

COME, YE CHILDREN

A Bible Storybook for Young Children

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Illustrated by Jeff Steenholdt



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*“Come, ye children, hearken unto me:
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”
— Psalm 34:11*

To
my
grandchildren

Preface

With trembling hand I have set down these one hundred ninety-eight Bible stories, echoing David's words, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." It is to very young children that I have directed this book, children of the approximate ages of four to eight years. Because it was not merely **stories** I was setting down, but because it was the **fear of the Lord** I was teaching, I tried to take particular care to use a simple, direct style and words young children would understand. When some of Scripture's more difficult concepts entered the narrative, I explained the concept in vivid picture language, at their level of understanding.

Central to the contents of these stories is the **fear of the Lord**. For that reason I have closely followed the Scriptural narrative and the stories are, I believe, Biblically accurate. When I wrote them, I used not only the one passage which told the story proper, but searched through the whole of God's Word for other references or commentaries on that particular incident. I did that, of course, because the Word of God is one whole, and Scripture interprets itself. That is the reason, too, that I did not write a series of separate "Bible stories." Each story is written as a part of a whole, the whole being the revelation of the whole counsel of our great God and Father to His people through our Lord Jesus Christ. In that our young children also share.

It has been said that one cannot write Bible stories without interpreting them, without applying them, and without teaching the fear of the Lord through them. I believe that. Throughout this book I have tried to show to the children who will listen to these stories that the Bible is **one whole**. Therefore, no matter what story we hear, we are always learning the fear of the Lord. Especially I have stressed the covenant idea: that God has worked out His purpose and fulfilled His promise through the line of believers and their children. In order that our young children in these last days will always know that the stories of the Bible are for them, as children of believing parents, and that the stories will touch them each day, I have added, under the title **REMEMBER**, the key to the spiritual application of each story which they can carry away in their little hearts.

The artist, Jeff Steenholdt, and I have tried to blend the nature of the illustrations to fit the style of the stories. The reader will find that the illustrations in this book are different from those in other Bible story books. Because we do not know the facial features of any of the Biblical characters, we have purposely eliminated direct facial views of any of them. Instead, Jeff has tried to capture, not only the authenticity of the landscapes and clothing of Biblical times, but also the positive element of each story, and has inserted it at the proper place in each story. He has done this with reverence, without prying into the spiritual, which cannot be seen, but by helping young children, who need pictures, to remember the heart of each story.

It is our prayer that this book may be used in the fear of the Lord and to His glory.

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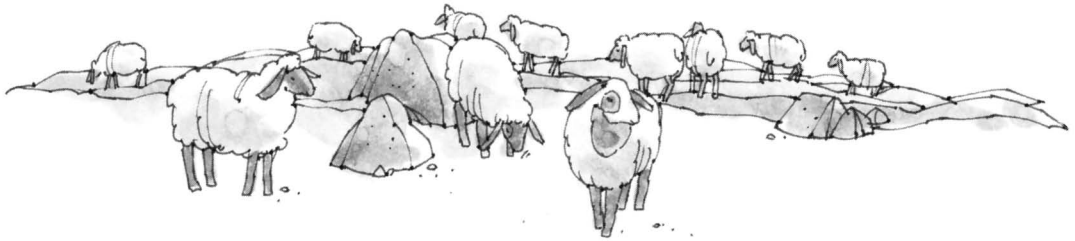
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God Makes Light

What did you have for breakfast this morning? Toast and jam? Or a bowl of cereal with milk? What did you have for lunch? A sandwich and soup? Did you say, "Thank you," to your mother?

When you eat the good breakfast your mother makes for you, do you ever ask her where your toast and cereal come from? If she tells you she bought it at the store, do you ask her where the store gets it from? After she tells you the store buys the bread from the bakery and the cereal from the cereal factory, do you wonder how they make the bread and the cereal? Then your mother tells you that bakers need the wheat and the corn and the oats that grow in the farmers' fields to make bread and cereal. She tells you that the farmer plants the seed in a field that God made; God sends His rain and His sunshine and makes the wheat and corn and oats grow, so that the baker and cereal maker can make bread and cereal for you and your family.

Your mother might tell you, too, that God made the trees that the carpenters used for the boards to build your house, and God gave the sand that goes into the cement. Your mother will tell you that everything we have comes from God. Yes, everything comes from God! Would you like to hear how God made everything?

Long ago, in the beginning, God was there. God always was. He has no beginning and no ending. We call Him **eternal**. That is very hard for us to understand, isn't it? God is holy and pure and perfect, and without any thought of wickedness in Him; and because He is holy and pure and perfect, He knows



what is best. We call Him **wise**. And God is so great that He has all the power. He knows what is best and He can do what is best.

Do you know what God in His greatness did? He made the world. First, the world was not there, and then the world was there! How could that be? The earth where we live and the heavens where God lives came because God spoke. His powerful Word called the heavens and earth to be made. When God told the heavens and the earth to be made, we say that He **created** them.

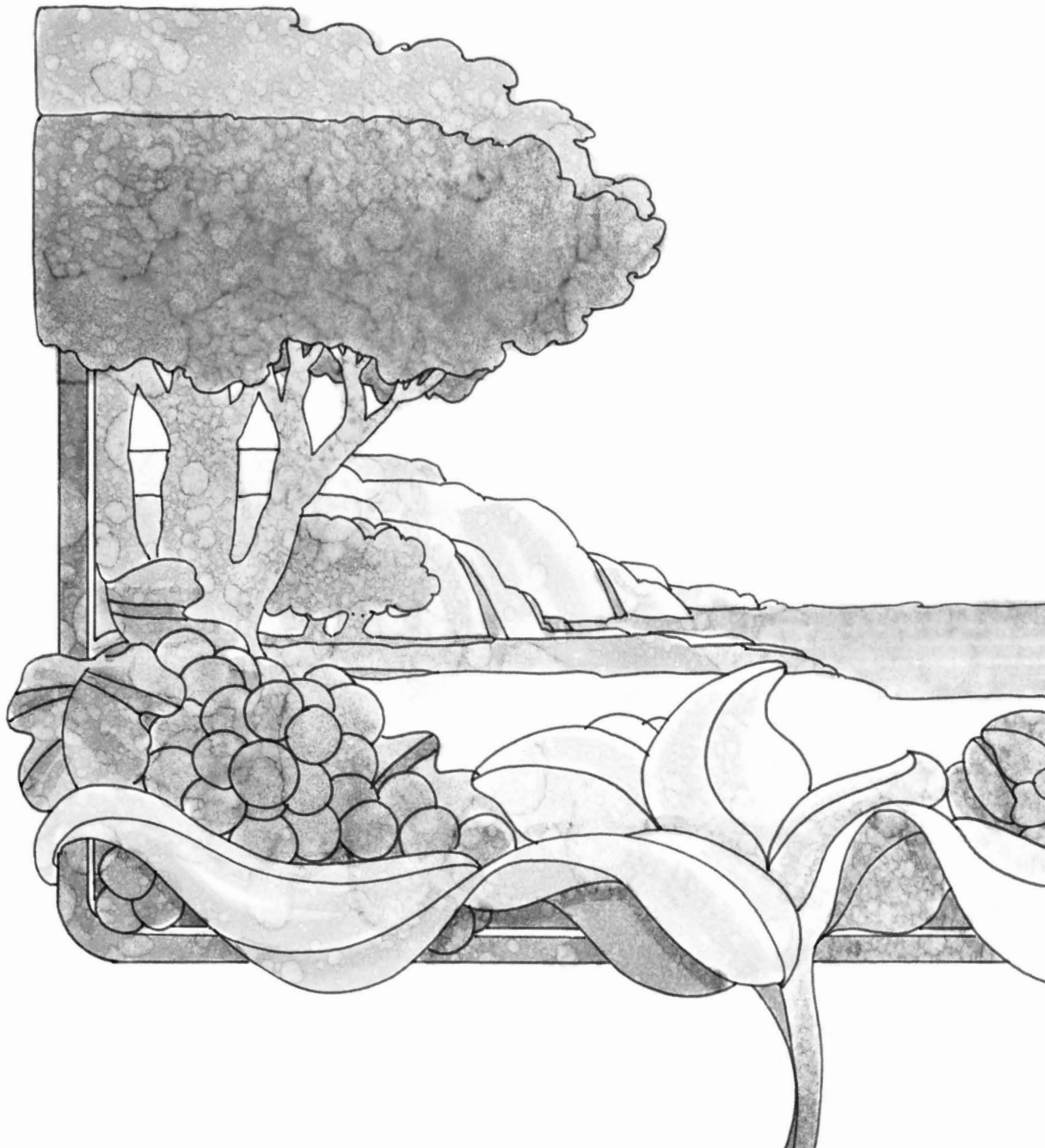
But God's world was not finished the minute He spoke. Many things, like water, sand, and air, were all mixed together. And the world was dark, pitch dark, black dark, thick dark. God wanted a world that would be light and alive, so God's Spirit sat over the dark world. You know what happens when a hen sits over her eggs for many days, don't you? They hatch into live little yellow chicks. God's Spirit sat over His world to make a **living** world. Nothing can live in a black, dark world, so God said, "Let there be light." And there was light – for a whole day. In the evening God made night, and that was the end of the very first day. God saw that His light was good. Do you see the good light that God makes every morning of every new day?

REMEMBER:

God is light. When we look outside and see the beautiful, bright daylight He has made, we will know that it is a picture of the light of our great God.

God Makes the Sky and Plants

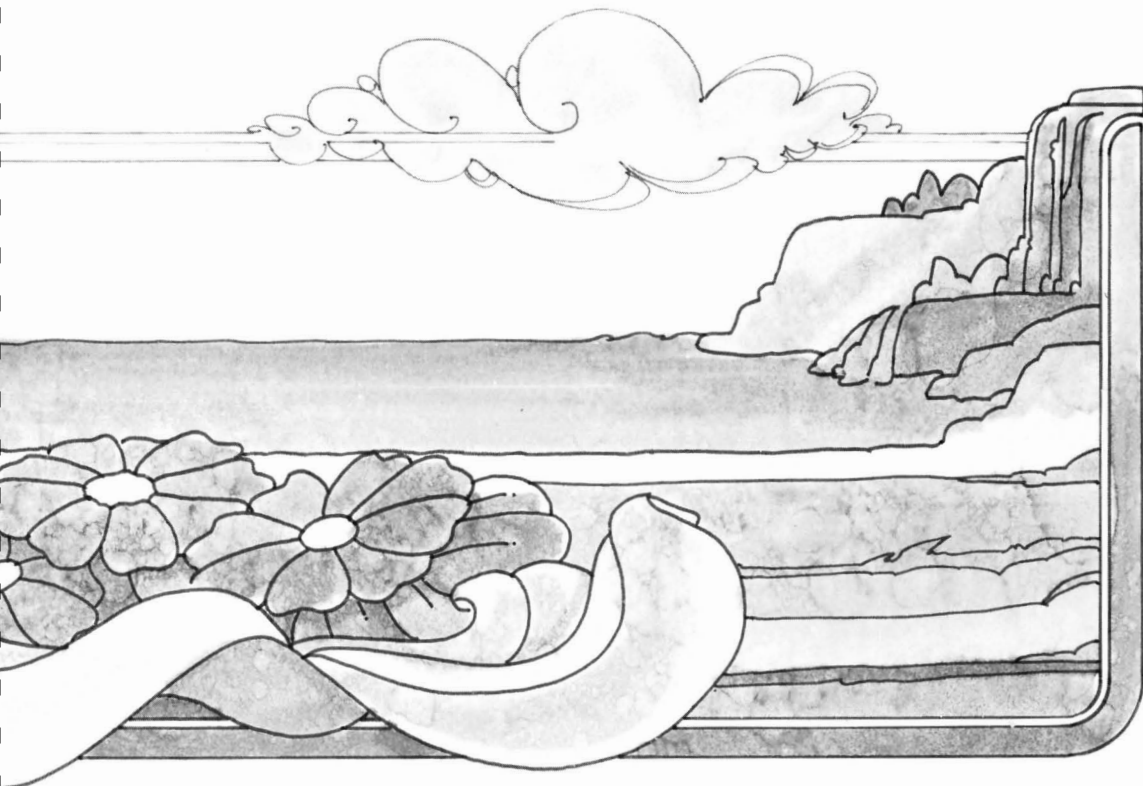
On a bright, warm, summer day, do you like to lie on your back in the grass and watch the sky? Do you see the clouds slide past? Do you ever try to look as high as you can, right into the sky? Do you wonder whether God is behind that blue sky?



We remember that everything comes from God. On the very first day, God made the light. On the second day, He made the sky, the blue sky we see every day. What do you think the world looked like before God made the sky? The earth and the water and the air and the sky were all mixed together. Then God spoke the Word of His great power, and He **separated** the waters of the sky from the waters of the earth. Do you know what **separate** means? When your mother cracks an egg and puts the yolk into one bowl and the white into another, she **separates** the egg. She pulls it apart.

God pulled the waters of the sky apart and stretched them out on top of the earth. God stretched the sky thin, like a beautiful blue curtain on top of us. We say that the name of that beautiful blue curtain is the sky.

The next day God separated some more. The land and the water on the earth were still mixed together, and there was not a dry, hard place for anyone to stand. Then God told the waters to come together to one place, and the dry



land appeared. God pulled the waters into little brooks and streams, and big rivers and lakes, and oceans, too.

If you could have stood on the dry land on the day that God made it, all you would have seen would have been sandy ground, brown and bare. God's dry land was not finished yet! It needed grass and flowers, corn and wheat, bushes and trees, and all the different kinds of plants you can think of. God did not plant tiny seeds, and then wait and wait for them to grow. He made the plants and trees big, already grown up.

If you could still be standing on God's earth after He told the plants to come, you would have seen the whole earth become beautiful and green with all the hundreds of plants and trees that God wanted on His earth, and the red and yellow and orange and purple flowers already blooming.

When you want a plant to grow, you need a seed and plenty of rain and sunshine. Then you must wait and wait for it to grow. But God did not create His plants that way. All God's plants were there the very minute God spoke His Word. We call that a great wonder. God saw that His wonder was good.

REMEMBER:

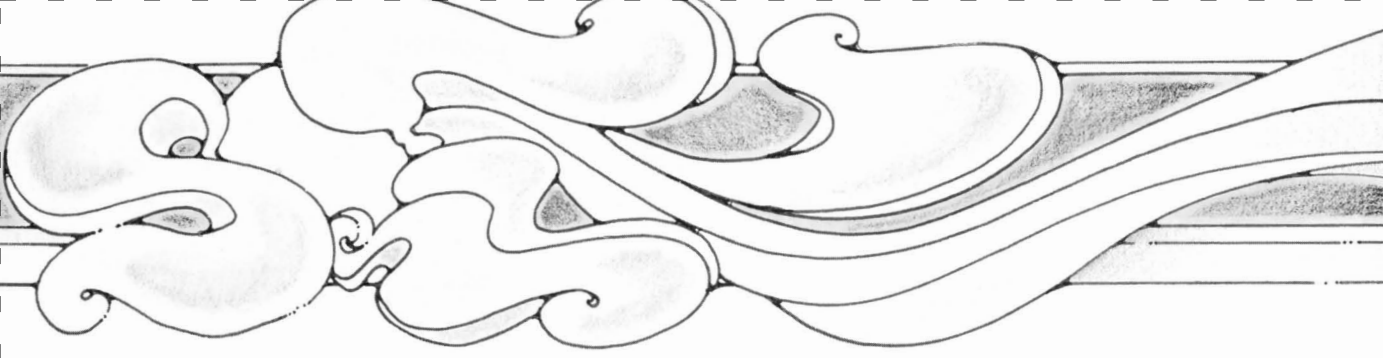
Plants need light in order to live. That is why plants turn themselves to the light. God's children are like plants, for they, too, turn to God's light so that they may live. Where can we find God's light? In His Word, the Bible.

God Makes the Sun, Moon, and Stars

What kind of weather do you like better: cold, rainy weather, or warm, bright sunshine? When it is the day for a picnic, do you run to your bedroom window early in the morning to see whether the sun is shining and do you hope that the sun will make the weather warm and beautiful for your picnic? God makes the sun shine.

On the fourth day, God made the sun and He put it in the big blue sky that He stretched out like a curtain over the earth. God made the sun to be a holder for the light that He had made on the very first day. In our homes we have light holders, too. We call them lamps and we can switch them on and off whenever we wish. But God's great light holder, the sun, always holds the light. It never goes off.

God made the sun very big and very hot. He made it bigger than our earth; and then He set it far away from us in His heaven, so that it cannot burn us up. He made it just warm enough to make the trees and flowers and our gardens grow.



Every day the sun tells us what to do. In the morning, when it comes up, it tells us to get up, for a new day is starting. When the sun sets at night, it tells us that it will soon be bedtime. When the sun tells us what to do, we say it **rules** us. God's sun rules us by telling us what kinds of clothes to wear: for in the wintertime, when it does not shine so brightly, it tells us to put on warm jackets and mittens. In the warm summertime, it tells us to get out our swimming suits, because it is warming up the lakes and pools.



God made the sun to shine during the day, and He made holders for the light to shine at night, too. We call them the moon and the stars. If you go outside on a dark night, try to find the moon. It catches the bright light of the sun and shines it back down on our dark world. The moon is just a mirror of the sun and we can see the sun's light in the moon just as we can see ourselves in a mirror.

When the Lord set the stars in His heavens, He set them very far away from the earth. God's stars are really very big, many of them bigger than our earth, but they are so far away that they look like tiny, sparkling dots in the sky. God made **millions** of those beautiful stars, more than we can count, and put them in patterns in the sky. Do you know why? Because He wanted His world to be great and beautiful and He wanted His great and beautiful world to praise Him. When we look at God's wonderful sun, His moon, and His stars, we must remember to praise Him, too.

REMEMBER:

The lights in the sky are pictures of Jesus. Sometimes the Bible calls Jesus "the **Sun** of righteousness" and "the bright and morning **Star**." Jesus is the Light of the world because He saves His people from their sins.

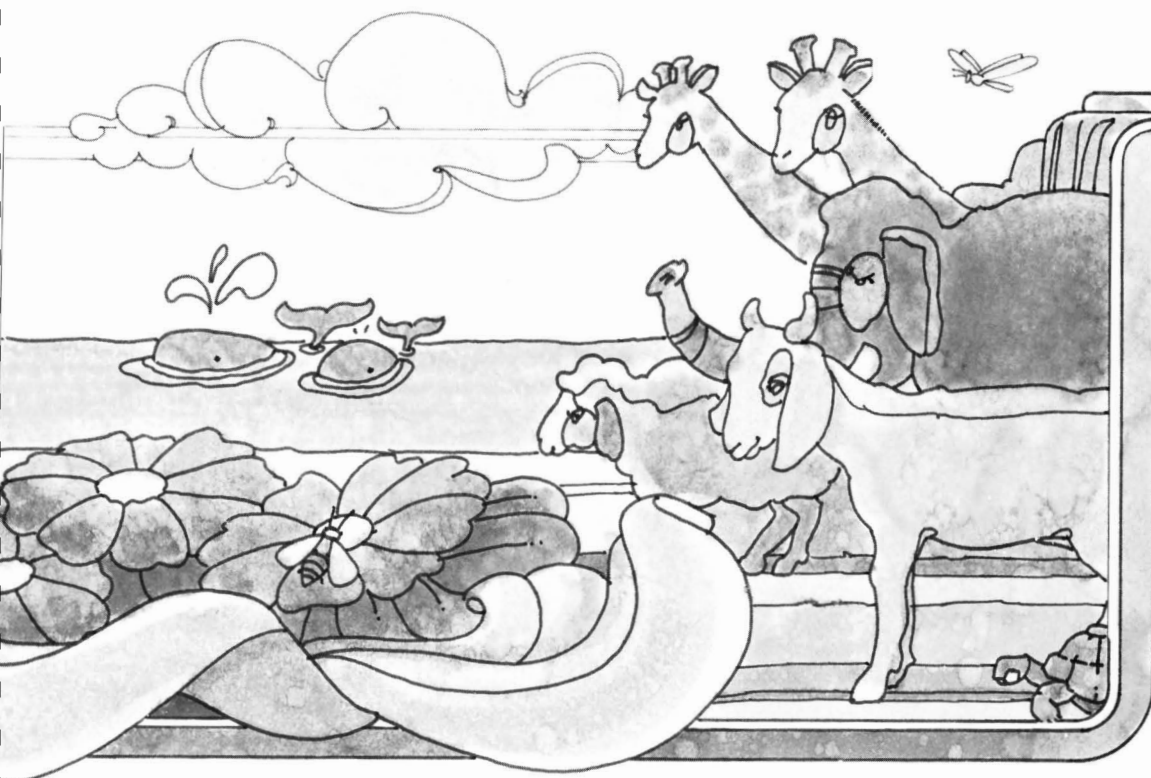
God Makes Fish, Birds, and Animals

Have you ever thought what our world would be like with plants and trees, sun, moon, and stars, but with nothing that can run or hop? Can you think what it would be like to play in a pond without any frogs to catch, to have a garden without ever seeing a rabbit, to go to a farm without horses or cows, and to see trees and no birds flying to them?



On the fifth day, God spoke with His powerful Word to the waters of the earth and told them to bring out things that moved: fish and birds; and the waters obeyed God's Word. Our great God wanted His earth to have many, many fish and birds, such a great plenty and so many different kinds that His earth would never run out. He made the tiny silver minnows, the middle-sized trout and salmon, and the huge sharks and whales; and then He made one rule for them all: to stay alive, they must always be in the **waters** God made. If they tried to live on land, they would die. That is God's rule for the fish.

God called the birds out of the water, too. Did you know that birds are something like fish? Many of the birds God made are water birds, and can swim. Think of the ducks and the sea gulls. Most birds can fly, for God gave them perfect wings, and told them to live in the air and make nests in the trees. That is God's rule for birds: to live in the air. If they try to swim under water, they will die. Would you like to know why God made the birds? To make His earth beautiful. He painted their feathers such beautiful colors! Only a wonderful



God could paint them that way! God made the birds to sing praise to Him, too. When you hear a bird sing, remember that it is singing its Maker's praise.

On the sixth day, God spoke His powerful Word to the **earth** and called all the animals that moved out of the earth. He made three kinds of animals: the wild animals that live in the forests and jungles — like lions, bears, elephants, and zebras; the tame animals that live on farms or are pets — like sheep, horses, dogs, and cats; and the small animals that creep along the ground, which we call **bugs** — like ladybugs, beetles, grasshoppers, and caterpillars.

When God made the fish and the birds and the animals, He made them know just how to make their homes and how to take care of their babies. When you see a mother robin feed her baby robins, think that our wonderful God taught the mother robin just how to take care of her babies. God told all the fish, the birds, and the animals to have many babies and grandbabies and great-grandbabies because He wanted His creatures all over the earth.

Then God **blessed** the earth and all that He had made in it. That means He showed **kindness** and **goodness** to His world. God saw that it was good, and He liked it.

REMEMBER:

God likes to use pictures of His animals when He tells us about Jesus, too. God calls Jesus a **Lamb** Who died for us and a **Lion** Who is our King.

God Makes Adam and Eve

God's earth was almost finished! It looked so beautiful with the trees and flowers, fish and birds, and all the animals God had made. But something was missing: someone to take care of God's earth. God said He wanted someone **wonderful** to take care of His earth, a **man** who could think and talk and do God's will, a man who would be **like** God Himself. So God made a picture of Himself, only a little, weak picture. That picture was a man.

Do you know how God made the first man? He took dust from the ground and formed it into a man, and then He breathed His own breath into that man, and he became alive. God called that first man Adam.

Then God gave Adam a home in a wonderful garden He planted. In this garden were many beautiful trees with all kinds of food for Adam to eat. God made rivers in this garden, and very special, precious stones, and gold; and He told Adam to take care of his wonderful, perfect, new home. The name of the garden was the Garden of Eden.

Animals lived in the garden, too, and God told Adam to give names to all the animals. When God made all the animals to come to Adam to get their names, Adam knew just what to call them. The animals came to him two by two: a father and a mother sheep, a father and a mother monkey, a father and a mother dog, until there were no more animals left to have names. And then Adam felt very sad. Do you know why? Because all the father animals had mother animals and the mother animals had father animals, and they were so happy together. But Adam was all alone, and he couldn't even talk with anyone.

God knew how lonely Adam was, and He knew that Adam needed a helper, a wife. As Adam sat there, feeling sad and alone, God made him sleep very soundly. While he was asleep, God took one of Adam's bones, his rib, and from it made a beautiful lady, his wife. Can you think how happy Adam was to wake up and see his helper, his wife? Her name was Eve.

Then God told Adam to be the king of God's earth, to rule over it and to take care of it and to use it. And He told Adam and Eve to have many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren to live on His earth, for God gave His earth to His people as a present.

The beautiful Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived was perfect. Nothing in it died, and there was no evil in it; and Adam and Eve didn't do anything wrong, for there was no sin in the garden. Every day they talked with God.

Now God's wonder of creation was almost finished. He made only one more special day of creation. That was day number seven. God made that day a special day of rest. God did not just sit and do nothing, but He looked at His wonderful world and enjoyed it and blessed it. And God told Adam and Eve and us to have a special day of rest every seven days, too. He taught Adam and Eve and us to worship Him and praise Him and sing to Him on our day of rest. Our special day to praise God is Sunday.

REMEMBER:

God made **us** to be little pictures of Himself, too. Do we try to live as God wants His little pictures to live?



Adam and Eve Fall into Sin

When you have been naughty and your parents make you sit on a chair, have you ever thought, while you sat there, what it would be like to be perfect? Always to do exactly what your daddy and mother say, always to do what God wants you to do, never to say bad things? Adam and Eve were perfect in the Garden of Eden.

In the middle of the garden, God had planted two trees. Their names were **the tree of life** and **the tree of knowledge of good and evil**. The tree of life would make Adam live, and God told him to eat all the fruit he wanted from it, but God told Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for then he would surely die. Adam obeyed God. Eve knew about the two trees, and she obeyed, too.

But one day trouble came to the Garden of Eden. The devil came to Eve. Who was he? Once upon a time he was one of God's good angels in heaven, one of the highest of all the angels; but he was not satisfied to be an angel. He wanted to be like God, and that was a terrible sin. God threw him and his helper-angels out of heaven into hell, an awful place of fire and punishment, where there is always suffering.

The devil did not always live in hell. God let him walk on the earth, too. Do you know how he came to Eve? He put himself inside a snake and talked to Eve through the snake's mouth. Purposely the devil asked a wicked question about God. He said, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"



Eve's answer was not quite right, either. She said, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden."

But when she told about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she said they might not even **touch** it. The last part was not true. God did not say anything about not touching the tree.

Then the devil told a wicked lie. He said, "Ye shall not surely die." Eve should have looked at the tree with obedient eyes, but she began to look at it with sinful eyes. She reached out her hand, took some fruit, ate, and gave Adam some, too. Now they both had sinned.

The first thing they noticed was that they had no clothes on. When their hearts were perfect, they did not have to cover their perfect bodies; but now they saw their nakedness with their sinful eyes. Eve sewed fig leaves together to cover their bodies. Then God came to talk with them, and they were both ashamed and hid away. God found them and kept asking them questions: "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree?"

Adam, with his sinful heart, blamed Eve and said she gave him the forbidden fruit to eat. He said it was Eve's fault.

When God asked Eve, "What is this that thou hast done?" she blamed the snake with the devil inside him. God **curse**d the snake and punished him. God's punishment for the snake was that he would crawl on his belly in the dust all his life.

God told Adam and Eve that they would have trouble and sickness and pain in their lives, for from now on they would live in a sinful world, with sinful hearts. But didn't God say they would surely die if they ate the fruit of the tree? God did not make them drop dead and stop breathing right there in the Garden of Eden. What did God mean, then, when He said, "You shall surely die if you eat the fruit of the tree"? It meant that they would live **away** from God's face; for the Bible says that to live away from God is **death**.

How sad Adam and Eve were! But God did not leave them in their terrible sadness and death. He gave them a promise. Some day He would send a Savior, the Lord Jesus, Who would crush the devil's head and would save them from their sin and death.

God made clothes for Adam and Eve from the skins of animals. Do you know why? When God killed the animals, He was making a picture of Jesus, Who some day would die for their sins. Adam and Eve had to learn to kill animals and bring them as sacrifices to God as pictures of Jesus, Who would die on the cross for them.

REMEMBER:

Because Adam and Eve sinned, we are born sinful, too. The promise of Jesus to die on the cross is for **us**, too. He saves all His children from their sins.

Cain and Abel Offer Sacrifices

After Adam and Eve had sinned, they could not stay in the perfect Garden of Eden anymore. The Lord chased them out and He set angels with fiery swords to guard the gate so that no one could get back into the garden.

Now Adam and Eve did not live in the garden where they had been perfect and happy. Now they had to plant their own seeds and grow their own food from the hard ground. Often they must have felt very sad and sorry, and probably very tired. The Bible does not tell us how they made a house and furniture and clothes. But don't you think God took care of them? For they were His children.

One day God brought happiness to their lives. He gave them a baby boy, and Eve named him Cain; and soon afterwards God gave them another baby boy, whom they called Abel. Eve did not have a beautiful cradle nor soft, white blankets for her babies as our mothers have, but she probably made them beds of straw or hay and covered them with the skins of animals for blankets.

Feeding their children and keeping them warm was not the most important thing for Adam and Eve. Do you know what was much more important? They wanted to teach their boys about God. Adam and Eve must have often sat down with their boys, just as our daddy and mother sit down with us, and they must have told them stories about the beautiful Garden of Eden and about the snake and the devil and about their terrible fall into sin. The best story was the one of God's great promise to send them a Savior, Jesus, Who would take God's anger away by dying for them and making a bright pathway into heaven for them. That was a happy story.

Then Adam and Eve would teach the boys how to make an altar, probably of stones piled on top of one another, and how to bring a gift — a present — to God. It had to be the right kind of gift: a lamb that was killed, and whose blood ran down the stones of the altar; for that lamb was a picture of God's Lamb, Jesus. They taught their boys to bring **themselves** as offerings to God when they prayed on their knees at the altar and promised to love and obey God.

As Abel grew up, he listened to his parents and took a lamb from his flock of sheep, and with faith and love in his heart came to God with a picture of Jesus and Jesus' blood.

Now watch Cain take an offering to God. He was a farmer, and he took some of the crops that grew in his fields as a gift on his altar. Do you know what Cain was saying to God when he did that? He was saying that he did not need a



lamb, a picture of Jesus. He did not need Jesus to save him. He would bring something that he grew all by himself. Cain did not come to God in faith and love, and he did not want to be saved by Jesus' blood.

God liked Abel's sacrifice, but He hated Cain's. How did they know? God probably told them by a voice. Cain should have been very sorry for his sin. Instead, he became angry. He was angry with God! He knew he could not touch the holy God, but he could hurt Abel, who loved God. One day, when they were in the field together, Cain killed Abel. We do not know how. There lay Abel, cold and still and dead.

But Cain was not sorry. When God asked him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" he said, "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"

The Lord saw Cain's sin and his lie, and gave him a punishment: God cursed the ground so that it would not grow food for Cain; and he would have to wander from place to place on the earth. Cain was so wicked that he talked back to God, and said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He said it would never work, anyway, because everyone would try to kill him because of his sin. So God put a mark on Cain – we do not know what kind of mark it was – so that no one would kill him. And Cain wandered over the earth the rest of his life.

Do you know who won the victory? Abel did. He was the first man who went to heaven to be with the Lord. He is in heaven now.

REMEMBER:

Adam and Eve taught Cain and Abel all about God just the way our daddies and mothers teach us. We do not have to bring gifts of lambs on altars anymore. We bring gifts of faith and love in our **hearts** when we worship our God in church.