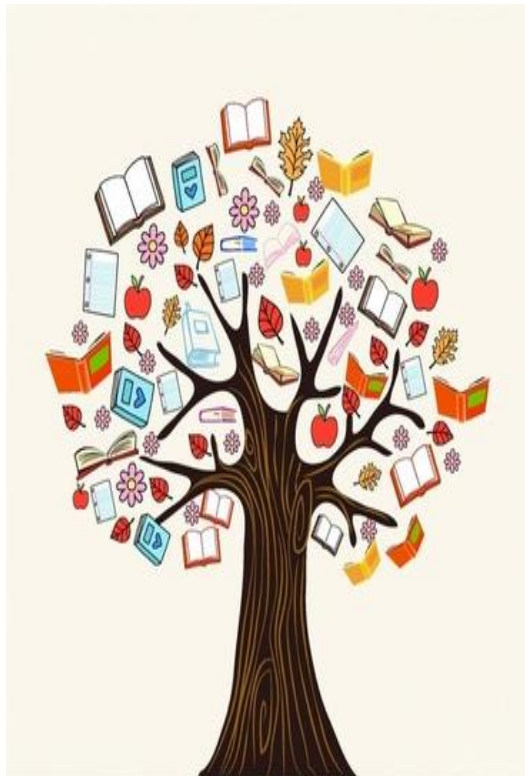
Hold on a minute! Look over there behind those bushes! God has put something else in His Garden.

That's Adam and Eve! They're God's special people, His family on the earth. God made them both, and He gave them the gift of life. He has placed Adam and Eve in His special garden, where He lives. He told them they were His family, and they could work with Him by helping take care of His Garden, His sacred space, which was someday going to spread out and be the whole world.



Yahweh loves Adam and Eve. They are free to spend time with Him every day, and He enjoys spending time with them. He also gave them a special job. He wants them to have a great big family that will help Him take care of the whole world. That means in the very beginning God wanted everyone in the whole world to be part of His family, to enjoy Him, and help Him enjoy and take care of His beautiful creation.

Yahweh is a God who loves life, and He doesn't like death or any of the things associated with death like sickness and disease. So, he has placed a special tree in the Garden. It is called the Tree of Life, and Adam and Eve are free to eat from the tree and live with God forever. Look, there it is!



God also placed another special tree in the Garden. It's called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree does not give life to people like the other tree. This tree is very dangerous!

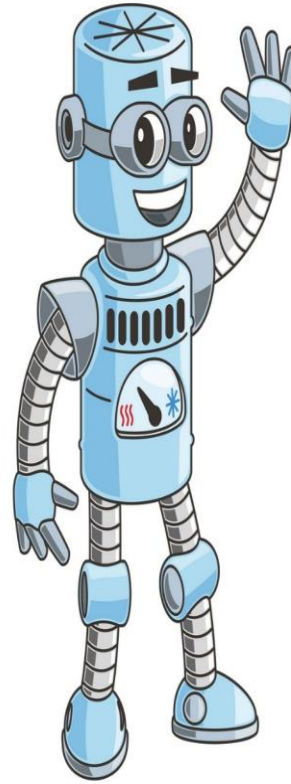
God told Adam and Eve they can eat anything they wanted in the Garden. But they shouldn't eat anything from the second Tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told them, *“The day you eat anything off the second tree, that's the day you decide that you think you know better than me regarding how to live. It means you choose to live on your own, and you don't choose to live with me any longer. The day you eat it, you will be exiled—that means kicked out of the Garden. Sadly, you will also die because you won't have the Tree of Life anymore. But I want you to live with me and be my special family! So, please don't eat the fruit off the second Tree! When I tell you what to do, it's always because I love you and I want what is best for you.”*

I think it's a good question to ask, “If it's so dangerous, why did God put the second tree in the Garden?” God put the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden because of love!



God is love. God freely chooses to love you and me. He also wants you and me to freely choose to love Him, and He wants us to love one another. So, God made Adam and Eve with special abilities to think, and learn, and then make their own decisions. This way they could freely choose to love God and others. You see, if you force someone to love you, that's not really love. God knew if He created Adam and Eve and they couldn't make choices, they would just be robots and not real people. Robots can't choose love!

Thankfully, God didn't make robots. He gave Adam and Eve a choice. They were free to love Him and live in His Garden, or they could choose to reject Him and live apart from God. Living apart from God would mean living apart from the Tree of Life, and that meant death would be the result of rejecting Him. Rejecting God would be disobeying God, and that's what sin is.



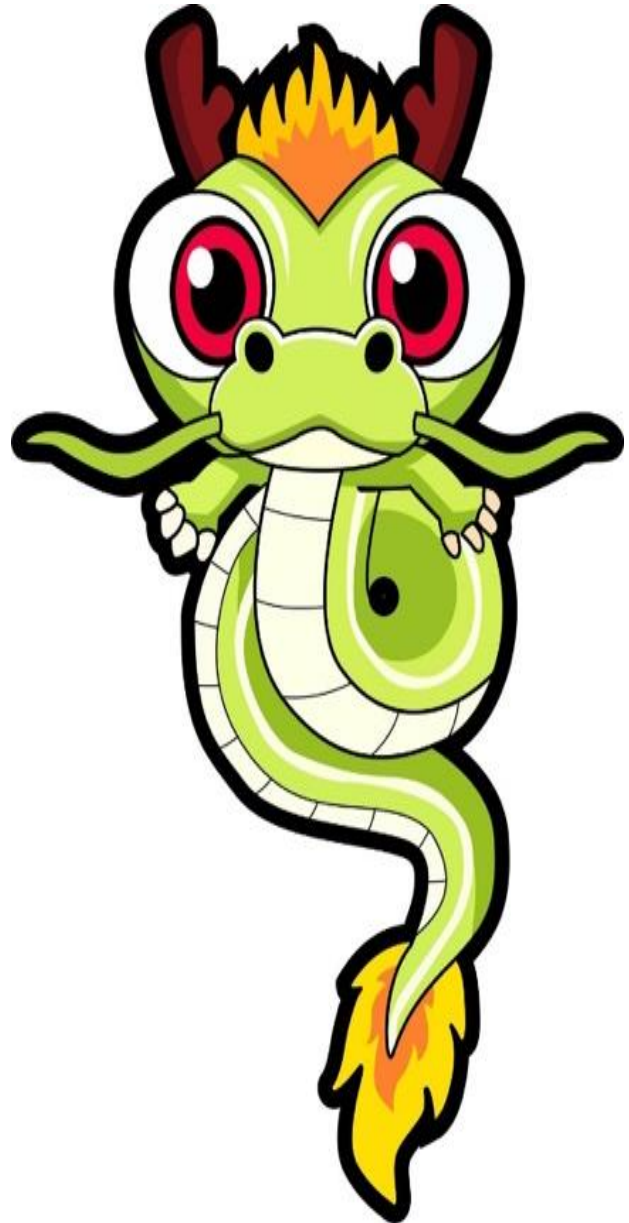
Sin, disobeying God, is like a weed that grows uncontrollably and hurts everything and everyone. It's like pollution that makes everything sick and causes death and misery everywhere. We always need to listen to God, follow God, and avoid sin!

Oh no! Look out! There comes a new creature into the Garden, and this guy is always up to no good! We will meet him in the next chapter. Proceed with caution because he's a sneaky snake. For real!

CHAPTER 3 – A SNEAKY SNAKE!

Woah! Who is this serpent looking creature sneaking into the Garden? And why aren't Adam and Eve afraid of him? Get ready because you're about to meet the most dangerous creature mankind has ever met! He's always up to no good.

You see, God not only had a human family on earth, but He also had a family in heaven. His family in heaven were spiritual beings. He made them so they could help His family on earth. But some of these spiritual beings decided to rebel against God. They wanted to be their own boss, and they wanted people to worship them instead of God. God had to kick some of them out of heaven because of their sinful rebellion against Him.



The spiritual being we see in the Garden with Adam and Eve is the first one God kicked out of heaven. We call him Satan, or the Serpent. He has come into the Garden to trick Adam and Eve, and he wants them to reject God and follow him instead. He wants them to give their loyalty to “Team Satan” so he can take control of them and all the nations. Let’s see if we can sneak over and hear what he’s telling them!

The Serpent hisses and says, *“Don’t you want to be your own boss instead of listening to Yahweh? He doesn’t want you to eat from the second tree, because He knows it makes you smarter than Him and you’ll get to decide for yourself where to live and what to do. You won’t really die if you eat it! Trust me, not God! I defied Him and didn’t die. Don’t let Him boss you around! Doing whatever you want to do makes you so much happier! That’s what I do. Come join me.”*

Oh no! They’ve listened to Satan! I don’t think this is going to work out very good for Adam and Eve. God warned them of the bad things that would happen if they rejected Him and His ways.



Ah oh, I think Adam and Eve know they've messed up. God is coming to spend time with them, and for the first time ever they're hiding from God in the bushes! That is what happens when we disobey God. It messes up our relationship with Him. Even though they're hiding, God knows what they've done. He knows Satan tricked them into eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God's heart is broken because they sinned, and He knows what the consequences will be.



Sadly, sin means Adam and Eve must move outside the Garden. After they chose to disobey God, it meant they would continue



to sin and disobey God. Being out of the Garden meant they could no longer eat from the Tree of Life, and someday they would die. Sin always leads to very bad things. Sickness, violence, hatred, hunger, death, and all the bad stuff that happens in the world was caused by sin and that sneaky snake, the Devil.

Remember, sin is like pollution. Pollution contaminates the air, and that makes everyone and everything sick. When man chose to listen to the Serpent and sin, sin spread through the whole world like pollution. Everywhere we see bad things in creation, it's all because mankind chose to reject God and follow Satan.



Sin not only contaminated the whole creation, but it also caused



Adam, Eve, and all the nations to become prisoners of Satan. He kept the nations enslaved to violence, hatred, selfishness, and most of all he kept them tricked into rejecting God. The Bible sometimes calls Satan the ruler over all the evil in the world. He rules over people by keeping them committed to sin, which means they continue rejecting God. He also uses death, the consequence of sin, to keep people afraid and sad.

It is sad to see what Satan and sin have done to our world. Because of sin, we are incapable of living good enough to get back into God's family. Sin and Satan have us all enslaved to death. That's what the story of Genesis tells us, and that's why there's so much sickness, sadness, and death in the world today.

God is good, and He can only live with good things. Sin contaminates us, and it makes us *not* good. Because of sin, mankind can no longer live with God.

Thankfully, God had a plan to rescue us from sin, Satan, and death! Even though we all sin and disobey God, He loved us so much He planned the greatest rescue mission ever! Let's hop back into our time machine and travel to the time when God's rescue mission entered the world.

CHAPTER 4 – GOD’S RESCUE PLAN

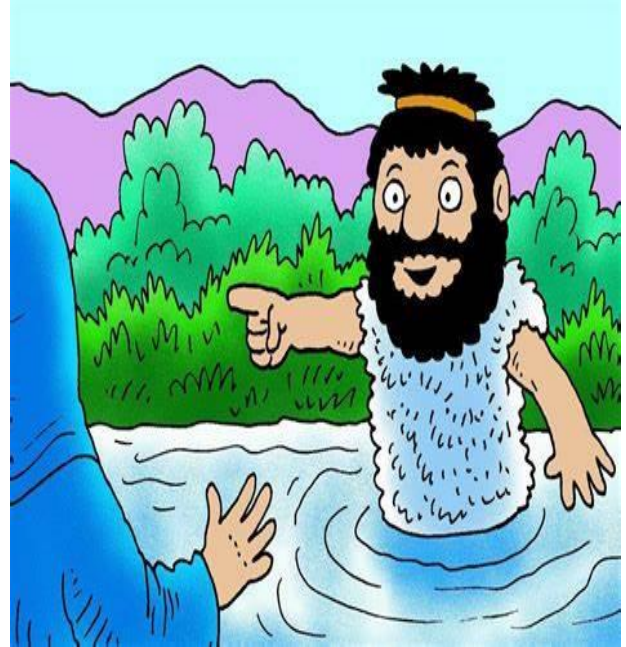
God is an awesome God! Even though mankind turned against Him, rejected Him, and brought all kinds of misery and pain into the world by corrupting it with sin, God still loved us all and wanted us to be His special family on the earth. So, God had a rescue plan! God’s rescue plan would come in the form of a Person. Let’s hop in our time machine to about 2000 years prior to our modern day, and let’s take an up-close look at God’s plan to rescue us from sin, Satan, and death.

We have arrived in a little town called Bethlehem. A long time ago, in the Old Testament scriptures, God promised to rescue man from sin, Satan, and death. God said He would rescue us by sending a special Person, His Son. And that’s what we see happening here in Bethlehem. Just like God



promised, His Son has been born to Joseph the Carpenter, and his soon to be bride, Mary. And God sent an angel to tell them to name Him, Jesus! That means He is the one who will come and save us from our sins. But now let’s move a little further in our time machine to when Jesus grows up!

Now we are about thirty years after Jesus was born. His cousin John the Baptist is preaching about God's Kingdom. John is telling everyone they should turn away from living in sin and get ready because God's promise to rescue man was coming soon! Everyone who believed John's message was baptized in the Jordan River. Baptism is when you are dipped into water as a way of showing everyone else you've turned away from sin, and that you've turned your life over to following God. People were coming from all around to hear John preach.



One day while John was preaching, he saw Jesus coming. That day, Jesus was baptized by John. Jesus wasn't baptized because He was turning from sin. John called Jesus, "The innocent lamb of God," meaning Jesus was innocent and without any sin at all. Jesus was baptized as a special ceremony to start His rescue mission!

Now we are going to buzz around and watch Jesus in ministry. Hold on! Here we go!

Look at that! The world was corrupted by sin and Satan, and that means sometimes people struggle without food. But Jesus took one little boy's lunch and turned it into enough food to feed over 5000 people! It's like all the bad stuff caused by sin in the world goes away when Jesus shows up!



Oh no. There's a very sad family. Their daughter has been very sick, and she just died. They are all crying. But look at Jesus! He just prayed for her, and now she's alive again! Death is defeated by Jesus!

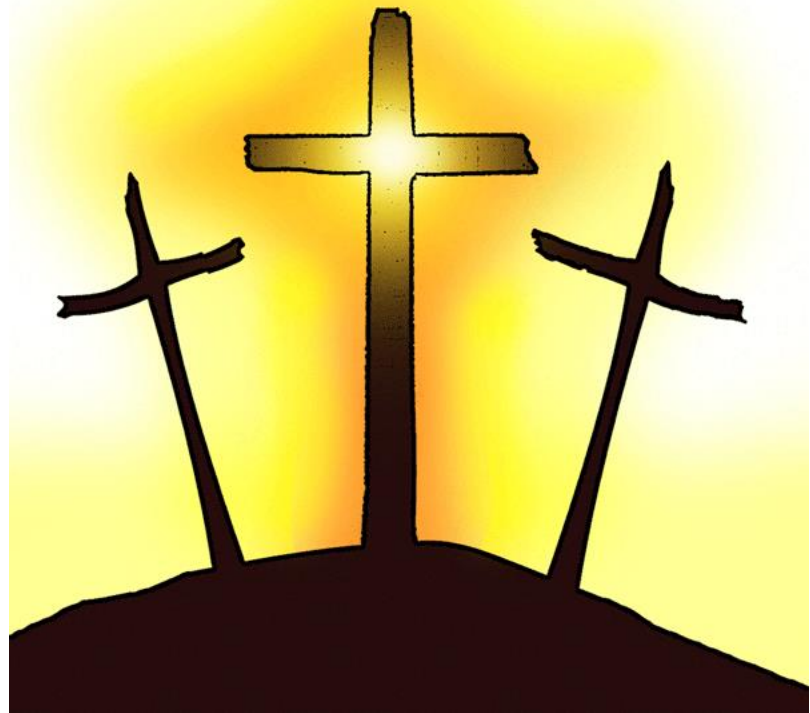
There are a lot of people being tormented and controlled by evil spirits like Satan. But watch Jesus, going from town to town and running off all the demons so people can be free and happy! The devils fear Jesus and must leave people alone when He shows up. Satan is no match for God's Son!



This is amazing. Jesus fixes everything sin messed up in the world. He also defeats the devil and his evil army. And death is overcome by Jesus! His ministry is a ministry of rescuing the world from sin, Satan, and death.

You might be asking, “What happened to Jesus? How long was He living in the world and helping people?” And that brings us to our next stop. It's three years after Jesus was baptized and started helping people. And now things are going to get a little sad again. But don't worry, there will be a happy ending!

Do you see those crosses? Those are used for killing people. Satan caused one of Jesus' disciples to turn against Him. Satan also used his evil control over world leaders to make them turn against Jesus too.



Sadly, they lied and falsely accused Jesus, and had Him nailed to a cross. On the cross, Jesus died. It was a very sad day. Because of Satan, and because of sin in the hearts of men, Jesus was crucified.

Remember, when Adam and Eve chose sin and rejected God, they joined “team Satan” and the whole world came under the evil influence of Satan? Satan had used sickness, violence, misery, and death to torment people. He tricked all the nations into following him and kept them from turning back to God. And now he thinks he’s defeated Jesus, and defeated God’s plan to rescue us. But the story isn’t over. Jesus was buried in a tomb after He died on the cross. So, let’s jump forward a couple days and check out the tomb.

Look at that!
The tomb is
empty! Do
you want to
know where
Jesus' body
is? I'll tell
you! Jesus'
body is gone,
and the tomb
is empty
because God
raised Jesus
from the
dead!



You see, the cross was part of God's plan all along! The Sneaky Snake, the Devil, used death as his main weapon against man. He tricked Adam and Eve into sinning, and he kept the nations tricked into sinning, all because he hated God and the people God made. Since God loved life, Satan loved death. God is about loving others. Satan is all about hating others. God is good. Satan is bad. So, God turned Satan's own weapon of death against him.

The people, influenced by Satan, sinned, and reject Jesus and nailed him to the cross. But remember John called Jesus a lamb? In the Old Testament days when sin polluted God's temple, a lamb was sacrificed and the life in its blood purified sin's pollution from the temple and made it a safe place for man to be with God again. When Jesus died on the cross, He spilled His blood and gave His life so all the sin that polluted our hearts and lives could be cleansed. That means, because of Jesus' blood shed on the cross, our sins are now purified and forever forgiven by God! We can now live with God again as His special family. Isn't that awesome news?



Jesus not only died so our sins could be cleansed, but He also died so He could defeat Satan and death. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He broke the power of Satan's weapon, death. God raised Jesus from the dead, and then took Jesus back to heaven to be with Him forever. Because Jesus defeated death, you and I can have victory over death as well!

Victory!

Jesus defeated death and went to heaven to become our way to go to heaven. The cross of Jesus, and His resurrection and his empty tomb are the greatest things in all human history!

Remember, Satan kept the nations tricked into following him and rejecting God. But when Jesus died on the cross, He also delivered the death blow to Satan's deceptive control over the nations. Now all the nations can turn back to God and be in His family again! In summary, Jesus, as God's rescue plan, defeated sin, Satan, and death; and now there's nothing to keep anyone from turning back to God.



Just like God gave Adam and Eve a choice, God now gives us a choice. He has given us Jesus to defeat sin, Satan, and death. However, we still must decide whether we want to turn back to God and follow His awesome plan for our lives or continue living for ourselves and following Satan's plan that ends in sin and death.

Jesus made a wonderful promise. He said everyone who believes in Him will receive the cleansing of all their sin by His shed blood and death on the cross. He also said that in the same way He was raised from dead to live forever with God, that everyone who believed in Him would also be raised from the dead and spend forever with God.

Believing in Jesus purifies us of all sinful contamination, sets us free from Satan's prison and returns us to God's family. Believing in Jesus and becoming His follower guarantees us eternal life. I hope you believe in Jesus!



CHAPTER 5 – WHAT NOW?

Now we travel back to our day and time! But first, I want you to see one more thing. So, let's make a quick pit stop!

Does this look familiar? It looks just like God's special garden, doesn't it? But it isn't! We just travelled all the way to the end of the ages!

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He promised someday He would come again and recreate the whole earth! That's what we see here. This is the new garden



God will someday make. When Jesus comes back, He's going to get rid of all sickness, and violence, and hunger, and death. Everything that old sneaky snake caused in the world will be gone forever. And we will live forever with God in His new garden. Happy life, love, and goodness will be everywhere.

I hope you enjoyed our time travel trip!
Now, it's time to go home! Buckle up!



Now that we are back home, you might be asking yourself the question, “Why doesn’t Jesus hurry up and come back so we can live in God’s new garden forever?” That’s an excellent question! The answer is simple: All of us who have believed in Jesus are now supposed to spread the Good News of what He did for us on the cross and by raising from the dead.

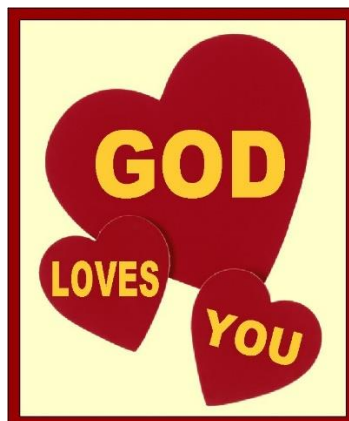
There are people all over the world who have never heard the Big Story of the Bible, and they’ve never heard about Jesus. They can’t believe in Him and join us in God’s family unless they first hear about Him. So, Jesus is waiting to come back so we have time to tell the whole world they can join us in God’s family! Remember, back in the beginning God wanted His family to include all the nations? That’s still what he wants!

That’s why He’s giving us time to go into all the world and tell everyone about Jesus! God wants a family that includes all kinds of people!



The story gets even better! The blood of Jesus cleanses us of all the pollution of sin when we believe in Him. When that happens, we become special temples for God! Jesus comes to live in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit then gives us the strength we need to tell everyone else about God's rescue plan, and to live the way God wants us to live!

The Bible's Big Story is the good news of Jesus. It is about God's rescue plan for mankind. If you have never turned to Jesus and believed in Him, maybe you could do that today! People who believe in Jesus are called, "Christians." Maybe your parents, grandparents, or other family members are Christians. Maybe you have a Christian friend, or Christian neighbor. Maybe you know a preacher, or Sunday school teacher. If you'd like to know more about Jesus and what it means to believe in Him, talk to the Christians you know! If you already believe in Jesus, then ask Him to help you tell everyone else the good news of God's rescue plan! And remember...



■ THE END

Dear Friend,

We pray you and your little ones have been blessed and encouraged to read about the Big Story of the Bible, and to learn all about God's rescue plan in Jesus! If you'd like to learn more about Jesus, God's amazing love, and what His will is for your life, please feel free to contact us via our website. We love you, and we are praying for you!

In Love,

Joey and Jessica Rogers

<http://www.meansbaptistchurch.org>