

ADAM & EVE

This story can be found in Genesis 1 – 5.

In the beginning there was God. Did you ever wonder where God came from? He did not come from anywhere. He has always existed. Because we are physical, we cannot understand this. We have a beginning. When is your birthday? This is your beginning. With God, it is different. He has just always been.

First, God created the angels. Even they have a beginning, since they were created. God then created the universe. We do not know how long it took God to make it. We cannot even imagine how big it is. When we look up in the sky on a starry night, we can only see a small part of it.

God created millions of spirit beings called angels. The Bible mentions three of these spirit beings who were created to help rule over the rest. One of these was Lucifer. The other two named in the Bible are Michael and Gabriel. Lucifer was sent to rule over the beautifully created Earth. His name, Lucifer, means “Light Bringer” or “Shining Star of the Dawn.” God created Lucifer to be very wise, good, and capable. He also created him very beautiful. Lucifer was to govern the angels of the Earth by carrying out all of God’s orders and laws. Everything was wonderful and everyone was happy... for a while.

Because God created and owns the universe, He is the supreme ruler over it. At first, Lucifer was content, happy, and obeyed God, but God gave all the angels a mind of their own. They could think, reason, and make decisions. As long as Lucifer obeyed God everything went very well, but after a while, Lucifer wanted more. He wanted to be the supreme ruler of the universe. Thoughts of greed, ambition and pride entered into him. He thought God was unfair. Surely, he could rule the universe better than his Creator.

In time, Lucifer persuaded one-third of the angels to agree with him. He made promises to them that when he took over he would give them great rewards. He lied and persuaded them to turn against the very One who gave them life. The pride, lust and greed that had grown from an

evil idea caused Lucifer’s great wisdom to become perverted. Otherwise, he would have known that successful war against his Creator would be impossible. His thinking was so distorted that from then on his reasoning became false. Filled with the belief that he could actually conquer his Creator, Lucifer moved to carry out his rebellious plan. With millions of angels willing to obey him instead of God, he swept up to heaven with them for the attack!

Of course, God is much more powerful. Lucifer was defeated and thrown back to earth. His name was changed to Satan, which means “enemy.” The angels who were thrown back to earth with him became known as demons.

Because of the great battle fought, the earth was destroyed and the dinosaurs who were living at this time were killed. The once beautiful earth was now a giant mess because of Satan’s rebellion, but God had no intentions of leaving it like this. He had already planned to create a family. He wanted to create human beings that would one day be a part of His Spiritual God Family. First, they would have to live temporary lives as humans to learn lessons and choose His way of life and not be like Satan. God set out to clean up the earth and to bring about His plan.

On the first day, God cleared away the heavy smoke and gases. The sun could now come through for the first time since the rebellion. God was able to separate the day from the night. He said, “And evening and morning were the first day.” God made it clear that a new day starts when the sun goes down. This is why we keep the Sabbath starting on Friday night and ending when the sun goes down on Saturday evening. So on the first day, God separated the day from the night.

On the second day, God cleaned the air. He had to do this before any plants or animals could exist. We all need fresh, clean air to breathe.

On the third day, God separated the land from the seas and oceans. He created beautiful trees, flowers, fruits and other vegetation. The earth was beginning to look beautiful again.

On the fourth day, the Creator swept up the last of the gases and dust from the skies, thus letting in the light from the sun, moon, and stars.

On the fifth day, God created the fish and other water creatures, as well as the birds.

On the sixth day, God created the land animals. Goats, elephants, squirrels, dogs and other animals were made. Can you name a few

that would have been created on this day? Also, on the sixth day, God created man. He formed Adam out of the dust of the ground. He knew Adam would be lonely. All the animals were created male and female. He wanted Adam to know that he also needed a mate. God caused Adam to go into a deep sleep and then took one of his ribs and made a woman. Adam named her Eve.

On the seventh day, God rested from the tremendous work He had done in six days. He called the seventh day the Sabbath. This would be a special day of rest. He made a law that man should observe that same day every week by resting and assembling to worship. God made the Sabbath holy and commanded people to always keep it holy. The first six days were for man to work and play, but God said the last day of the week would be holy time. God wants us to remember His awesome creation. The Sabbath is a time we come before God at Church to learn about His way of life for us. God said we should rest, just like He rested from all His work.

God taught Adam and Eve the right way to live. He explained to them about His laws that would bring them happiness, but He wanted them to choose. God knew what Adam and Eve would do. God knew that without His Holy Spirit living in them, they could not be good. God wants us to realize that we need Him.

God made Adam and Eve different from the animal world. He gave the animals a brain, but not a reasoning mind. God made people to be able to think and make decisions. Animals are guided by their instincts. Ants know how to gather food for the winter. No one has to teach them. Birds know when to fly south for the winter without even a map! The whales know to go to warmer water in the winter and go to places like Alaska in the summer. No one shows them the way. They know by instinct. People are not like this. We have to be taught everything. People have a human spirit in them. God made the first man, Adam, with a mind that could learn to work and build things. But in order to get along with other people, and in order to have a good relationship with God, we must have God's Holy Spirit added to our minds.

God tested the first man, Adam. In the midst of the beautiful Garden of Eden God put two special trees. One was the tree of life. The other was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life would give them God's Spirit to live the right way. The tree of the knowledge of

good and evil would allow them to judge for themselves what was right and wrong. God warned them that taking of the fruit of this tree would lead to death. It meant they rejected God.

Satan looked for ways to turn Adam and Eve against their Creator, so he could become their master. His opportunity came one day when Eve walked off by herself in the park. She suddenly came upon a serpent, a snake-like creature. All the animals were friendly at this time, but she was very surprised when the serpent actually started talking to her!

"Did God tell you that you would die if you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" asked the serpent.

"Why, yes He did," Eve answered. "We don't want to die, so we haven't even touched the tree."

The serpent was quick to answer. "But humans can't die," he lied. "If you eat of the fruit of the tree you will be wise like God."

Eve could not resist. She believed the lies the serpent told her. She went to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and picked the fruit and ate it. It tasted good, so she gave some to Adam. He knew that it was from the tree that God had warned them about, but he ate it anyway. God knew what they had done, and He was not pleased.

He sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. He put a flaming sword at the entrance of the garden. God banned them from eating of the tree of life. As a result of their sin, God put a curse on the ground outside the park. For the first time since the Earth was remade, weeds and thorns sprang out of the soil. This was a hardship for Adam, who had to plant and farm for his food now.

After a time, two sons were born to Adam and Eve. The first was named Cain, and the second was named Abel. Cain became a farmer and raised fruits, vegetables and grain. Abel was a shepherd and took care of sheep. Cain and Abel learned to make sacrifices to God on stone altars. This was their way of contacting God and asking forgiveness for things they had done wrong. Cain did not have the attitude his brother had. Abel would pick and bring the best of his flock to God. Cain also had animals, but he brought vegetables to God. He did not want to give up his best animals. He wanted to keep those for himself. He knew that God required an animal sacrifice, not vegetables. He did not care. His heart was not right with God. When Cain found out that God was not pleased with him, he became jealous of his brother,

who had done the right thing. The envy turned to anger, then to hatred. Later, when the two brothers were out in the field alone, Cain struck his brother with a large stick and killed him. He tried to hide his sin. Of course, God knew what he had done.

God asked Cain, "Where is your brother?"

Cain lied, "I don't know. Am I suppose to always watch out for him? I don't know where he is."

God told Cain that He knew what he had done. God put a curse on him and he had to leave his family. It was very sad for Adam and Eve to lose two of their children.

Adam and Eve had more children, and just as God had said would happen if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they died. By the time Adam died at the age of 930 years-old, the world had thousands of people living on it. Violence, hatred and greed were in the hearts of all who lived. God was very sad to see such suffering in the world. Whenever God's laws are broken, there is unhappiness and misery. The wickedness grew so bad that only 726 years after Adam died God destroyed the whole earth with a flood. Only Noah and his family survived, but that is another story...

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Satan's name before it was changed? What does Lucifer mean? What does Satan mean?
2. Why did Satan rebel against God? How many angels followed him?
3. The Earth at one time had been so beautiful. What happened to it because of Satan's rebellion? How long did it take God to re-create the Earth?
4. Why did God create man? On which day was man created? What did God take from Adam to make Eve?
5. How does God count time? When does a day begin and end?
6. Why did God make the Sabbath? Which day was it created on?
7. What were the names of the two trees in the Garden of Eden? What did they represent?
8. What kind of animal did Satan speak through to entice Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

9. Did Adam know what he was eating when Eve gave him the fruit, or was he tricked?
10. Who was the first baby ever born? What was his brother's name?
11. Why did God not accept Cain's sacrifice?
12. What did Cain do to Abel because he was jealous?
13. How old was Adam when he died?
14. How long after Adam's death did God destroy the earth with a flood?

NOAH

This story can be found in Genesis 5 – 10.

After God created Adam and Eve they began to have many children and the world became very populated. It was filled with violence and hatred. Everyone fought to have their own way. Even though God had explained to Adam and Eve His Laws and Commandments that would lead to happy lives, they did not want to live that way. They chose to live the way they thought was best. They decided for themselves what would be right and wrong. They did not want God to tell them. The result was great unhappiness and chaos on the whole earth. People fought and killed for the things they wanted. They cheated, lied, and stole from others. There was no love for other people. The world was filled with tears and unhappiness. It was sad for God to see how wicked people had become.

The Bible says, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

This doesn’t mean God regretted that He made man, but was sad for the suffering that people go through when they don’t live according to His laws. He knew that man would live his own selfish ways and had lessons to learn, but it was sad to see them suffer for their bad choices.

But there was one man on earth who was righteous. Of all the people on earth, only Noah loved God. When Noah was 500 years-old, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

God told Noah to make an ark with rooms in it. An ark is a wooden box. Later, God had the children of Israel build the ark of the covenant. It was a wooden box too. In Noah’s case, the ark was a large box-like boat that would hold people and many animals. God gave Noah specific instructions as to how to build the ark. It had to be built exactly like

God told him. Of course, God had made the whole world; he could have easily made the ark too, but He wanted Noah to build it. God told Noah that He was going to destroy the world with a great flood. Noah knew he had to make the ark to float, following God’s detailed instructions. It would have 3 decks on the ark and many rooms. The ark was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.

We do not know how long it took Noah to build the ark. It probably took him and his sons many years to build it. They worked very hard on it. They had to cut down the trees and gather all the supplies. They did not have a Home Depot like we have. They had to do all the work themselves. They did not have all the tools we have either. The ark became a giant boat. People came from all around to look at it. They made fun of Noah and his sons as they were working. Here they were building a large boat and there was not even any water around. How silly! They laughed and scoffed at “old crazy Noah” for years and years. Still, Noah did as God told him to do. Noah told them what was coming and how they needed to change from their evil ways and do what was right. No one listened. No one was sorry for the way they acted. Not one person. Noah was sad for the world, but he understood why God had to do this. Noah agreed with God.

God told Noah to take animals on the ark with him. Noah was to take male and female animals so that there would be babies to repopulate the earth. Noah was to take seven pairs of clean animals and birds and one pair of unclean animals and birds into the ark with him. God did not have to tell Noah which animals were clean and unclean. Noah had already been keeping the health laws. “Clean” and “unclean” means animals that are healthy to eat and those that are not good to eat. Noah needed more clean animals on the ark than unclean so that he and his family would have food. Therefore, more cows than pigs were brought on the ark. How many camels were on the ark? How many deer?

Noah did not have to trap the animals to bring them on the ark. God caused the animals to come. The people must have been amazed as they saw two zebras, two bears, two lions, fourteen deer, fourteen cows, and many more animals approach the ark. It must have been an incredible sight to see them all board the large boat.

Building the ark was not all of Noah’s work. He also had to get hay and other food for all the animals. He had to prepare for his own family

on the ark, too. They had to have food, clothes, beds, and other things. This was a big job. What kind of things do you think you would have liked to take on the ark?

Finally, the day came. The Lord said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and your wife, and your three sons, and their wives." Noah and his family joined the boat load of animals on the ark. It must have been very loud with so many animals. Outside, people were still laughing and making fun of them. Noah knew what was going to happen to them. He felt sorry for them, but he knew that God was righteous and just in what was about to take place.

In the book of Hebrews, it says that Noah condemned the world in righteousness. This means Noah agreed with God. Noah knew the world had become so bad and the best thing would be to destroy the people and let them be resurrected later when God's Kingdom rules over the world. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He explained to them right from wrong, but they chose to live a wrong way of life. They did not want to obey God. They continued to live miserable, selfish, hateful lives- opposite of God's way. They will all be resurrected later to have another chance to live happy, peaceful lives if they choose to obey.

When they are resurrected, do you think they will be ready to listen? Do you think they will be scoffing and laughing then? Or do you think they will be humble and listen to God?

Noah was 600 years-old when he went into the ark. It was 1,656 years after God had made the first man and woman. Noah and his family sat on the ark for an entire week before it began to rain. During this time, the people outside laughed and made fun of Noah and his family. Noah, himself, must have wondered just when God would fulfill the promise He had made. After a week on the ark, it started to rain. It rained harder and harder for 40 days and 40 nights. It did not let up at all. At first, the people did not think much of it, but after a while they had to wonder if Noah could be right. By this time, it was too late.

Homes began to flood. The water came over the rooftops. Some people managed to get to the mountains, but the water would rush down and sweep them away. There was no escaping. Every land animal and man died on earth, except those in the ark.

Noah and his family were not bored on the ark. There were so many chores to do. They had to feed and water the animals, clean the stalls,

and a variety of daily chores. All eight people on the ark stayed very busy. When making the ark, God had instructed Noah to put in a window. Looking out the window, all they could see was water. Water was everywhere. When the rains came and flooded the earth, the ark lifted with the water and floated around. Noah did not know where he was, and it did not matter. There was nothing else alive on the earth except the fish. The ark finally came to a rest after five months of drifting. It was another three months before they could see the tops of the mountains.

The waters decreased continually. Eventually, Noah opened the window on the ark and he sent out birds, a raven and a dove. The birds flew over the waters, but when they could not find a resting place they returned to the ark. The birds would not land on the water. Noah waited another week and he sent the dove out again. This time, the bird came back with a green olive leaf in its mouth. Noah knew the waters must be going down, so he waited another week and sent the dove out again. This time, the dove did not come back. Noah knew it was time to come out of the ark. He and his family had been on the ark for a little more than a year.

Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed one of every clean animal and bird to God. He gave thanks to God for allowing him and his family to live. God then told Noah, "I will never again cause a flood to destroy the whole earth, and I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done." God made a covenant with Noah. God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I will make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, forever. I will set My rainbow in the cloud, and when you see it you will remember the promise I made." There had never been a rainbow before this time, but now we see them after it rains.

The next time you see a rainbow remember that it is a sign of the covenant God made with Noah and the whole world - that He would never allow the waters to destroy the whole earth again. It is a sign of God's promise.

Nimrod and the Tower of Babel

After the flood, Noah lived another 350 years. All together Noah lived 950 years. It did not take long after the flood before man was back to his old ways again, and there was wickedness just like before the flood.

Noah's son, Ham, had a son named Cush. Cush had a son named Nimrod. Instead of spreading out into the country, people began to live in cities protected by walls. They were afraid of the wild animals. Nimrod was a mighty hunter who protected the people, but he was also a very wicked man who hated God. He built several cities including Babel. Nimrod knew the story of the flood. He knew God had destroyed the earth for the evilness, so Nimrod had a plan that he thought could outsmart God. He built a tower that would be so high that God could not send a flood to kill them. He thought if he could just get high enough he could escape another flood. He did not believe God's covenant with man. Do you remember what that covenant was? What was the meaning of the rainbow?

The people worked hard on building the tower. God saw them and knew that the people working together would be able to do even more evil, so God confused their languages. All of a sudden, while the people were working, they could not understand one another. One would speak French, another German, another Spanish. They looked confused at each other. "Hey, what are you saying? What's wrong with you? I can't understand anything you are saying. What's going on here?" Everyone was in total confusion. The word "Babel" means confusion. People were just babbling. Work on the Tower had to be completely abandoned because they could not understand each other.

People started leaving the area, banding together with others who spoke their language. They resettled in other parts of the world. The Tower of Babel was never completed.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many sons did Noah have? What were their names?
2. Why did God destroy the earth and all the people?
3. Did Noah tell the people what was coming? How many believed him?
4. How old was Noah when he went into the ark?
5. How long did he live after the flood?
6. How many people were on the ark?
7. How many pairs of clean and unclean animals were on the ark?

8. Why more clean than unclean animals went on the ark?
9. How long did it rain on the earth?
10. How long did Noah and his family have to stay in the ark?
11. What kind of chores did they have on the ark?
12. How did Noah know when it was time to come out of the ark?
13. What was the covenant of the rainbow?
14. Who was Noah's evil great-grandson? Why did the people like him so much?
15. Why did Nimrod build a tower? How did God stop him? What does Babel mean?

ABRAHAM

This story can be found in Genesis 11 – 22.

This story starts only 292 years after the flood. Abram was several generations after Noah, yet Noah was a big influence in Abram's life. Remember, Noah lived 350 years after the flood, so Abram was about 58 years-old when Noah died. Noah saw the people of the world turn evil against God once again, even after the world had to be destroyed because of great wickedness.

Abram's father worshipped idols. There is even evidence that he may have actually worked for the very wicked Nimrod, leaving his son to be raised by Noah. Abram learned about God from Noah.

Seventeen years after Noah died God told Abram to depart out of the country and go to a new place that God would lead him in. We do not know why God told Abram to do this, except maybe to get away from all the wickedness around him and from his own family who were idol worshippers. Nevertheless, the Bible says that Abram took his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, and departed. Abram was 75 years-old at the time.

Promises Made to Abraham

God told Abram that He would make a great nation from him and would bless him greatly, but Abram and Sarai did not have any children. How would God keep His promise that a great nation would come from Abram if he didn't have any children? God told him, "All the land that you see will belong to your grandchildren for years to come. Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are - north, south, east, and west; for all the land you see I will give to your descendants forever." "Descendants" are grandchildren, and great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren! Abram believed God; he just did not know yet how God would work it out.

Eventually, Abram's servants and Lot's servants started fighting over the watering holes and the pastures. God told Abram to sepa-

rate from Lot. Abram told Lot to choose where he would like to go. Lot chose the best of the land and moved away from his uncle. Lot chose to live in the city of Sodom, a very wicked town.

Melchizedek

The city of Sodom came under attack by a wicked king. Lot and his family were among those taken captive. When Abram heard about it, he gathered his servants and went to rescue his nephew. After Abram brought Lot and all his possessions back, he paid a tithe to God for all he had taken. Abram met with Melchizedek, King of Salem, the priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek was actually God Himself, who was made visible for Abraham to see. Salem means "peace," so Melchizedek was the King of Peace. Abram gave Him the tithe. We also are to pay a tithe to God. We do that by paying a tenth of our money to God's church. Tithe means "a tenth."

God again told Abraham that He would bless him, but Abram said, "But You have given me no children. There is no one to inherit all these things." But God assured him that he would have an heir.

God took him outside at night and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able. That is how many your descendants will be."

Hagar

Abram and Sarai became a bit impatient, not understanding how God would fulfill His promise. Sarai gave her handmaiden to Abram to have children with. She was an Egyptian woman named Hagar. After Hagar became pregnant, Sarai became jealous and despised her. The contention was strong between the two women. Abram told Sarai to do with Hagar as she wished. Sarai dealt harshly with her, and Hagar fled from her presence.

A messenger of the Lord found Hagar beside a well. He asked her, "Where have you come from and where are you going?"

"I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress, Sarai," Hagar answered. The angel told her to go back to Sarai and submit herself before her. The angel revealed to her that she would have a son and should call his name Ishmael, which means "God hears." He said he would be a wild man who fights with everyone. Hagar gave birth to Ish-

mael. Abram was 86 years-old.

Thirteen years later, when Abram was 99 years-old, the Lord appeared to him again and said, "I am Almighty God (El Shaddai). Walk before Me and be blameless." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked to him saying, "My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but you shall be called Abraham, which means 'father of a multitude.' I will make nations from you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendents after you for an everlasting covenant." A covenant is an agreement between two people, like a promise. When God makes a covenant or promise to you, it is absolute!

Then God said, "As for your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah, which means 'princess.'" God told Abraham that a son would be born to him.

Abraham said, "Will a son be born to me? I'm 99 years-old and Sarah is 90 years old."

Sodom and Gomorrah

Then the Lord appeared to him again. Abraham looked up and saw three men coming. However, they were not really men; they were God and two angels that were with Him. Abraham bowed low to them and asked if they would please stay and eat with him. Abraham told Sarah to quickly make a nice meal for the guests. God told Abraham that Sarah would become pregnant soon and have a son. Sarah was listening from the tent. She began to laugh to herself because she knew she was too old to have children. The Lord asked her why she laughed. Sarah denied it because she was afraid, but God said to her, "No, but you did laugh." God knew she had laughed to herself. Remember, God even knows our thoughts.

The Lord and the two angels rose to leave. God said, "Because the cry from Sodom is so great, I will go down and see that city." The two angels began their journey to Sodom, but the Lord stayed back with Abraham.

Abraham asked God, "Would you destroy the righteous in Sodom along with the wicked? Suppose there are 50 righteous in the city, would You spare it for the 50?"

The Lord said, "If I find in Sodom 50 righteous, then I will spare all

the place for their sakes."

Abraham then asked, "What if You find 45 righteous? Would You spare the city?"

God answered, "Yes, for 45 righteous I will spare the city." Abraham kept asking God about finding less and less righteous.

Finally, Abraham said, "Let not the Lord be angry and I will speak just once more. Suppose ten should be found there?"

The Lord said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten people." Then the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham went his way.

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening. They appeared as regular men, so no one knew they were angels of God. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the ground. Lot invited them to spend the night at his house, but the angels said that they would just sleep in the open town square. Lot strongly protested, "No, you must come home with me." He knew it was a wicked city and the men would not be safe there. The two angels went to Lot's house for the night. That night bad men tried to break into their house. Just as God had said, it was a very evil place. The angels struck the bad men with blindness. The city was so evil that not even ten righteous people could be found there.

The angels told Lot, "Is anyone else here? Your sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever else you have in the city - take them out of this place. God has sent us to destroy it because of the great sins of this city."

Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who married his daughters and said, "Get up and get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law, he seemed to be joking.

When morning had dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here and go. Hurry or you will be consumed in the punishment of the city." Lot lingered until the angels took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the two daughters and brought them out of the city. The angels urged them, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you! Escape to the mountain or you will be destroyed!"

Lot said, "No, not the mountains. Let me escape to another city called Zoar."

The angel said, "Hurry then and escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there."

The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. Then the Lord rained fire down on Sodom and Gomorrah. He overthrew those wicked cities and all the people in them. While running, Lot's wife turned and looked back, ignoring the warning not to do so, and she became a pillar of salt, which is like a statue made out of salt! She should have obeyed the angel and not turned around, but she was not happy about coming out of Sodom. She liked living there among her friends and family. She could not understand why God had to destroy it. She had become so accustomed to the evil that she did not recognize how bad it really was.

Early the next morning, Abraham went upon the hill where he had stood the day before with God. He could tell by the smoke coming from Sodom and Gomorrah that not even ten righteous were found in those cities. For Abraham's sake, God had saved his nephew, Lot, and his two daughters.

Isaac, the promised son

Finally, 392 years after the flood, Sarah and Abraham had a son. He was named Isaac, which means "laughter" because Sarah had laughed when she found out she was going to have a baby. Abraham and Sarah were very happy parents. Sarah was 90 years-old and Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born.

Ishmael, Abraham's son with Hagar, was 13 years-old when Isaac was born. Strife between Sarah and Hagar grew even worse when both women wanted Abraham's attention for their own sons. Finally, Sarah told Abraham, "Cast out the slave woman and her son. For the son of this slave woman shall not be an heir with my son, Isaac." This greatly displeased Abraham, but God told him to listen to Sarah and send them away. He would make a nation of Ishmael too because, after all, he was also Abraham's son. He would not have the blessing that Isaac would have, but he would still be a large nation. Today, the descendents of Ishmael are the Arab people. The descendants of Isaac became the tribes of Israel, who are scattered around the world.

Abraham packed bread and water and gave it to Hagar and sent her and Ishmael away. She wandered in the wilderness until all her food

and water were gone. She placed Ishmael under some shrubs and went a little distance from him. She did not want to see him die. She prayed to God and cried. God heard her and an angel answered, "Don't fear, Hagar. God has heard you and will take care of you." Hagar lifted her head and saw a well of water. God saved Hagar and her son. Ishmael became an archer, which means he was skilled with a bow and arrow. He grew up and married an Egyptian woman.

God Tests Abraham

Abraham loved Isaac more than he loved even himself, but God was about to test Abraham. Though God knew Abraham, He still needed to do this in order to test his love to make Abraham stronger and also, so these things could be written for us - as an example.

God called to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here I am."

He said, "Abraham, take your son, Isaac, whom you love, to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on the mountain that I will show you."

Back in the days before Joshua Christ became our sacrifice, people had to sacrifice and kill animals to pay for their sins. They would take a goat, lamb, or bull and cut its throat and let it bleed to death. They would then burn the animal on a pile of sticks or an altar. When we sin there is a penalty that can only be paid by shed blood. Now, we do not have to sacrifice animals because Joshua paid that penalty for us. Some very evil people in Abraham's day would sacrifice their own children to their gods. They would kill them and burn them, but God never wants us to do anything like this. Yet here, He was telling Abraham to do exactly this. Abraham must have been a bit confused at such an order from God, but he did not question God or argue with Him.

The next day, Abraham rose early and saddled his donkey. He did not delay in obeying God. He must have agonized at knowing that he was going to kill his son, whom he loved more than anything. He did not tell Isaac why they were going out. He just told him that they were going to sacrifice to God. They gathered sticks for the offering and set out on the journey where God had told them to go. For three long days they went to the place God had told Abraham to go. For three days and nights Abraham thought about what he was told to do. At any

time Abraham could have said, "Let's turn around and go back. I just can't do this. It's too much to ask of me. I love my son too much. Why has God asked me to do something so awful? I just can't do it. It's not right." But Abraham did not do that. He kept focused on what God told him to do. He trusted God. He may not have understood why he had to sacrifice his son, but he understood he had to obey God.

Abraham had not told Isaac or the two servants with them that he intended to kill Isaac. On the third day, they reached the place God had told them to go. Abraham told the two servants to stay behind while he and Isaac went ahead to sacrifice to God. Isaac asked him, "But where is the lamb for the burnt offering, Father?"

Abraham answered him, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

Abraham built an altar and tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar. Isaac must have been scared, but he trusted his father, whom he knew loved him. Abraham trusted his Father, whom He knew loved him. Abraham took the knife and was about to kill Isaac without hesitation, but God stopped him, "Abraham. Abraham."

He answered, "Here I am."

To Abraham's great relief, God said, "Do not kill the lad, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not even withheld your beloved son from Me."

God knew now that Abraham would obey Him. He knew that Abraham had faith and trusted Him. Abraham proved that he loved God more than anything else, including his son. This was written for us as an example that we should put God first, just as Abraham did. God said, "Now I know you, Abraham." God knew this would be the hardest thing Abraham was ever asked to do. If he was willing to obey in this, then God knew Abraham would always obey Him in everything else.

Abraham looked and there was a goat caught in the bushes. He took the goat and sacrificed it on the altar. He and Isaac gave thanks to God. They were both very joyful.

They went back down the mountain and joined the two servants and went home together very happy. Abraham became known as the "father of the faithful" because he had great faith and trust in God.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who helped raise Abraham and taught him about God?
2. How old was Abraham when Noah died?
3. Seventeen years after Noah died, what did God tell Abraham to do?
4. Who was Abraham's nephew?
5. What were the two cities destroyed for their wickedness? God said He would save the cities if there were how many righteous people there? Were there?
6. What happened to Lot's wife? Why?
7. What was Abraham's and Sarah's name before God changed it? What does Abraham mean? What does Sarah mean?
8. Sarah could not have children because she was too old, so who did she give to Abraham to have children with? What was the name of their son? What does his name mean?
9. What did Sarah do when she heard she would have a son? How old was Sarah? How old was Abraham? What does Isaac mean? Why was she to name the baby Isaac?
10. What happened to Hagar and Ishmael?
11. How did God test Abraham's faith?
12. How long was the journey?
13. What was Abraham suppose to do to Isaac? Did God stop him just before he could?
14. Why is Abraham known as the "father of the faithful"?

ESAU & JACOB

This story can be found in Genesis 11 – 22.

About three years after Sarah died, Abraham began to think about Isaac getting married. By then, Isaac was forty years-old. Abraham was concerned that his son might choose a wife from among the Canaanites, who were idol worshippers.

Abraham instructed his chief servant to take men, camels and provisions on a trip to Mesopotamia, Abraham's native land, and bring back a wife for Isaac from among his own people.

After days of journeying to the northeast, Abraham's servant and his caravan arrived one evening at a well just outside the city of Nahor. In those days, the women were generally the ones who went to the wells to draw water. Abraham's servant prayed that among them would be one that would turn out to be a good wife for his master's son. He also prayed that God would point out such a woman by causing her to volunteer to draw water for him and the camels. This would seem to be asking a lot of God. What woman would be willing to draw water for ten thirsty camels? But even before the servant's prayer was finished, a beautiful young woman approached the well. As she drew up water, Abraham's servant came up to her and asked her for a drink of water. At once the woman held out her jar of water. "Drink, my lord," she said. "And I will be glad to draw water for your camels too!" This was a direct answer to the prayer that Abraham's servant had just asked for. He was sure that this was the woman for Isaac. She told him that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son. Therefore, she was a second cousin to Isaac. It was good news to Abraham's servant and he thanked God for answering his prayer. He told Rebekah who he was and about his prayer to find the right woman for Isaac. Rebekah was thrilled. She took the man to her family and they told the story to them. They were all convinced that it was God's will that Rebekah should become Isaac's wife. They were all very happy - especially Rebekah. She was presented with gold jewelry and beautiful clothes. They soon

started on the trip back so she could meet her future husband.

A few days later, Isaac was walking in the field when he saw a caravan approaching. He went to meet it, hopeful that it was the one his father had sent out to Nahor. When Rebekah saw a man running toward them, she asked who he was. On being told that he was the man she had been brought to marry, she was very pleased. She quickly got down from her camel and went to greet her future husband. They were both very happy to meet each other.

Isaac and Rebekah were married shortly afterwards. Through Isaac and Rebekah, God began to fulfill the promises he had made to Abraham. God had promised to make great nations from him. By now, Abraham was 140 years-old. He lived another 35 years and died when he was 175 years-old.

It was twenty years before Isaac and Rebekah were able to have children. Rebekah had some unusual pains that were so severe that she asked God for relief. God told her that she would give birth to the beginnings of two nations. One nation would turn out to be stronger than the other, and the first born would serve the younger. The twins struggled inside her.

The first born came out red and was hairy all over, so they called him Esau, which means "hairy." The second twin grabbed hold of the heel of the first baby. They named him Jacob, which means "supplanter," or "sole of the foot." Supplanter also means to "uproot" or to "supersede another especially by force." Remember what God had told Rebekah about the twins. The younger would become more powerful and the older would serve the younger. God could have easily caused Jacob to be the older, but He chose to do things this way for a purpose.

Even though the boys were twins, they were nothing alike. Esau loved to hunt. Jacob loved raising animals and crops. Isaac loved the delicious meat that Esau brought home, so Esau became his favorite son. Rebekah's favorite son was Jacob.

Esau Sells His Birthright

One day, Esau went on a long hunting trip. He went so far that by the time he returned he was staggering with hunger. Jacob had been cooking some delicious soup and Esau could smell it. Esau was so weak and the soup smelled so good that he begged Jacob to give him some

at once before he fainted.

It was a custom in those days that the first born son in a family would receive more gifts and rights than any brothers born later. Because Esau was the first born, he naturally had what was called the birthright. This meant that if the father died the birthright owner would inherit a larger share of the father's property than any other child in the family. In this case, it also meant that the descendants of the oldest son would receive the greatest share of the promises God made to Abraham and those who came after him. The birthright was of great value. Jacob realized this, and he greatly desired it. This was his opportunity to get it from his brother, Esau.

"I will give you all you want to eat, if you will turn over your birthright to me," Jacob smiled shrewdly. Esau was so hungry that he feared he would faint any minute from lack of strength. He felt like if he died, what good would the birthright do him anyway?

So he said, "I promise to give you my birthright for some soup."

After Esau finished eating he walked away, not seemingly caring about the great price he had paid for something to eat. Isaac and Rebekah did not know about this matter at the time. Otherwise, Isaac would have been greatly displeased since Esau was his favorite son.

Years later, Esau brought grief to his parents by marrying two wives. It was not unusual to have more than one wife in those days, but Esau's wives were Canaanites. The Canaanites worshiped idols and had no knowledge of God.

Rebekah and Jacob trick Isaac

One day, when Isaac was well past one hundred years-old and had become blind, he sent for Esau. He told his oldest son, "At my age, death could come to me at any time. Take your bow and arrows and go kill a deer and cook it the way I like it, and afterwards I will give you the blessing that should be on the son who has the birthright." Remember, Isaac did not know that Esau had sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. Esau did not tell him either. He just set out to hunt for a deer. Rebekah had overheard Isaac talking to Esau. She wanted Jacob, her favorite son, to receive the blessings, so she came up with a plan.

Rebekah called Jacob to her. "Hurry. Do as I say and you will receive the blessings that your father is about to give to Esau. Go out to

the flocks and get two young goats. I will cook them just like your father likes it and he will eat and then bless you."

Jacob believed he should have the birthright because Esau had promised them to him, but he did not think it would be that easy to fool Isaac. He told his mother, "I can't pass as Esau. When my father puts his hands on me, he will know my skin is smooth and not hairy like Esau. Then he'll probably curse me instead of bless me."

But Rebekah said, "Don't worry about that. I have a plan. Just go and get the goats."

Jacob went and got the two goats from the flock. Rebekah hastily made a delicious meat dish cooked and seasoned so Isaac could not tell it was not deer meat. She took one of Esau's coats and put it on Jacob. Over his hands, arms, and neck she carefully wound strips of the hair of the goat they had just killed. "Now take this meat and bread to your father," she told Jacob.

Jacob tried to sound like Esau when he went into the tent. "Here I am, father," he said.

"Who is it?" asked the blind Isaac.

"It is Esau. Sit up and eat this meat, and then you can bless me as you promised."

Isaac asked, "How is it that you brought back the deer so fast?"

Jacob lied, "God led me where to find one."

Isaac was not sure. "Come here, my son." He wanted to feel him to make sure it was Esau.

He felt his hairy arms and said, "You sound like Jacob, but these are the hairy arms of Esau. "Are you really Esau?"

Jacob lied to his father again. "Give me the food, Esau, and I will eat and bless you."

Isaac ate his meal and asked Jacob to come closer and kiss him. When Jacob did so, Isaac smelled the grasses and aromatic herbs of the fields on Esau's coat. It deceived him into thinking it was Esau beside him.

Isaac then blessed his son. "God, give to this young man many well-watered fields. Give him plenty of grain and fruits of the vines. Cause people to serve him and nations to bow down to him. Give him power to rule over his brothers. May a curse be upon any who will try to curse him and may a blessing be upon any who would bless him. "

Having received the blessing, Jacob left at once. He hurried to avoid Esau. Shortly afterwards Esau entered into his father's tent. "Here I am, father, with the deer meat cooked just the way you like it."

Isaac was shocked. "Who are you?"

"I'm Esau, your first born."

Isaac realized he had been tricked by Jacob into blessing him. He told Esau what had happened. Esau was furious. "He has tricked me twice! First, the birthright and now the blessings. Can you bless me too, father?"

Isaac was sorry for his favorite son. "I have already asked for the blessings to be given to Jacob. Here is what it will be like for your descendants, Esau. God shall give you and those who live after you a land far away from the best things this Earth has to offer. You will have to hunt and fight for what you will get. You and your people will serve your brother and his people, but there will come a time when you will be free of them." Esau was not thankful for anything his father asked for him, instead he was very angry with Jacob and wanted to kill him.

Rebekah became so worried about Jacob's safety that she thought up a plan to get her favorite son to leave. She went to her husband, Isaac.

Jacob Is Sent Away

She said to Isaac, "If Jacob lives here much longer he will likely marry a Canaanite woman, like Esau did. I think you should send him to Haran to choose a wife from our own people." Isaac had been greatly disappointed that Esau had married idol worshippers, so he agreed. Jacob was eager to go because he was afraid of Esau. He hurried on, traveling light and taking a back road in case Esau tried to follow him.

On the journey, Jacob stopped at a lonely, rock-covered mountain slope. There he slept on the ground, using a smooth stone for a pillow. He had a strange dream. He dreamed of a huge stairway leading from Earth to very high into the sky. Many angels moved up and down the stairway. At the top stood a very powerful looking being. "I am the God of Abraham and Isaac," came a voice from the being at the top of the stairs. "I will go with you on your trip, and I will protect you. The land on which you lie will become yours, and those who come after you will own it. They will spread out over the Earth, and through them all nations will receive a blessing. I will keep the promises that I am making to you."

When Jacob awakened from the dream, he was filled with a strange

fear. He realized God had spoken to him for the first time. He felt it was such an important event that he anointed the stone that had been his pillow and set it up as a special landmark. He was so thankful for God's promise to protect and provide for him that he promised to give God a tenth of all that came to him. Jacob knew that the first tenth of what anyone earns should be returned to God. After all, God owns everything. Whatever man has, comes to him as a gift from his Creator.

Jacob Meets Rachel

Finally, Jacob reached Haran. He found the home of Laban, his mother's brother. His beautiful cousin, Rachel, was watering the sheep. Jacob introduced himself and Rachel was very pleased to meet him. Jacob visited with his uncle's family for a month. During this time he worked hard helping with the flocks and working in the fields, and he also fell in love with Rachel. Rachel had an older sister named Leah, but it was Rachel that Jacob loved. Laban could see what a hard worker that Jacob was and did not want to lose him, so he asked Jacob, "I would like for you to keep working for me. What would be a fair wage to pay you?"

Jacob answered, "I will work for you for seven years if you will give me Rachel to be my wife." Laban was of course very pleased. Seven whole years of work for free! What a bargain!

Seven years can be a long time, but Jacob was content just to see Rachel everyday. He worked hard and finally the end of the seven years came. It was time for the wedding. Laban threw a big feast for the wedding. It lasted a whole week. When it came time for the ceremony, Jacob's bride wore a long heavy veil that hid her face from view. Jacob was very happy. It felt that the seven years of working for Laban was worth it to marry the woman he loved so much.

Laban tricks Jacob

After they were married the long veil was removed. It was not Rachel at all! It was her sister, Leah! Jacob was furious. He went to Laban. "You have tricked me. I didn't work for Leah. I worked seven years for Rachel. You cheated me!"

Laban calmly answered him, "I'm sorry, my nephew, but in this land it is the custom that the older daughter marry first. I can't change the custom. I had to give you Leah."

If Laban had been fair, he would have told Jacob about the custom, but he wanted Jacob to work for him. Jacob was disappointed and hurt. This trick reminded him of the way he had tricked his father and his brother out of the birthright and special blessings. God let him see how it felt to be tricked.

Laban told Jacob, "If you still want Rachel to be your wife, you must do two things."

Jacob answered him, "But Leah is now my wife. What two things could change that?"

Laban answered, "If you will be a good husband to Leah for the rest of the marriage feast this week and you work for me for another seven years, Rachel can be your wife." Jacob agreed to the terms. At the end of the week, Rachel and Jacob were married. Jacob still had to work for the next seven years for his uncle. Poor Leah. She was stuck in a marriage that she did not ask for and with a man who did not love her, but loved her sister instead. God also felt sorry for Leah and blessed her with many children.

After working for Laban for fourteen years it was time for Jacob to move his family. He packed his two wives and his flocks and moved his caravan toward the home he had once lived in. He was still afraid of Esau, though. He had not seen him in fourteen years and was not sure if Esau was still mad over being tricked. He asked God for protection.

Jacob wrestles with God

While Jacob and his caravan were camped out, Jacob went off by himself to pray. That night, God came down in a human form to talk to Jacob. God seized Jacob and began to hold him down as to prevent him from continuing on with his journey. He wanted to see how determined Jacob was. They began to wrestle. Of course, God was much stronger, but He wanted Jacob to fight for what he wanted. They wrestled all night. It must have been very exhausting for Jacob, but he did not give up. Every time God tried to walk away, Jacob would grab Him again and wrestle with Him. "I don't want You to leave until you have given me Your blessings." Jacob was determined. Of course, God could have stopped Jacob at any time, but He wanted to see how determined Jacob was. God could tell by Jacob's physical determination how strong he would be spiritually in obeying Him. It was the strength of character

that God was interested in. God would not give His blessings to a man who had unfairly taken something from a weaker brother. Therefore, God appeared as a man to give Jacob the chance to prove himself with one who appeared to be his equal.

When dawn finally came, God told Jacob, "It is time for Me to go." But Jacob would not let Him go. God touched Jacob's hip and his hip came out of joint. It was very painful. God told him, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but will now be called Israel."

Israel means "God prevails." To prevail means to prove superior, to exist continually. The name Israel means, WHO exists? WHO is proven superior? GOD prevails. Who won the wrestling match? God prevails and is superior. God told Jacob, "Your name shall be called Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed."

Jacob moved his caravan forward. Finally, he saw Esau coming. The two brothers met and Esau was very happy to see his brother. He had forgiven him for tricking him. God had given Israel favor.

Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, went on to have twelve sons who became known as the Israelites.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the sign that Abraham's servant asked for to know who would be right for his master's wife?
2. Who asked the servant if he wanted her to water his camels?
3. Who was the firstborn son? What does his name mean?
4. Why was Jacob a "supplanter"?
5. Who was Isaac's favorite son? Why?
6. Who was Rebekah's favorite son?
7. What did Esau sell his birthright to Jacob for? What is a birthright?
8. When Rebekah heard Isaac tell Esau to kill a deer and fix it for him and then he would bless him, what plan did she come up with so her favorite son could be blessed instead?
9. What made Isaac think it was Esau when it was actually Jacob?
10. On the way, what was Jacob's dream? What did he use for a pillow?
11. How long did Jacob agree to work so he could marry Rachel? How was he tricked?

12. How much longer did Jacob have to work to marry the woman he loved?
13. Who did Jacob wrestle with? What name did God change Jacob's name to? What does Israel mean?
14. How many sons did Jacob have? What did they become known as?
This story can be found in Genesis 29 – 50

JOSEPH

This story can be found in Genesis 29 – 50.

God promised blessings through Abraham. Abraham's son was Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel by God. Jacob, or Israel, had 12 sons. Jacob had two wives, Leah and Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah.

Jacob and Leah had sons, but Rachel did not have any. She longed for a child. The firstborn of Leah and Jacob was Reuben. Then came Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Jacob also had sons from Leah's and Rachel's maidservants. They were Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali.

Finally, Rachel had a son. He was named Joseph, which means, "the Lord shall also give me another son." Later, Rachel did have another son, Benjamin. Sadly, Rachel died while giving birth to him. It was a very sad time for Jacob.

Isaac died soon afterwards, too. He lived to be 180 years-old. His sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him and he awaits the resurrection soon to take place.

Because Jacob loved Rachel so much, Joseph became his favorite son. It was obvious to his other sons that Joseph was the favorite. This made his brothers jealous. Jacob also made a beautiful coat for Joseph. The Bible describes it as a "coat of many colors." This made his brothers hate him even more.

Joseph had a strange dream and he told it to his brothers. Joseph told his brothers how he dreamed they were binding the sheaves in the field (a sheaf is a wheat stalk that stands in the field), and his bundle of sheaves stood upright and their sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. His brothers were angry. "Do you think we are going to bow down to you? Do you think you are going to rule over us?" They were disgusted.

Then Joseph told them about another dream he had. This time, he dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him. Now his brothers were really angry.

His brothers went to feed the flock far away from home. Jacob got

worried about them when they had been gone for a long time. He called for Joseph. "Please go and see how your brothers are doing and bring me back news of them." So Joseph left to find them. When he finally caught up with them a few days later, they were not happy to see him.

"Here comes the dreamer," one of them said. "Let's kill him and just say a wild beast ate him."

When Reuben, the eldest brother, heard what they were planning, he moved to save Joseph's life. "Let's not kill him. Here is a deep pit. Let's just put him in it." Reuben had secretly planned to rescue Joseph out of the pit later and send him home.

When Joseph saw his brothers, he waved and shouted for joy. He had been searching for several days for them, but they were not happy to see him. They grabbed him and ripped off his coat of many colors that his father had made for him.

They threw him into a deep dry well. They left him there all day while they tended to their flocks. Joseph was confused as to why his own brothers would do such a thing. He did not know how jealous and full of hatred they were.

Joseph sold into slavery

While they were eating their supper, a group of Ishmaelites came down the road. They were on their way to Egypt. "Why should we kill our brother," said Judah. "We can sell him to these Ishmaelites and make some money. We can sell him as a slave." They pulled Joseph out of the well and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Joseph went to Egypt as a slave.

When Reuben returned from tending to his flock, Joseph was gone. He was very upset. He had wanted to let Joseph go. Now what would he tell his father? They killed a goat and dipped Joseph's coat into the blood. They took the coat back to Jacob. Poor Jacob. He recognized his favorite son's coat. "A wild beast must have killed Joseph," said Jacob. He cried and mourned for many days. He refused to be comforted for the loss of his son. It was a very mean and cruel thing of his sons to make him think he had lost his favorite child.

Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave to Potiphar, captain of the guard in Pharaoh's army. The Lord was with Joseph and he was successful in everything he did. Joseph was honest and worked very hard.

God gave him favor in Potiphar's sight and made him overseer or boss of the household. The Lord blessed Potiphar's house because of Joseph.

Joseph was a very handsome young man and Potiphar's wife constantly badgered him to be her boyfriend, but Joseph refused. He told her it would be wrong to take the wife of another man. He respected Potiphar, who trusted him. Also, most important of all, it would break God's Commandment. Which Commandment would it break? The seventh: do not commit adultery. Joseph did his best to avoid her. However, one day, when no one else was in the house, Potiphar's wife approached Joseph again. He tried to run away from her, but she grabbed his coat. He just left his coat and ran. She became very angry with him. She started screaming and yelling. The other servants came running. She lied and told them that it was Joseph who had followed her around, wanting her to be his girlfriend and when she refused he tried to kiss her. She screamed and when the servants started coming he fled and left his coat behind. Poor Joseph. It was an outright lie! When Potiphar heard the story he threw Joseph into prison. It was unfair, but Joseph did what was right, even though he was the one who was punished.

God had mercy on Joseph. He still gave him favor even in prison. The prison-keeper was kind to Joseph and made him in charge over all the other prisoners. Joseph prospered even in prison because God was with him.

One day, two very special men were thrown into prison. One was the chief butler of the Pharaoh and the other was the chief baker or cook. They were put under Joseph's care.

Dreams of the butler and baker

Both, the chief butler and the chief baker, had a dream one night. They were talking about it amongst themselves. They were sad because they did not know what the dreams meant. Joseph came to see them. "Why do you two look so sad?" he asked.

"We both had a dream and there is no one who can tell us what the dreams mean," they answered.

Joseph told them, "God is the one who interprets dreams. Tell me your dreams and perhaps God will reveal them to me."

The chief butler told his dream first. "Behold, a vine was before me and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its

blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then the Pharaoh's cup was in my hand. I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it. The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will restore you to your place and you will serve the king wine as you did before. Please, when you go back, remember me. Ask the Pharaoh to let me go free."

The chief baker was excited over the good news Joseph had told the chief butler. He was anxious to tell his dream. "In my dream, there were three white baskets on my head. In the top basket there were all kinds of baked goods for the king and the birds came and ate them out of the basket on my head."

Joseph was sad to tell him the interpretation, but he knew he must. "The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will hang you from a tree and the birds will come and eat the flesh off you."

Three days later there was a big birthday party for Pharaoh. On that day, he restored the chief butler to his duty of serving wine to him, but the chief baker was hanged just like Joseph had said. The chief butler had forgotten about Joseph. He did not tell the Pharaoh about Joseph being in prison unjustly.

Pharaoh's dream

Two years later, Pharaoh had a dream. He did not know the meaning of it, but the dream disturbed him greatly. He called for all the wise men, but no one could interpret it for him. Then his chief butler remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh how Joseph had told him and the chief baker exactly what would happen to them. Pharaoh called for Joseph to be brought to him.

Pharaoh told Joseph, "I have had a dream and no one can tell me the interpretation of it, but I have heard that you can interpret dreams."

Joseph answered him, "No, I cannot interpret dreams. It comes from God. Only God can tell the meaning. But if you will tell me your dream, God will show you the answer." Joseph was very wise. He knew that the answers came from God and not from himself.

"In my dream," Pharaoh said, "I stood on the bank of a river. Suddenly, seven cows came out of the river, fine looking and fat, and they grazed in the meadow. Then seven more cows came up after them.

They were poor and skinny; the ugliest cows I've ever seen. Then the poor and skinny cows ate up the fat cows, and even after eating them, they were still the ugliest cows I've ever seen. They were still poor and skinny. Then I had another dream. There were seven heads of wheat that came out of one stalk, full and healthy, ready to eat. Then I saw seven thin and withered stalks come up and devour the seven good stalks, yet they still were thin and withered looking. I told this dream to the magicians and they didn't know the meaning. Can you tell me?"

Joseph told Pharaoh, "The two dreams mean the same thing. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven good years and the seven heads of wheat are also seven good years of crops. The seven skinny cows and the seven thin and withered stalks are seven years of famine."

Do you know what a "famine" is? It is when there is not enough food. People die of hunger. Sometimes bad weather can cause a famine. If there is not enough rain, crops do not grow. Or if there is too much rain, the crops drown. God let Pharaoh know there would be seven years of plenty of food and seven years of famine.

Joseph went on to advise Pharaoh, "You should select a wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. He should appoint officers to collect one fifth of the crops of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years and store it up for the harder times. This way, Egypt will not perish during the famine."

Joseph made second in command in Egypt

The advice was good in Pharaoh's eyes. He believed Joseph and he was so impressed by what Joseph had told him, he put him in charge of all Egypt, second in command to Pharaoh himself. He put fine clothes on Joseph and gave him a special signet ring off his own finger. Joseph was thirty years-old. He had been a prisoner for three years. God had elevated Joseph from slave, to prisoner, and now second in command in Egypt.

Joseph got to work right away. He had large warehouses built to store grain and other food. He married and had two sons, Manasseh, the firstborn, and Ephraim, his second. Finally, the seven years of plenty in Egypt ended. Famine came upon the land. Only Egypt had food, since Joseph had stored it up for seven years. The famine was severe.

Joseph's brothers come to Egypt

Jacob and his family also suffered. Remember, he did not know his son, Joseph, was still alive. He surely did not know he was a great ruler in Egypt. When Jacob heard that Egypt had food, he sent ten of his sons there to buy some. He kept Benjamin at home. With Joseph gone, Benjamin was the only child of his beloved Rachel. He wanted to make sure nothing happened to him, so the other ten brothers set off for Egypt to buy food.

When they came to Egypt, Joseph recognized them right away. He acted like a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them in Egyptian. He pretended he could not speak their language. He had an interpreter speak for him. "Where are you from?" he asked sternly.

"We are from Canaan and we came to buy food," they meekly answered.

Joseph fired back, "I don't believe you. You are spies! You came here to see how weak our country is so your army can attack us."

The brothers began to get very nervous. "No, no! Really, we just came to buy some food. We are all brothers. We have one more little brother at home with our father. It's the truth!"

Joseph spoke again through the interpreter, "I don't believe you. You will stay here in prison until your younger brother comes. I will send one of you home to fetch him."

The brothers started talking amongst themselves, not realizing that Joseph could actually understand their language. "This has happened to us because of what we did to Joseph. We are guilty and now we are going to be punished."

Joseph was overcome with sorrow for them. He turned his head so they could not see, and he cried. He wiped away his tears then came and spoke through the interpreter, "I will only keep one man." He pointed to Simeon. "You bring back your younger brother and I will release him."

Simeon was tied up before them. Joseph secretly told his servants to fill their sacks with grain and even the money they had paid. They left without Simeon. When they got down the road they opened their sacks and saw the grain and the money! They were very afraid. "We are in real trouble now," they said. "God is certainly punishing us."

When they saw Jacob they told him the whole story. "The man who is over all the land spoke roughly to us and mistakenly thought we were spies. We tried to tell him the truth, but he would not believe it. He kept Simeon prisoner and said we couldn't have him back until we brought our youngest brother. Then he would know we were telling the truth. Also, when we returned our sacks were filled with grain and with the money that we had paid for it."

Jacob was very upset. "Joseph was taken from me, Simeon has also been taken away, and now you want to take Benjamin from me too? No way!"

As time passed the famine grew worse. Jacob realized his family would starve if they did not go back to Egypt and buy food. He called his sons together and told them to go back to Egypt. "But the man warned us not to come back without our younger brother."

Israel asked him, "Why did you tell him about Benjamin?"

Judah answered, "He asked us if our father was still alive and if we had any more brothers. Could we possibly have known he was going to ask us to bring him back? Please, father, let him go. I promise to take good care of him."

Their father consented. "Take twice as much money with you."

The brothers went back to Egypt. They came to Joseph's house. When Joseph saw his brother, Benjamin, with them, he told his servant, "Take them into my house and prepare a very nice meal for them." The brothers were taken into Joseph's nice house. They were afraid.

"It is because of the money which was returned to our sacks the first time. They are going to punish us and make us slaves." They tried to explain to Joseph's servant the mistake that was made concerning the money. They were very worried. Then their brother Simeon was brought to them. They were all happy to see one another.

When Joseph came in for lunch the brothers bowed very low to him. Joseph remembered the dream he had that one day his brothers would bow before him. Through the interpreter, Joseph asked about their father's well being. "He is in good health," they answered as they continued to bow low. Then Joseph saw his younger brother, Benjamin, his only full brother who was also born of their mother, Rachel. Joseph was so moved that he hurried out of the room to find a place to cry. After a while, he returned to the room with the men. Joseph made sure

Benjamin was served five times more food than the other brothers. They ate and drank and were very happy.

When it was time to go Joseph ordered his servants to fill their sacks with grain, the money they had paid, and also to put into Benjamin's sack his special silver cup. When they had left, Joseph ordered his servants to go after them. When they caught up with them, they asked them, "Why have you stolen from our master?"

The brothers were terrified. "What are you talking about? We didn't steal anything."

But the servants said, "Someone has stolen our master's silver cup. Whoever has stolen it shall die." When they searched the sacks, the cup was found in Benjamin's grain sack. Then each man found the money put back into his grain sack. Now they were in big trouble. They were so scared! They were all taken back to Joseph.

The brothers each tried to intercede for their younger brother, Benjamin. "Don't kill him, kill me instead. We promised our father that we would take care of Benjamin and bring him back safely." The brothers cried and begged for mercy. They told of their brother, Joseph, who had died years before and how it almost killed their father. If they had to go back now without Benjamin, surely their father would die.

Joseph reveals himself

Finally, Joseph could take it no more. He started to cry in front of them. Then he spoke to them in their native Hebrew language. "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" The brothers were silent in shock. "It is me, Joseph, whom you sold into slavery. Look, don't be afraid or sorrowful. God has sent me here to save us through the famine. There are five more years left of this famine. Go back home and bring your families and our father to come to live here and I will take care of all of you."

The brothers hugged and kissed their brother Joseph. There was much crying and laughter coming from the room as they got acquainted with one another. They returned to Canaan once again to get their families and Jacob. They told Jacob, "Joseph is alive! He is the governor over all the land of Egypt."

Israel was dumbfounded. He was so delighted that they left at once. The reunion between Israel and Joseph was such a happy one. Jacob came to live in Egypt with all his sons and their families. Israel lived

long enough to see his favorite son again. He died and was buried with his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham. Joseph lived to be 110 years-old.

There were 66 people in the family of the Israelites. Jacob had twelve sons and they multiplied into a very large family. They stayed in Egypt 430 years before Moses led them out. Sometime after Joseph had died, the Egyptians made the Israelites slaves. It was a hard life and the Israelites cried out to God to save them, but this is a whole different story.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Joseph's mother and father?
2. How many sons did Jacob have?
3. How many sons did Rachel have? Who were they?
4. What did Jacob make special for his favorite son?
5. What was the dream Joseph told his brothers would happen?
6. Why did Joseph's brothers not like him?
7. What did the brothers do to Joseph? What did they tell their father happened? What did they take back to Jacob as proof?
8. Who bought Joseph as a slave?
9. Why was Joseph thrown into prison? How long was he in prison?
10. What were Pharaoh's two dreams? What did they mean?
11. How long was there to be plenty of food and how long would the famine last?
12. Why did Joseph's brothers come to Egypt?
13. What did Joseph accuse them of being?
14. Who was kept behind as a prisoner?
15. Who did Joseph tell them they had to bring back in order for their brother to be free?
16. Why did Jacob not want Benjamin to go to Egypt?
17. What did Joseph have planted in Benjamin's grain sack to bring them back?
18. How many Israelites moved to Egypt?
19. How many years did the Israelites live in Egypt before Moses led them out?

MOSES

This story can be found in the book of Exodus.

This story takes place over 2,000 years after the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve. It also happened almost 1,500 years before Joshua Christ.

Jacob's family moved to Egypt to escape the famine in the land. His son, Joseph, had been placed as ruler in Egypt and had saved the country during the famine by storing food for seven years as God had told him to do. After the famine, the children of Israel stayed in Egypt. Several hundred years had gone by and the Israelites became slaves to the Egyptians. It was a very harsh life. They had to work hard in the fields and make buildings using bricks and mortar. The Israelites, also known as Hebrews, were very miserable.

The Egyptians were afraid that the Israelites would have so many boy babies that they would grow up and overpower them, so the king of Egypt, who was also called Pharaoh, ordered the midwives (the women who helped deliver babies) that when they went to help the Hebrew women have their babies, the girls could live, but if a boy was born than they must kill it.

The Hebrew midwives feared God and did not do as the Pharaoh commanded them, but allowed the boy babies to live, so God blessed the Hebrew midwives. Now, Pharaoh sent his soldiers to kill all the baby boys. He told them to throw the babies into the Nile River.

There was a man and his wife from the tribe of Levi who had a baby boy. They were afraid the Egyptians would kill their baby, so they hid him for three months. When they could not hide him any longer, they made a little ark for him. They put the baby in the little basket and sent it down the river. His sister, Miriam, followed along side the riverbank to see what would happen to her little brother.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river with her servants to bathe. She had no children of her own. She saw the little basket floating along the river and she sent her maidens to fetch it. When she

opened up the basket there was a cute, sweet little baby crying. She had compassion on the baby. She said, "This is one of the Hebrew's children." The baby's sister, Miriam, was watching. 20

She approached the princess and asked her, "Would you like for me to find you a Hebrew woman to help take care of the baby for you?"

Pharaoh's daughter said, "Yes, go." Miriam went and got her mother to take care of him.

Pharaoh's daughter called the baby Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Moses was raised as a prince in Pharaoh's court. He ate the best food, wore fine clothes and was educated by the best teachers and had all the best things that a prince could have. He knew he was not an Egyptian, but an Israelite.

When Moses grew up, he went one day to where the other Hebrews were and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. When he thought no one was looking he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. The next day when he went out again, he saw two Israelites fighting and he tried to break them up. "Why are you striking a fellow Hebrew?" Moses asked.

Then one of the men said, "Who made you a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"

Moses Flees Egypt

Then Moses knew that his secret was out and he was afraid. When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. Moses fled from Egypt. He went to a place far away from Egypt. He married and had two sons. His life was pretty routine for the next several decades. He tended to sheep and cattle and worked hard for his father-in-law.

In time, the king of Egypt died and the bondage of the Israelites became even harsher. They groaned and complained and cried because of their hardship. God heard them and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, it was time for God to save the Israelites out of the hand of the Egyptians.

The Burning Bush

Moses was tending to his sheep in the desert and came to Mount Horeb. God appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from a bush. Moses was

amazed when he saw the bush. He could see the fire, but the bush did not burn up. He stood there awestruck when he heard a voice, "Moses!"

He jumped back and said, "Here I am."

Then the voice boomed, "Do not come near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Then God said, "I am the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And Moses hid his face, because he was afraid. Then the Lord said, "I have heard the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their task-masters, and I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey. I have heard their cries and I will deliver them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you, Moses, to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Do you think Moses was thrilled? Do you think he was anxious to rush back to Egypt and save his people? Actually, Moses was not happy about it at all. He did not want to go. He wanted God to send someone else. "But who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and demand such a thing? He will never listen to me."

God said, "Moses, I will be with you. Go and tell the Israelites that I have visited you and they will be leaving Egypt. Tell Pharaoh that the Lord God of the Israelites has met with you, and now, please, let us go three days journey into the wilderness that we may worship God. I am sure the king of Egypt will not let you go, so I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do and after that he will let you go." God wanted the Israelites to see His power and miracles. He wanted them to know it was He who saved them. They were about to be witnesses to the great power and glory of God.

Moses answered and said, "But suppose they won't listen to me. What if they don't believe me?" So God told him to throw the rod down that was in his hand. Moses cast it to the ground and it became a large hissing snake - and Moses fled from it!

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out and pick it up by the tail." Moses carefully picked it up, and it turned back into a rod again. "Now," God said, "put your hand into your shirt." When he put his hand into his shirt it turned white like snow with leprosy. Leprosy is a terrible skin dis-

ease. Moses was shocked when he saw his hand. "Now," God said, "put it back into your shirt." When Moses put his hand back into his shirt and pulled it out again, he was very relieved to see it restored.

God said, "If they do not believe you after you have done these signs then take water from the river and pour it over the dry land and it will become blood." Of course, God knew they would not believe him. God had already planned out what miracles He would perform. He knew exactly what Pharaoh would do, too.

Moses said to God, "Oh, please God, couldn't you send someone else? I stutter and can't speak very well. Please just send someone else."

God said, "Who makes a man's mouth? Go and I will be with you."

But Moses still did not want to go. "Oh, please, God, send someone else."

God became angry with Moses. "I will send your brother, Aaron, to go with you. I will speak to you and you tell Aaron what to say." God could have worked directly with Aaron, but that is not what He wanted to do. He put Moses in charge. God would speak to Moses, then Moses would tell Aaron.

Moses and Aaron went to the elders of the children of Israel and told them what God had told them, and they believed and were happy that God had looked on their affliction. They knew God was going to save them from the Egyptians.

Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "The Lord God of Israel says, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"

Pharaoh said, "Who is this Lord that I should obey Him? I don't know Him and I will not let the Hebrews go." Instead, Pharaoh commanded that day that the taskmasters work the slaves harder than ever before. The Israelites were mad at Moses and Aaron blaming them for making their work more difficult.

Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Lord, why have you brought trouble on the Israelites to make it harder than before on them? Since I came to Pharaoh, they are worse off than before. I thought You were going to deliver them." But Moses and the other Israelites were being impatient. God had a plan.

"Now you will see!" said God. God sent Moses back to Pharaoh

with instructions.

Once again, Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that God had said, “let My people go.” Again, Pharaoh would not. Aaron cast the rod on the ground before Pharaoh and it became a snake. Pharaoh called his magicians and they did likewise and their rods also became snakes, but Aaron’s snake swallowed up their snakes. Sometimes God allows Satan certain powers, but it was very clear who was the most powerful.

Pharaoh would not give in and let the children of Israel go. The next morning he went to the Nile River to bathe, and Moses and Aaron were there and said to him, “The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, ‘Let My people go that they may serve Me in the wilderness, but you would not. By this you shall know that I am the Lord.’” God had instructed Moses and Aaron. They raised their staff and stretched it out over the water. The rivers, ponds and streams turned red - blood red!

This was the first plague - water turned into blood. The Egyptians suffered greatly because of this plague. They had to dig all around the rivers to try to find fresh water.

The blood stank and the fish died. The rivers were completely red. The magicians were also able to turn water into blood. Of course, if they would have been very good they could have turned the blood back into water, but they could not. The plague lasted seven long thirsty days.

Also, remember that Egypt did not know God. They had many false gods. Their main god was the river. Living in a harsh desert land like Egypt, the people began to worship the river as a god. They had many gods and many of these plagues brought on them were attacks on their false gods, mocking the way they believed.

Pharaoh still refused to let the Israelites go, therefore, the second plague was brought on them. The river spewed out frogs abundantly. They came into peoples houses, into their beds, even into their kitchens. Frogs were even getting into their food. The Egyptian magicians were able to make frogs. However, they could not make them disappear. Frogs covered the land of Egypt. They came out of the rivers, ponds and the streams. Frogs, frogs, frogs - everywhere! Frogs had also been one of the Egyptians’ gods, but now they were sick of them. The poor Egyptians could hardly sleep at night for all the noise the frogs were making. Every time they tried to eat, the frogs jumped into their

plates. The Egyptians were so miserable and so sick of frogs!

Finally, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Go and beg your God to take away the frogs. I cannot stand it any longer. I promise to let the children of Israel go. Just take away the frogs.”

Moses cried out to God concerning the frogs and the frogs died. They died in the houses, in the fields, in the beds, everywhere! The Egyptians gathered them together in heaps to burn them. The land stank! But when relief came, Pharaoh changed his mind. In other words - he had lied. He decided not to let the children of Israel go. God knew what Pharaoh would do. He knew he was lying.

God told Moses that the third plague would be lice. Aaron was to strike the dust of the ground and it would become lice to bite and torment the Egyptians. This time, even the magicians could not copy the miracle, but Pharaoh’s heart was still hardened and he would not let the Israelites go.

The next plague began something different. Up until this time, even the children of Israel had to endure the hardships of the plagues but now God was going to separate Israel from Egypt. The children of Israel would now be protected from the plagues.

The fourth plague was a swarm of flies. The sky was dark with so many buzzing flies. The poor Egyptians could not even rest because of them. They were everywhere - in their food, their water, their beds. When they opened their mouths to speak, the flies would rush in! The Egyptians were miserable, but there was not one fly in all Goshen.

After a while, Pharaoh could not stand it anymore. He called for Moses and Aaron. “Just stop the flies, and I will let the Israelites go. Please!” But after the plague ceased, Pharaoh changed his mind. Pharaoh had lied again. He would not let them go.

The fifth plague was brought on the Egyptians. It was disease on their animals. This was a very bad plague for the Egyptians because they depended on their animals for food and work. Many of the animals died, but not one of the Israelites animals had died - not one! Again, Pharaoh would not let them go.

The sixth plague was very painful. God told Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of ashes from a furnace and to let Moses scatter it in the wind in the sight of Pharaoh and it would become fine dust in the land of Egypt, causing boils and sores to break out on both man and beast. The

magicians could not stand before Pharaoh because of the painful boils on them. Do you think Pharaoh let the children of Israel go? Not yet.

Pharaoh was told that if he did not let the children of Israel go that the next day a seventh plague of great hailstorm would come and kill any animals, plants and people who were in the fields. Some in Pharaoh's court believed this and they made sure their servants and animals were kept inside the next day and not in the fields. Those who did not believe and were in the fields were killed by hail and lightning. It was the worst storm the land had ever seen. It was terrifying. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail storm. Again, Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and begged for God to stop the storm. He promised to let the children of Israel go, but when the storm was over and Pharaoh felt safe, he changed his mind...again.

What the seventh plague of the hailstorm did not destroy in the way of crops, the eighth plague took care of - locust. Every tree and every green thing was stripped bare by swarms and swarms of locust. There were millions and millions of them, eating everything in sight. The extremely loud noise they made was deafening!

The Egyptians must have been miserable listening to the locust destroy all their plants, fruits, grass and trees. The land was completely dark with so many locust. By the time they were gone, there was nothing left. Trees were stripped completely bare. There was not anything green around. Pharaoh was still stubborn and would not let the Israelites go.

The ninth plague was darkness over all Egypt for three days and three nights. It was a thick darkness - so thick they could not even see one another. They could not leave their homes. Even with candles burning, it was completely dark, but the children of Israel had light in Goshen where they lived.

God told Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and Egypt. Afterwards, he will let the children of Israel go. In fact, he will drive you out of the land. Speak to the Hebrews and tell them when it is time to go, ask the Egyptians for their gold, silver, and other fine goods." God would give them favor so they would take with them the many riches of Egypt. They would "spoil" the Egyptians.

After the ninth plague of darkness, Moses and Aaron were again brought before Pharaoh. He shouted at them, "Get out of Egypt! Take

the Hebrews with you and go! But," he quickly added, "you cannot take 23 your flocks and herds."

Moses knew what Pharaoh was thinking. If the Israelites were to travel into the desert without meat and milk from their herds, they would return to Egypt for food and would become slaves again.

"We must take our flocks with us so that we can offer sacrifices to God," Moses boldly told Pharaoh. "We will not leave even one animal behind."

Pharaoh's face became hot with anger. "You have just lost your freedom!" he shouted.

After a long silence, Moses said, "You will not see us anymore. God will send one more plague upon Egypt. All the firstborn in your land will die! This includes your firstborn son, Pharaoh, as well as the firstborn of all the animals." Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh's court for the last time.

In the other plagues, God protected the Israelites in the land of Goshen. They did not have to do anything but stay in Goshen, but this time it would be different. They would only be protected from this last plague if they carefully followed the instructions given to them. Now we come to the tenth plague, which brings us to Passover.

Passover

God gave important instructions to Moses, "This month, which I have named Abib, is the first month of the year. Tell the Israelites that on the 10th day of this month, every family should set aside a perfectly healthy male lamb about a year old. Then, on the evening of the 14th day of the month, each family must kill its lamb. The lamb should be roasted and eaten along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Be sure to roast it well. Eat all of it, if you can, and if any part is left over, burn it up. When you eat the lamb, be dressed as though you are leaving on a long journey."

Moses listened carefully as God continued to give more instructions. "When you kill the lamb, take some of the blood and smear it on the two side posts and on the upper part of the doors of your houses. Then, when I send an angel to kill the firstborn of Egypt, he will pass over the marked homes and your firstborn will not die. This day will be called the Passover. It shall be a memorial, or reminder, to you that I spared your firstborn from death. You shall keep the Passover as a me-

morial to you and your children from generations to come forever.”

“The next day, the 15th day of the first month, Abib, you shall observe a special yearly Sabbath.” Remember, God’s days begin at sundown and end at sundown. This Sabbath, which could occur on any day of the week, was to begin at sundown at the end of the 14th day. “It will be called the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, “ God told Moses. “You shall put all leavening out of your houses before the holy day starts. For seven days when you eat bread, it must be unleavened.”

Leavening makes food “puff up.” When making bread, the dough must rise before it can be baked. The leavening in the dough makes it “puff up.” Sins of pride and vanity cause people to feel important or “puffed up” in their minds. God wanted the Israelites to leave sinful Egypt and to leave behind the sinful ways that are pictured by leavening. But what is leavening and what is sin?

If you look on the labels of the foods you buy, you will see certain ingredients that help make the bread rise. Leavening is anything that will make the food rise or puff up. Some of these ingredients are yeast, baking powder, and baking soda. These are found in bread, cookies, crackers, and cakes. It is only for this seven day period of the year that these products represent sin. It is fine to eat them the rest of the year, but not during the Days of Unleavened Bread. During this time, we must put them completely out of our homes so we do not accidentally eat them.

Now what is sin? The answer to that question can be found in I John 3: 4, which says that sin is the transgression of the law. Transgression means breaking, therefore, sin is breaking God’s laws. God says that the penalty of breaking his law is death.

Joshua Christ would be killed on Passover. The lamb that the children of Israel killed was a symbol of Christ, who would become our Passover. Because of Christ’s sacrifice, God would “passover” our sins so that we would not have to pay the penalty of sinning, since we all sin. Christ died and paid the penalty for us, but He expects us to come out of sin and be extra careful not to sin again and break God’s laws. The blood of Christ would be our “Passover,” just like the blood of the lamb would cause God to “passover” the children of Israel.

Now, back to our story. The Israelites remained indoors on Passover night as God had instructed them. For the Egyptians, it was a terrible night. At midnight, all the firstborn people and animals died.

Pharaoh was horrified as he looked upon the lifeless body of his oldest son.

There was not one household in Egypt that there was not at least one dead. There was a great cry in the land. Pharaoh began to realize, more than ever before, the great power of the God of Israel. His message to Moses and the Israelites to leave Egypt came quickly. Since God told the Israelites to be dressed as though they were leaving on a journey, they were ready to go. They rounded up their flocks, which had been protected, and began their exodus from Egypt on the night of the 15th. It was a joyous occasion.

God wanted them to remember the miracles He had performed to free them from slavery. They celebrated what was truly a “night to be much observed” on the beginning of that first special holy day - the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Now we keep this “Night to be Much Remembered” as a memorial - to remind us of how God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. It was a very happy time for the Israelites. As they were leaving, the Egyptians gave them gold, silver, clothes, and anything else they wanted. Israel had lived in Egypt exactly 430 years - to the day - before God led them out. It was no small event for the Hebrews to leave. They had grown to be several million men, women, and children. It was a lot of people to move out, but the excitement was enormous as they packed their belongings to leave the cruel and harsh land they had known all their lives. Now they would be free!

As the Israelites traveled, God used a large cloud to guide them during the day. In the evening, the cloud would stop. This was a sign for the people to stop and camp for the night. When darkness came, the cloud changed into a giant pillar of fire! It gave them light and perhaps warmth on cold nights. In this miraculous way, God led the Israelites in the direction they should go.

Scouts and spies, sent by Pharaoh to watch the movement of the Israelites, discovered that the huge caravan was headed toward the Red Sea. Upon hearing the news, Pharaoh decided that he wanted the Israelites back as slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh and his army of horsemen and chariots thundered across the plains to overtake them. By this time, the Israelites reached a point near the Red Sea where they could see huge mountains directly ahead of them. These mountains appeared to be blocking their way, yet the cloud guided them onward. Many of

the elders of Israel disagreed with the direction God was leading them. Soon, hundreds were complaining. The Israelites were horrified when they heard that Pharaoh's army was rapidly approaching. They were trapped with the sea on one side, the mountains all around them, and Pharaoh's army approaching on another side. Moses reminded the people that it was God who was leading them and He knew what was best. That night, the pillar of fire moved between the Israelites and the Egyptians, protecting them.

Crossing the Red Sea

Usually, the Israelites camped for the night, but now God instructed Moses that they were to move on. Those who questioned God's instructions were even more puzzled when he commanded them to move east - toward the Red Sea. The people complained more, "Because there weren't enough graves in Egypt, you brought us out here to die! Why didn't you just leave us alone in Egypt? Why did you have to bring us out here to die?"

Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still and see how God will deliver you this day. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you will see no more. The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace."

God told Moses to lift up his rod and stretch out his hand over the sea. When Moses did so, there was a loud roar and the rushing water began to roll back, forming a long narrow valley right down the middle. On each side the water became a towering wall. Can you imagine seeing such a sight? It was awesome as the water parted. "Look! Look! The water is dividing in two!" They shouted to one another in disbelief. The noise was tremendous, not only from the rushing water, but from the excitement of the Israelites.

A strong wind began to blow, drying the muddy earth so that the wagons and people could walk through. Several hours later when the sea bed was dry, the Israelites began walking between the two towering walls of water to the opposite shore. As they neared the other side, thunderous sounds of running horses and loud clangs of chariots rapidly gaining on them frightened even the bravest of men. Pharaoh's army was right behind them! They began to run. The women and children cried and hurried as fast as they could. The sun glistened on the drawn

swords ready to cut them down. "Hurry!" They shouted to one another. "We must run faster! They will kill us all!" They grabbed their children and hurried along, screaming.

When all the Israelites were safely on the other side, God told Moses to stretch forth his rod toward the sea again. When Moses did so, the huge walls of water roared and thundered as they crashed downward and came together - drowning Pharaoh's army and Pharaoh himself. The Israelites shouted and danced as they saw the defeated Egyptians.

God had performed the miracle for all the Israelites to witness. They had seen so many miracles during this time, but when they came upon a problem, they forgot all that God had done back in Egypt. They had forgotten the great power of God. Still, there would be many more miracles for them to witness as they travel to the promised land filled with milk and honey.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did the children of Israel come to be in Egypt? How long were they there?
2. Why did Pharaoh want to kill the boy babies? Why not the girl babies?
3. How old was Moses when he was put into a basket and sent down the river?
4. Why did his parents put him in the basket? Who followed along to see what would happen to the baby?
5. Who found the baby?
6. Why did Moses have to flee from Egypt?
7. What did Moses see on the mountain that made him take a closer look?
8. What two miracles did God show Moses on the mountain for him to take to Pharaoh?
9. Was Moses excited to go and help his people? Who did God send along to speak for him?
10. What happened to the magicians snakes when they were cast down?
11. What was the first plague? How long did it last? Were the magicians

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

This story can be found from Exodus 15 - 34.

After the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, the sea crashed down on the Egyptians and killed them all, including Pharaoh.

Now the children of Israel were in the wilderness. They were free at last from the Pharaoh of Egypt and the bondage he kept them under. They were no longer slaves. God was leading them to a new land that He described as “flowing with milk and honey.” At first, they were very joyous. Then their joy turned into anger when they could not find water. They griped and grumbled before God and Moses. “Did you bring us out here to die? Where is the water? We have been without water for three days. Give us what we need,” they demanded. They came upon a place called Marah, but the water was bitter. Now they complained even louder. God told Moses to cut down a tree and throw it into the water. The water was made sweet. It was hard to find enough water for so many people. There were about six million Israelites.

Manna

After a short while, the people complained again. “We are hungry! Give us food!” they demanded. “When we were back in Egypt, we always had plenty to eat. Now you have brought us out here to die!”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a certain portion per person every day. I will test them whether they will obey Me or not. They shall gather only enough to feed each family member for the day. They shall not gather any extra, but on the sixth day of the week, they shall gather twice as much, so they will have some for the Sabbath.”

In the morning, when the dew lifted, there was a small round substance left on the ground. When the children of Israel saw it, they asked one another, “What is it?” So they named the bread manna, which means, “What is it?” Moses told them that this was the bread from heaven sent by God. It was delicious and tasted like bread with honey.

able to do the same?

12. What was the second plague? Were the magicians able to do the same? Why did the land become stinky?
13. What was the third plague? Were the magicians able to perform this one?
14. What was the distinction God made with the fourth plague? Where did the plague not affect people? What was the fourth plague?
15. What was the fifth plague?
16. What was the sixth plague? Why couldn't the magicians stand before Pharaoh?
17. What was the seventh plague? What did some of the people from Pharaoh's court do the next day for their animals and servants?
18. What loud, annoying, destructive creature ate all the green trees and plants in the eighth plague?
19. How long did the ninth plague of darkness last? Did the Israelites have light in the land of Goshen?
20. What was the tenth and final plague? What special instructions were given to the children of Israel?
21. Why is it called “Passover”?
22. Who was killed during Passover? What did the children of Israel have to put over the door for the angel to pass over them? Could they come out?
23. What is the Night to be Much Remembered about?
24. How did God lead the Israelites in the day - in the night?
25. Why were the children of Israel “trapped” when Pharaoh's army came after them?
26. What did God do to save them?
27. What happened to Pharaoh and his army?

BONUS question: What month and day was Passover on?

The manna had to be gathered early in the morning before the hot sun melted it. Anyone who was lazy and did not get up in time went hungry.

They gathered enough for their family with no leftovers as God had said, but there were a few who did not believe God. They gathered extra to keep overnight. By the next morning, the manna had worms in it and stank! The people had to clean out their tents and still the tents stank! It was hard to get the smell out. They should have listened to God. When the sixth day came the people were to gather twice as much, enough for the Sabbath too. Some who had stinky tents were afraid to. They saw what happened to the manna when it was kept overnight, so a few did not gather twice as much on the sixth day, and they went hungry. When they went out on the Sabbath to try to gather the manna, there was none. God was showing them that there was a distinction on the Sabbath day. He caused a miracle that the manna would last overnight for the Sabbath, but not on the other days. He wanted them to do their work on the other days, but the Sabbath was a day of rest.

Water from the rock

God led the people by a cloud during the day and by night a pillar of fire. Sometimes they camped for a few days, but they knew when the cloud moved, they had to follow. Again, their water supply was low and again the people complained, "Give us water!" They told Moses, "You have brought us out here in the wilderness to die!" The mob was angry. God was not pleased. God told Moses to go and stand on a large boulder and strike the rock with his staff. When Moses struck the rock, water gushed out and the people drank.

Mount Sinai

When the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai, they camped there for a while. Moses went up on the mountain and God spoke to him, "You shall tell the Israelites that if they will obey My voice and keep My commandments, then they shall be a special treasure to Me. You shall be a holy nation." Moses told the people what God had said.

The people answered, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!"

God told Moses to tell the people to come to Mount Sinai on the third day. They were not to come too close. Moses was to set boundaries for them. Whoever touched the mountain would be put to death.

They were to be respectful to God.

On the third day, the people came to the foot of Mount Sinai. There was great thundering and lightening. The ground shook. The people were greatly afraid. There was a very loud blast of a trumpet announcing God was coming down to the mountain. It grew louder, as did the thundering. The trembling earth caused rocks to slide from the mountain. The light was blinding. The Great God of the Universe had descended on the mountain. The people trembled at the sight. Then the Lord called Moses to come up.

Before Moses could get very far up, God ordered him back. "People are trying to follow you up the mountain. Return at once and warn them against trespassing on holy ground. If they come too close, they will die. You may bring Aaron with you when you come back, but no one else. Now hurry, Moses." On his way down, Moses loudly warned the people, "Get back!"

Among other things, God gave Moses his Ten Commandments. In the Bible, the Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

The Ten Commandments

It was actually on the day of Pentecost that God gave His Ten Commandments to the children of Israel. The Commandments are not just for the Israelites, but for all of mankind. They teach us how to worship God and how to get along with one another.

The millions of Israelites stood in complete silence as their Creator told them the Ten Commandments He had for them.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not carve images of things in Heaven or on Earth for the purpose of bowing down to them in worship. I am a jealous God! I punish those who hate Me down to their third and fourth generations, but I show love to those who love Me and obey My laws!
3. You shall not use the name of the Eternal your God in any wrong or useless manner. I will punish those who utter My name without respect and reverence.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You shall labor and do all your work for the first six days of the week, but the seventh day

is holy. Your God rebuilt the Earth in six days and rested on the seventh. He therefore made the seventh day holy time.

5. Give special respect to your parents. Honor them.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not lie.
10. You shall not desire to own something that does not belong to you; you shall not covet.

These are the laws that God gives to people in order to have a good relationship with Him and with each other. They are laws based on love; love for God and love for each other. People do not keep these laws in the world and because of this, there is pain and suffering.

Now, all the people witnessed the thundering, the lightening flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. They were very afraid. They told Moses, "You speak to us and we will hear, but don't let God speak to us. We are too afraid." The people began to back away, but Moses drew near into the thick darkness of the mountain where God was.

God gave other judgments and laws to Moses to give to the children of Israel. He gave them laws of how to deal with criminals, with property, and other day-to-day problems. He also discussed with Moses about the feast days, offerings, and sacrifices. The people were all in agreement saying, "We will do whatever God commands us to do."

Moses Goes Back Up the Mountain (Exodus 24: 9 - 11)

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders went up on the mountain. There they saw God as He manifested Himself to them. They could not see Spirit, so God made Himself visible to them. Under His feet was like smooth paved sapphire. They ate and drank with God. Then God told Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and I will give you the law and the commandments which I have written that you may teach them." Moses arose with his assistant, Joshua, and they went farther up the mountain with God. Moses told the elders to wait until he and Joshua came back. The sight of the glory of God was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain, and all the children of Israel could see it. Mo-

ses then walked into the midst of a cloud and Joshua waited for him.

Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. In all that time, he did not eat or drink anything. God talked to Moses about making the Ark of the Covenant. He told Moses to put into it the tablets of the Ten Commandments, which God Himself wrote, and to put some of the manna that the children of Israel were eating, and also to put the rod that Aaron had used in Egypt. God and Moses talked for many hours about different laws and judgments. God told Moses that the Sabbath would be a sign between the children of Israel and Him. It would be a covenant forever. God spoke face to face with Moses, as you would a friend.

The Golden Calf

While Moses was on the mountain, the children of Israel grew restless. "Where is this man, Moses? He has been gone too long. We don't know what has happened to him. Come, let us make gods that will lead us."

Aaron told them, "Break off all your golden earrings and bring them to me." So the Israelites brought their gold to Aaron and he put it in the fire and melted it down and fashioned a calf out of the gold. Then he said, "O children of Israel, behold your god! This is the god who brought you out of Egypt." Aaron made an altar before the golden calf and told the Israelites, "Tomorrow we will have a feast before the Lord." Of course, this would not be a feast before the true Lord. The very first Commandment says that you shall have no other gods before Me and the second Commandment says not to make any graven images.

Even though God had performed so many miracles for the Israelites to see, some of them wanted to cling to the habits of idol worship they had acquired in Egypt. "We need a leader we can see!" they exclaimed. They bowed before their golden calf. They danced, laughed, and had a big feast before their idol.

God told Moses, "Go down, for the people have corrupted themselves. They have made an idol out of gold and have turned aside from what is right." God was very angry. Moses hurried down the mountain with the two tablets of stones in his hands and met up with Joshua.

Joshua said to him, "There is a great noise in the camp. There must be war going on."

Moses answered him, "That isn't the sound of war; that's the sound

of feasting.” Moses and Joshua hurried the rest of the way down the mountain.

The Tablets Broken

When the Israelites saw Moses, they stopped immediately. There was dead silence. Moses was so angry that he threw the two tablets on the ground in front of him and shattered them to pieces. “What is going on here?” he demanded. “What have you done? Aaron, what did these people do to you to cause you to commit such a terrible sin before God?”

Aaron answered, “Well, Moses, you know how evil they are. It wasn’t my fault. They told me to make them a god to go before them. After all, you were late coming down. So the people brought me their gold, and I cast it into the fire, and - poof! Out came this calf.” Aaron shrugged his shoulders as if he did not have a clue as to how this could have happened. Moses was not fooled by such a silly story. God certainly knew better. They had deliberately disobeyed God and made an idol to worship.

Moses melted down the calf and put the gold in their water and told the people to drink it. Then he stood in the entrance of the camp and said, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side – come with me!” The sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. Moses told them to put their swords on and to kill those responsible. Three thousand Israelites were killed that day because of their terrible sin before God.

The Lord told Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on them as I did the first tablets, which you broke.” God wrote again His Ten Commandments and Moses brought them down to the children of Israel.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was wrong with the water at Marah? How long had the Israelites been without water? What did Moses do to make the water sweet? When the Israelites complained of being hungry, what did God send them every morning from heaven?
2. What did the Israelites call the bread? What does “manna” mean? What did it taste like?

3. How much manna were they to gather each day? What happened if they tried to gather too much?
4. How much were they to gather on the sixth day? Why?
5. Can you name the Ten Commandments?
6. Which Commandment did God tell Moses would be a sign between Him and his people?
7. How long was Moses on the mountain?
8. What did the children of Israel do while Moses was on the mountain?
9. What did Aaron make for the Israelites?
10. What did Moses do when he returned?
11. How did Aaron say the golden calf was made?
12. What three things were put into the Ark of the Covenant?
13. On which holy day were the Ten Commandments given to the children of Israel?
14. What two places in the Bible are the Ten Commandments listed?

IN THE WILDERNESS

This story can be found from Leviticus 10 - Deuteronomy 34.

After God gave the children of Israel the Ten Commandments, He told them to build a tabernacle. He gave them every detail as to how it should be built. This is also where the ark of the covenant would reside that held the Ten Commandments. The people gave generously their gold for the building of the tabernacle. It was made to be taken down and moved whenever it was time for the Israelites to move. Remember, they were on their way to the promised land...a land flowing with milk and honey. As long as the cloud was settled over the tabernacle, they would camp, but when the cloud rose up, it was time to pack up and go where they were led.

When the tabernacle was complete, a hissing bolt of fire shot out of the door and went upwards and came down to the altar! The people were frightened and fell on their faces. "This is God's holy fire," Moses told Aaron. "Your sons should never allow it to die out. Twice a day live coals should be taken from the altar and carried in a censer to the holy place to be sprinkled with incense at the golden altar. Never let the holy fire go out."

From that day forward the tabernacle was in constant use. Early in the morning, Aaron's sons came to prepare for their duties. There were burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, food offerings, and many more. It was a busy place.

Aaron's Sons Killed

One day, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, arrived for work a little late. The holy fire had gone out. They went to the campfire and gathered some coals of a fire there. They had been warned not to let the fire go out. They did not respect God and thought they could just hide it by getting fire from another campsite. This was in direct disobedience and disrespect to God. They thought they could hide it from God.

As they were preparing the unholy fire, two hissing bolts of lightening

came out of the inner room of the tabernacle and struck them both dead. The people were sobered and scared by what had happened to Nadab and Abihu.

After a while, the children of Israel were on the move. The tabernacle was packed up and the people went where the cloud led them. God provided manna on the ground every morning, except of course on the Sabbath day, but they never stopped complaining.

Aaron and Miriam speak against Moses

One day, Moses' brother, Aaron, and his sister, Miriam, spoke against Moses. "You act like God is only working through you. God is also speaking through us. Who made you boss?" The Lord heard them, so he called out the three of them.

He told Aaron and Miriam, "Why were you not afraid to speak against My servant, Moses? For other prophets I speak to them in dreams or visions, but I talk face to face with Moses, like a friend. How dare you speak against him." God's anger was great against them. When Aaron turned and looked at his sister, she was white with leprosy.

Aaron said to Moses, "Oh please pray that God will heal her. We have sinned and are sorry." Moses prayed for Miriam. God said He would heal her, but she had had to be put outside the camp for seven days because of their sin. It gave them time to think about the sin they had committed in talking bad about their brother, God's servant.

When they had come to the promised land of Canaan, God told Moses to send out spies from each tribe to come back and tell the people about the land. They knew there would be enemies, but God would take care of them. After all, He promised them this land.

The Twelve Spies

Twelve spies, one from each tribe was sent out for forty days to spy out the land. It was rich land, just as God had said. The grapes were so big, a cluster had to be carried between two poles. There were enemies who lived there. After forty days, the spies came back with their report. The Israelites were anxious to hear about their new promised land.

"Well," they said, "it truly is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Here is some of the fruit." They showed the cluster of grapes hanging on two poles. The people were so excited about seeing such big deli-

icious fruit. They were anxious to hear more.

“Unfortunately, though,” they continued, “it has too many enemies. The cities are large with walls. Its too much for us. We cannot go there.”

“Wait,” said Joshua and Caleb. “Let us go at once and take it. God has promised us this land and He will fight for us.”

The other ten spies said, “No, they will kill us. There were giants there who made us look as small as grasshoppers.” Of course, this was a lie. There were big men there, but not that big!

“If only we had just stayed in Egypt or died in the wilderness,” they complained. “God has brought us here to die. We would be better off just going back to Egypt. Let us pick our own leader and go back to Egypt.”

Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb spoke to the people, “Do not be afraid. God will give us the land as He promised. Remember the miracles you saw. Trust God!” But the people were angry and started picking up stones to throw at them.

God was very mad. “Get out of the way, Moses, and let Me kill all these rebellious people!”

Then Moses pleaded, “Please, merciful God, don’t kill them. When the Egyptians hear about it, they will say that You couldn’t bring them into the promised land, so You had to kill them.”

The punishment for the rebellion

God had patience and did not kill them, but He told them they could not go into the promised land. They would have to wander in the wilderness a year for every day that they spied out the land. Do you remember how many days they spied out the land? Forty. So for forty years they wandered in the wilderness and did not have a home or land to settle in.

Everyone who was twenty years-old and older would not live to come into the promised land, except Joshua and Caleb. All the other rebellious Israelites would die before the forty years was up.

When Moses told the people God’s decision, they mourned greatly. Some of them decided they would go into the promised land anyway. They gathered their belongings and families to go. Moses tried to stop them. “God said not to go. You will be killed. Don’t go!” Some went anyway, and just as Moses said, they were killed by the enemies.

The rest of the Israelites packed up and as the cloud moved, they knew they had to follow. It was a sad time for the children of Israel who

had looked forward to a time they could build real houses and farm their own land, but because they lacked faith in God and rebelled against Him, they were not able to settle down.

Working on the Sabbath

While they were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath. They knew the Sabbath commandment. How are we to keep the Sabbath? We aren’t to work on that day. This man wasn’t just gathering a couple of sticks to build a nice cozy fire to warm himself or cook lunch. He was working hard, gathering a lot of firewood. He knew he was breaking the Commandment, but did not care. The men of Israel took him to Moses. When Moses inquired of God what to do with him, God replied, “Have all the congregation come outside the camp and throw stones at him until he dies.” Does this sound cruel to you? Well, it surely was not. God knew the children of Israel had to learn lessons. If they weren’t punished for their disobedience, then they would not learn to obey. This was also written in the Bible so we could also learn how important obedience is to God. This man will be resurrected later on. Do you think he will be careful about keeping the Sabbath then?

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

There were three well known men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The people respected these men. One day, they came against Moses and Aaron with two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation. “Moses and Aaron, just who do you think you are ruling over us? We are all God’s people and God is with all of us, not just you. Stop trying to rule over us and telling us what to do all the time.”

Aaron had learned his lesson before when he tried to tell Moses the same thing. He and Moses were afraid for the men. God would not take this rebellion lightly. Moses told Korah, “Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who He is working through, and who He is not working through. Korah, you and all your followers put fire in your censers, and bring them tomorrow.”

Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come. “You aren’t our boss. We don’t have to do anything you say. Who made you a prince over us?”

The next day, Korah and his two hundred and fifty followers came

before Moses with their censers. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation. The Lord said to Moses, “Separate yourselves from among the congregation that I may bring fire down and consume them all.”

Moses fell on his face. “Please don’t be angry with all of them because of Korah.” Moses quickly yelled at the people, “Get away from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Don’t touch anything of theirs or you will be consumed with them!” The people started moving away from them.

Moses said, “If these men die naturally or like anyone else, then you will know that God has not sent me, but if the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up, then you will know that they have rejected God.”

Just as he finished speaking, the earth rumbled and the ground started splitting apart until it finally opened wide and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the two hundred and fifty followers. All their families and possessions fell in also. Then the earth closed back up again. The Israelites screamed and yelled as they ran farther away from where the wicked men had been.

It should have been obvious to the children of Israel who God was working through, but the very next day all the congregation of Israel appeared before Moses and Aaron and complained, “You have killed the people of the Lord.”

This was so ridiculous to say. Did Moses or Aaron open the earth to swallow up the wicked men? Who killed Korah, Dathan and Abiram? God was very angry with the Israelites. He sent a plague that killed fourteen thousand, seven hundred people that day.

Moses disobeys God

The children of Israel still did not stop their complaining. When they came into the wilderness of Kadesh, there was no water there. They came before Moses and Aaron with complaints and threats. “Why have you brought us here to die? Why did you bring us out of Egypt? We were better off there!”

Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle and the Lord spoke to Moses, “Take the rod, gather the people together, and speak to the rock before you. It will bring forth water.” Moses took the rod and went to the people.

“Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this

rock?” Then Moses lifted the rod and struck the rock twice and water gushed out for the congregation and their flocks. God was angry with Moses. He had told Moses to speak to the rock, not strike it. Also, he asked the people if “we” must bring water from the rock. Moses had no power on his own. He should have given the glory to God.

“Because of your sin, you shall not bring the children of Israel into the promised land.” God told Moses and Aaron.

The children of Israel journeyed from Kadesh to Mount Hor. There, Aaron died peaceably on the top of the mountain. The whole congregation mourned for him for thirty days.

Plague of the Snakes!

Then the children of Israel traveled on. Again, they complained, “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is never enough food and water. We are sick and tired of eating this worthless bread.” They were complaining about the manna God had given to them.

God was angry with their ungrateful attitude. He sent snakes into their camps. Many died from the snake bites. The people came running to Moses, “We have sinned and spoken against the Lord. Please pray that He will take the snakes away!”

Moses prayed for the frightened children of Israel. God told Moses to set up a bronze snake on a pole and anyone who was bitten should come and look at the pole and they would not die. Of course, the pole has no healing power of its own. Only God can heal, but it was a reminder that they had sinned.

Later, the children of Israel worshipped the snake on the pole. They kept it for hundreds of years, bowing down to it as a god, until King Hezekiah of Judah finally tore it down. Today, you can still see the serpent on the pole as a symbol of healing. It is on hospital walls, the sides of ambulances, and sometimes in doctors’ offices. The next time you see one, you will know where it came from.

Moses’ death

Moses gave final instructions to the stubborn Israelites. He warned them about rebelling against their Creator. He told them of the wonderful blessings they would have in the promised land IF they obeyed.

The forty years of wandering in the wilderness was almost over. All those who had been twenty years-old and older at the time the land was scouted out had died. It was time to take possession of the promised land.

God had told Moses that he would not be able to go into the promised land, but He did allow Moses to see it before he died. Moses went atop Mount Nebo and from there he was able to see the rich land all around him. God told him, "This is the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have allowed you to see it, Moses, but you shall not cross over there."

Moses died there. He was 120 years-old. When he died his eyesight was still perfect and he never lost his health or strength. God buried him. Moses is in his grave waiting for the resurrection that will soon take place.

The children of Israel cried and mourned for Moses many days. Joshua took Moses' place to lead the Israelites. There are many more adventures to come when they cross over the Jordan River into the promised land.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God kill Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu?
2. What did Aaron and Miriam tell Moses that angered God? What happened to Miriam?
3. How many spies were sent into the promised land? What was their report when they came back? Who were the only two who gave a good report?
4. Why did God say they would have to wander in the wilderness? How long? Why 40 years? No one over what age would be allowed to go into the promised land?
5. Who were the three men who rebelled against Moses, saying they were all God's people and he needed to stop trying to rule over them? How many men also followed them?
6. What happened to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the 250 men who rebelled with them?
7. When the Israelites complained about the manna, what did God

send into the camps?

8. What did God tell Moses to put up on a pole for the children of Israel to look upon if they were bitten by the snakes? What happened when they looked on the pole?
9. Who was the king who tore down the pole hundreds of years later? Why did he tear it down?
10. Why was Moses not allowed to go into the promised land?
11. How old was Moses when he died?
12. Who took Moses' place after his death?

JOSHUA

This story can be found from Leviticus 10 - Deuteronomy 34.

God led the Israelites forty years through the wilderness in the Sinai peninsula. During those years, the adult generation which had rebelled against God by fearing to enter Canaan had died. Everyone who was 20 years-old and above at the time when the spies gave their report of the promised land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, had died during the forty years of wandering.

God made it clear that after Moses' death, Joshua would take his place. Moses was able to see the Promised Land but not able to enter into it because he had disobeyed God when he struck the rock for water, instead of speaking to it as God had instructed him. Moses died on top of Mount Pisgah, near Mount Nebo.

God spoke to Joshua after Moses' death. God promised Joshua that He would never leave him nor forsake him. Joshua was encouraged to hear those words from God. He assembled the tribes of Israel. In three days they would cross the Jordan River into Canaan, the promised land from God. They were instructed by God to wipe out all the pagan nations. They were to be careful not to take on any of the pagan customs.

Rahab

Before the Israelites entered Canaan, Joshua sent two spies across the Jordan River to the city of Jericho. Jericho was a major city with a wall all around it for protection against enemies. At night the gates would be closed and no one could come or go. It was well fortified and would not be easy to defeat.

The spies, dressed as Canaanite travelers, walked through the large gates of Jericho. As they looked around the large city, they stopped at an inn located on top of the outer wall of Jericho. A woman named Rahab invited them in for a meal.

While the men were eating, the sun began to set. This meant the gates of the city would be closed. The two spies were now trapped inside the city. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. It was soldiers

who had come to arrest the two spies. Rahab quickly led the two men to the roof where she covered them with stalks of flax.

Rahab told the soldiers that the Israelites were not there. "If you go quickly," she said, "you might be able to catch them." After the soldiers left, she helped lower the two spies down the wall to safety, but before the spies left, Rahab made them promise to spare her and her family when the Israelites attacked the city.

"We will spare you and your family if you remain in this inn when we destroy this city. Hang a red ribbon out the window so our men will know where you are," said the spies. The two spies returned back to the Israelite camp.

After hearing the report from the two spies, Joshua ordered the Israelites to break camp and move to a place near the Jordan River. It took most of the day to arrive at the river.

Parting of the Jordan River

It was springtime and the river had become very deep because of the spring rains. It was impossible for everyone with all their flocks and belongings to cross the river, but God had a special plan. Early the next morning, Joshua did as God commanded. He told the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and wade into the water's edge. When the priests stepped into the water, it parted. Just as God had done at the Red Sea, He parted the Jordan River so the Israelites could go across on dry land. The priests stayed on the edge holding the Ark of the Covenant until all the Israelites had gone across. Then they also walked across the dry riverbed. As soon as they stepped out of the water, huge waves came crashing down! Many of the Israelites were either too young or not even born when God had parted the Red Sea forty years earlier. They had heard stories from their parents and the older people how God had brought them out of Egypt and parted the Red Sea so they could cross over, and here they were witnessing the same miracle!

At this time, the children of Israel kept the Passover for the first time in the Promised Land. Manna, their main food for forty years, now ceased. They were in the land flowing with milk and honey and would have plenty to eat. Also, God had preserved the shoes on their feet all the time they wandered in the desert, so that they never wore out. Can you imagine having the same pair of shoes for forty years?

The Commander of the Army of the Lord

While Joshua was looking at the city of Jericho, he turned and came face to face with a man who had His sword drawn. Joshua boldly walked up to the man. “Are you a friend of Israel or an enemy?” he asked the man.

“I am the Commander of the Army of the Lord,” he replied. “Take your shoes off, Joshua, for the place where you stand is holy.” Only one could be holy. It was God Almighty talking to Joshua. Joshua fell on his knees and bowed low.

“What would you ask of me?” Joshua humbly asked. God told Joshua how the Israelites were to destroy the city of Jericho.

Jericho

The people of Jericho were very fearful. They had heard about the Israelites and how their God helped them in battle. They shut the gates up tight to Jericho, so no one could come in or go out. They thought they were protected by their strong walls.

The Lord told Joshua, “All the mighty men of Israel shall march around the city once a day for six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets made from rams’ horns before the Ark of the Covenant.” God went on to instruct Joshua that they were to march in complete silence until the seventh day.

For six days the people of Jericho watched as the army of Israel marched around their city in complete silence. They were scared as they saw the thousands of soldiers led by the priests and those carrying the ark. Everyday after they marched around the city, the Israelites left and went back to their camp. The next day, they repeated their silent march. They did this for six days.

Then, at about sunrise on the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. On the seventh time around the priests blew their trumpets and Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!” The priests blew their horns loudly and the people shouted and the walls of Jericho fell down. The Israelite soldiers ran into the city and killed all the people and their animals. All, that is, except Rahab and her family who were spared because she had helped the spies. The section of wall where Rehab lived was the only part of the wall that did not fall. God had protected her for helping the spies. Rahab had hung

a long red ribbon from her window so the Israelites would know where she and her family were. Rahab joined the Israelites in their camp.

The Israelites then collected the gold and silver and some other precious metals for the treasury for the house of the Lord. They had been commanded not to take anything else or they would bring a curse on themselves and on Israel. Then the city of Jericho was burned.

The Sin of Achan

News of the fall of Jericho spread quickly. The people of Ai were very fearful that they would also be conquered by the Israelites. Ai was a much smaller city than Jericho, so Joshua decided to send only about three thousand men to fight against it. When the Israelite soldiers confidently approached the city of Ai, the city gates swung open and Amorite soldiers came rushing out to them with their swords drawn. The Israelites were so surprised, they turned and ran away. Thirty six of the Israelite soldiers were killed.

Joshua was shocked when he heard the news. He asked God, “Why have you brought us over the Jordan just to be killed by our enemies? Why didn’t You fight our battle today like You did at Jericho? Now our enemies will think our God is weak. Why, God, why didn’t You help us?”

The Lord said to Joshua, “Get up! Israel has sinned. For they have taken some of the valuables from Jericho. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Tell the children of Israel to come together tomorrow according to their tribes. I will show you who has stolen things from Jericho and tried to hide them. There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.”

The next day, the Israelites came together by tribes. Lots were cast to see which tribe had the person in it who had sinned. The lot fell on the tribe of Judah, and then casting lots again it fell on a particular family. Finally, the lot fell on a man named Achan.

Joshua said to him, “What have you done, Achan?”

Achan answered Joshua, “I have sinned against the Lord. When I saw the beautiful clothes and the silver, I coveted them and took them and hid them in my tent.” Joshua sent men to search Achan’s tent and bring the stolen clothes and silver. Because of his sins, Achan was

stoned to death by the children of Israel. God's favor was then restored to the Israelites. Now, God promised to help them when they attacked the city of Ai.

The Attack on Ai

During the night, Joshua sent men to hide near the city. The next morning, he took troops towards the city. Once again, the soldiers in Ai rushed out against the Israelites. As Joshua planned, the Israelites began running away, causing the Amorite army to chase them farther and farther away from the city.

When the Amorites were far enough away, the troops that were hiding near the city attacked and burned it. When the Amorite army saw the flames rising from the city, they turned to race back, but they were cut off by more Israelites who were coming from the city. God brought great victory for Israel that day.

Joshua Tricked

Now, all the nations around started to fear Israel. They heard of the miracles God had performed to help them. Four of the neighboring cities of Hivites got together and came up with a scheme to trick the Israelites. They sent men who pretended to be from a land far away that came to make a peace treaty with Israel. God had told the Israelites to kill all the pagans and heathens close by. They would be a snare for the children of Israel.

The men approached the Israelites and told them they were from very far away. As proof of how long they had been traveling, they showed Joshua and the Israelites their worn out patched sandals, their old clothes, and their dry moldy bread.

"We have heard of your God and all He did in Egypt," they began, "and all He did to those in Jericho and Ai. Our elders have sent us here to tell you we are your friends. When we left, this bread was hot out of the oven. Now look at it - all dry and moldy. Just look at our old sandals that are worn out from traveling so far." The men of Israel should have asked God about the matter. Instead, they agreed to a peace treaty with these men and their cities. They swore to them by the God of Israel that they would not attack them.

When the travelers left, Joshua sent spies to follow them. After

only a few days, the spies came back and told Joshua that the men were actually from four neighboring cities. They were Hivites. Joshua was angry that he had been tricked. He called for them. "Why have you tricked us and told us that you were from a far away land? Instead, we find out that you have lied and live right here near us? You shall become our slaves and work for us!"

They answered Joshua and said, "We had heard about your God who brought you out of Egypt and commanded Moses to give you all the land and destroy all the people out of it. We were afraid for our lives. This is why we deceived you. We will become your slaves, your woodcutters, and water carriers."

Then five kings of the Amorites heard of the treaty between the Israelites and the four Hivite cities. They wanted to punish the Hivites for making friends with the Israelites. They gathered together a large army to attack one of the Hivite cities, Gibeon. The men of Gibeon sent a message to Joshua to come and help them. God told Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hands."

After marching all night Joshua suddenly came upon the enemy. The battle was fierce. When the Amorites started to run away, God caused a great hailstorm, which killed more of the Amorites than the Israelite soldiers had killed with a sword.

The Day the Sun Stood Still

It would soon be dark, though, and the enemy would be able to escape, so Joshua spoke in front of all the Israelites, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon!" The sun stood still until the enemy was defeated. Hours went by when it should have been night, but the sun stayed high in the sky.

The Lord gave to Israel all the land He had promised to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was divided among the different tribes and families. After forty years of wandering in the desert, Israel was finally home.

The Death of Joshua

Joshua lived to be 110 years-old. Before he died, he pleaded with the people to be strong and courageous. Joshua told them, "Your God is He who has fought for you and given you this land. Be careful to always obey Him. If you mingle with these heathen nations and have marriages

with them, they will lead you away from God. They will be a snare and a trap to you. Be careful that you don't worship the true God the way these other nations are worshipping their gods. Don't add to or take away anything that God tells you to do. Obey Him with all your heart and He will always take care of you." Do you think the stubborn children of Israel heeded Joshua's warning for long?

QUESTIONS:

1. Joshua took the place of what man after he died? How long had the children of Israel wandered in the desert?
2. What did the priests carry to the edge of the Jordan River? What happened to the river when the priests stepped into it?
3. Who helped the spies in Jericho?
4. Who did Joshua talk to that was the Commander of the Army of the Lord?
5. How many days did the Israelites march around Jericho?
6. What happened on the seventh day?
7. How did the Israelites know which house was Rahab's?
8. Who stole valuables from Jericho? Which Commandments did he break?
9. What happened to Achan?
10. How did the travelers trick Joshua and the Israelites? Who did they say they were? What was their proof that they had come from a far away country?
11. How many kings came together with their armies to fight Gibeon and the Israelites?
12. What miracle did God perform that killed more of the Amorites than the Israelite soldiers did with a sword?
13. What other miracle happened on that "long" day? Why did Joshua not want it to get dark?
14. How old was Joshua when he died?

GIDEON

This story can be found in Judges 6 - 8.

In the days of Israel, after they had come out of Egypt and after Moses, Aaron and Joshua had died and there was no one who led the Israelites. The children of Israel had forsaken God and were doing evil. They worshipped other gods and had forgotten all about God's Ten Commandments and the laws that would make them happy.

They were constantly fighting and battling other nations. The Midianites were always coming and taking their food and animals. Every time the Israelites' crops were ready to be harvested, the Midianites would come and take it. They would have to hide in caves from their enemies, the Midianites, who would come and steal and try to kill them if they could find them. The children of Israel were miserable, living in fear. They cried to the Lord for help and God would have mercy on them - feeling sorry for all their pain and suffering. He would send prophets to tell them to stop worshipping false gods and turn to Him and obey the Commandments they had been given, but most of the time they just ignored the prophets of God, all the while suffering.

Then, God used a man to save Israel. An angel appeared to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, Gideon, you mighty man of courage."

Gideon said, "If the Lord is with us, why is all this happening to us and where are all the miracles we heard about like when the Red Sea parted and the manna that was given to the Israelites to eat, and all the other miracles that were told to us? God has forsaken us; He has forgotten all about us." Actually, Gideon should have realized the reason God was not helping them was because they had turned away from God, from obedience to their Creator.

God assured Gideon that He would be with him and help him defeat their enemy, the Midianites.

Then Gideon said to Him, "If I have found favor in Your sight then show me a sign that it is You who is talking to me and stay here while I prepare a meal for us." So Gideon went in and prepared a meal.

The Angel of God said, "Take the meat and the bread and lay them

on this rock and pour out the broth.” Gideon did so. The Angel of the Lord put out the staff in His hand and touched the meat and the bread and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the bread. The Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. Gideon knew that this miracle was from God.

Gideon Tears Down Baal

Now, it came to pass that this same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s young bull and tear down the altar of Baal and cut down the wooden image that is beside it and build an altar to the Lord.”

Before God would work with Gideon to save his people, God wanted him to tear down the idols in his own house. Because Gideon feared his father’s household and the men of the city, he did it during the night. The next morning, the men of city saw their wooden god torn down and they were furious. “Who has done this thing?” they demanded. When they were told it was Gideon, they came to kill him.

But Gideon’s father said, “Are you here to speak for Baal? If he is a god, let him speak for himself!” So the men of the city went away.

Gideon Asks for Proof

God told Gideon that he would defeat the Midianites. He said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said, show me this sign. I will put a fleece of wool on the ground and in the morning if there is dew on the fleece only and it is dry on the ground, then I will know that You will save Israel by my hand.” A fleece of wool is like a coat of the sheep.

When Gideon rose early in the morning he picked up the fleece and was able to wring out a bowl full of water, but the ground was dry all around it. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more. Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece. Let the fleece be dry, but the ground all around be wet with dew.” The next morning when Gideon looked at the fleece, he smiled when he saw the fleece was completely dry, but the ground was wet with dew. Gideon had his proof.

A Small Army is Chosen

Then Gideon took his men and camped near the Midianites. The Lord said to him, “There are too many people here to fight the Midianites.

They will not know that it is I who have saved them. They will think they have saved themselves. Therefore, tell anyone who wants to turn back to go.” Twenty-two thousand of the Israelites went home. There were still ten thousand soldiers who remained. God said, “There are still too many. Bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. I will let you know who should stay and who should go. Everyone who laps the water with his tongue, like a dog laps, you shall send home, but whoever brings the water in his hand to his mouth shall stay.” The number of those who drank by putting the water in their hands was only three hundred men. The rest returned home to their families. The Lord said, “By the three hundred men who are here, I will save you and deliver the Midianites in your hand, Gideon.”

More Proof for Gideon

The camp of Midian was below Gideon in the valley. The Midianites had over 120,000 soldiers, compared to Israel’s 300 men. When Gideon looked down the valley and saw so many soldiers and their camels, they looked like locust or like the sand on the seashore. How could so few Israelites possibly fight against so many Midianites?

God told Gideon, “If you are afraid to fight them, go down in the camp with your servant, Purah, and you shall hear what they are saying and afterwards you shall be encouraged to go against them.”

Gideon and his servant, Purah, went down in the dark to the Midianite’s camp. There Gideon heard a Midianite soldier talking to another man. He said, “I had a dream. To my surprise, a loaf of bread tumbled into our camp. It rolled up to a tent and struck it so hard that it fell and collapsed.”

The man he was talking to then said, “This can only mean that God has delivered the Midianites into the hands of Gideon!”

And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God and thanked Him. He knew that God was going to win this battle for Israel. He returned to the camp of his three hundred men. He told them, “Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hands.”

The Trumpet and the Hidden Torch

Then he divided the three hundred men into three groups. Each man

had a trumpet in one hand and in the other hand a torch (a fire on a stick) that was hidden with a pitcher covering the light. They wanted it to be hidden so they could surprise the enemy. It was a dark night. The enemy could not see them sneak up quietly on them. They had their torches hidden under the pitchers and their trumpets ready to sound.

Gideon told them, "Look at me and do what I do. When I come to the edge of the camp and blow the trumpet, you do the same. Blow the trumpet, break your pitcher so your torch will show, and shout, 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!'" They were to make a lot of noise and confuse the enemy.

Gideon and the three hundred men who were with him came to the outer part of the camp in the middle of the night. They suddenly blew the trumpet and broke the pitchers so that the hillside was lit up with fire and shouts as they ran down the hill into the valley, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Remember, the Midianites had no idea there were only 300 men coming. It looked like Israelite soldiers were everywhere! The Midianites were so afraid, they started running every which way. It was such a loud commotion in the camp of 120,000 well-trained soldiers running around in utter chaos. In all the confusion they started killing each other! Some of the mighty soldiers just started running away screaming like little girls.

With so few of the Israelites, it was plain to see that it was God who won the battle for them. It took courage and faith for the Israelites to trust God. They knew there was no human way for only three hundred men to defeat one hundred and twenty thousand soldiers. They knew it was God who fought for them.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God allow the Midianites to be harsh to the children of Israel and come down and take their food? Why did God not help them when they cried out to Him?
2. Before God would work with Gideon, what did he have to do first?
3. What was the name of the false god that Israel had set up to worship instead of the true God?
4. Were the Israelites happy that Gideon had torn down their god?

5. Why did Gideon tear down their god at night?
6. What sign did Gideon ask for to know that it was God who was talking to him?
7. How was it determined which men would stay and which would go home?
8. How many stayed? Why did God not want more to stay and fight?
9. How many Midianites were there?
10. What was the dream the Midianite soldier had? What did it mean?
11. What two things did Gideon's men carry into battle?
12. Why put the light under the pitcher?
13. What happened when Gideon and his men surprised the Midianites?
14. Who really fought this battle?

SAMSON

This story can be found in Judges 12 - 16.

This is the story of the strongest man ever to live. He had super strength that God had given to him. After the death of Joshua, God gave the Israelites certain judges over them. There was even one woman judge named Deborah. Gideon was also a judge. After Gideon died, there were several other judges. The children of Israel continuously rebelled against their God. They would not get rid of the idols they were accustomed to serving. God allowed their enemies to rule over them.

The children of Israel were constantly oppressed by the Philistines. There was a man from the tribe of Dan whose name was Manoah. He and his wife had no children. An angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "You will have a son. Be careful not to drink any wine or eat anything unclean. He will be a Nazarite. You shall not cut his hair. He will deliver the children of Israel out of the oppressive hands of the Philistines."

The woman gave birth to a boy and she named him Samson. The child grew and just as the angel had instructed his mother, she never cut his hair. He was exceptionally strong.

When Samson grew up he saw a Philistine woman. He told his father that he wanted to marry her. His parents were not pleased. "Isn't there a woman here among the Israelites that you would rather have for a wife and not this Philistine woman?" But Samson was determined that she was the wife he wanted. His parents did not know that it was God who was taking an opportunity to move against the Philistines. He was guiding Samson's life.

Samson Kills a Lion

Samson went to see the woman who he intended to marry. On the way, a young lion came out of nowhere. It roared loudly and tried to attack Samson, but God had given Samson incredible strength. He killed the lion with ease. He went on his way and did not tell anyone about the lion.

Sometime later, he passed by on the same road. He saw the dead

lion. A swarm of honey bees had made their home in the lion's carcass. Samson reached down and scooped up some of the delicious honey and ate it.

The Riddle

At the big wedding feast, Samson told thirty of his companions, "I have a riddle for you. If you can solve it and explain it to me within the seven days of this wedding feast, I will give you thirty new linen garments to wear." His companions listened eagerly.

"But," Samson continued, "if you cannot solve it, you must give me thirty new garments." His companions looked at him excitedly.

"Go ahead, tell us the riddle!" they exclaimed.

So Samson posed this riddle to them:

*Out of the eater came something to eat
and out of the strong came something sweet.*

Can you figure out the riddle? It was about the lion and the honey, but his friends had no idea he had killed a lion. For three days they thought and thought. They just could not figure it out. Finally, they went to Samson's new wife. "Find out the meaning of the riddle for us or we will burn you and your family's house." Samson's wife was afraid. She should have told Samson about the threat, but instead she tried to find out the meaning of the riddle.

"Please, tell me, Samson. If you love me, you will tell me," she cried and pleaded with him.

"I haven't even told my parents; I'm not going to tell you." Samson said to her. She cried and begged more. Finally, on the seventh day of the wedding feast Samson gave into her tears and told her the meaning of the riddle.

On the last day of the wedding feast the men told Samson, "Hmmm, well what could be stronger than a lion and what could be sweeter than honey? I guess we solved the riddle, so now you owe us each a new garment."

Samson was angry with them. "You forced my wife to tell you, didn't you?" Samson made good on his bet. He went down to one of the Philistine cities and killed thirty of their men and stripped the clothes right

off them and came and paid the men.

Samson was so mad at his new wife that he left her and went back home to his parents. The young woman's father then gave her to be the wife of the man that was Samson's best man at the wedding. When Samson came back to see his wife, he found out that she had married another man. He was very angry.

Samson's Revenge

Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes. He took two foxes at a time and tied their tails together and put a lighted torch between the tails. He let the foxes go in the Philistines' fields. Those foxes ran for their lives! They had a lighted torch between them and they ran every which way. It burned up their grain fields, their olive groves, and their vineyards. Samson set back and laughed as the countryside was ablaze.

But he did not laugh long. The Philistines were so mad that they took Samson's wife and her father and they burned them. Samson said, "Okay, now I'm really mad!" He attacked and killed many of them.

The Philistines came together and encamped around the Israelites. The Israelites were nervous seeing their enemy coming up around them. "What is it that you want?" the Israelites asked them.

"We want the man, Samson!" they demanded.

The leaders of the Israelites approached Samson. "What have you done, Samson? They are demanding that we turn you over to them. They will kill us if we don't turn you over to them."

Samson said to them, "I will let you take me to them, but just promise me that you won't kill me yourselves." They promised.

Samson kills a Thousand Philistines

They tied Samson up with two new ropes. When the Philistines saw him, they came running up to him shouting in anger. God was with Samson and his super strength helped him to break the ropes as if they were nothing. He found a jawbone of a dead donkey. He began swinging that jawbone until he had killed a thousand Philistines!

Afterwards, Samson went to Gaza to visit with a beautiful woman there named Delilah. While Samson was with her, the Philistines closed the gates to the city. "Now we have him. He is trapped in the city. When he comes out, we will kill him!" they said. But when Samson came out,

he merely picked up the gates of the city, put them on his shoulders and walked off with them.

Delilah

The wicked men approached Delilah and said, "We want you to find out what makes him so strong. We need to know his secret. If you find out, we will pay you a lot of money."

Delilah asked Samson, "Where does your strength come from? What makes you strong, Samson?"

He cleverly wouldn't tell her the truth. "If I were to be bound with seven strong ropes then I would be weak and have the strength of any other man." Delilah told the Philistines his secret. They gave her the seven ropes and she tied up Samson herself. Then when she thought he was bound helplessly, she called out for the men in the other room.

"He is bound! Come and get him." When they came running out, Samson snapped the ropes in two as if they were nothing. The secret of his strength was not known.

Delilah begged and pleaded for Samson to tell her the truth. "You teased me and didn't tell me your real secret. Don't you trust me? Please tell me what makes you so strong."

Samson told her, "If I am bound with new, never before used ropes, then I will be as weak as any man." Now, Delilah took new ropes and tied him up. She called again for the men waiting in the next room. "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" When the men came in, Samson snapped the ropes in two again. His secret was still safe...for now.

Delilah again tried to get the secret from him. "You have only lied to me and made fun of me. Why don't you trust me? You don't love me or else you would tell me your secret."

Samson told her, "If you weave my long hair into seven braids then I will become weak." Delilah braided Samson's long hair into seven locks. Then she jumped up and called for the men to come and get Samson. This really was not the secret of his strength. When they came in, they saw Samson jump to his feet in great strength and they ran for their lives.

"You just don't love me, Samson." said Delilah. "You have told me so many lies. Why haven't you told me the truth? Don't you love me, Samson?" she pleaded and begged and cried until Samson finally gave in and foolishly told her the truth.

“My hair has never been cut. God told my mother before I was even born that my strength would be in my hair. If I ever cut my hair, my super strength would leave me and I would become like any other man.” Now Samson may have been the strongest man, but he sure was not the smartest. He should have never trusted that wicked woman.

Delilah went to the Philistines. “Come up once more,” she told them. “I think this time he has told me the truth. Bring the money with you when you come.”

Poor Samson. He should have known better. While he laid on her lap asleep, she cut his hair all off. Then she called out for the Philistines to come and take him. He jumped to his feet as before and thought, “I will defeat them as I always do,” but this time was different. He lost his super strength. They captured Samson. He was not able to fight back as he had always done. The Philistines poked his eyes out. Now he was blind. They put chains on him and made him go in circles at a grinding wheel. He worked all day doing the job that a donkey usually did. It was degrading for a one-time great champion of Israel. Everyday he pushed the heavy wheel round and round. The Philistines would walk by and make fun of him and laugh and tease him. They were very cruel.

Then one day the Philistines gathered together in a large arena. They were rejoicing and offering sacrifices to their god, Dagon. They thanked their wooden god for defeating their enemy, Samson. “Our god has delivered Samson into our hands.” They decided it would be entertaining to bring Samson to the arena and make fun of him and torment him. He was brought from the grinding wheel. A young lad had to lead him because he was blind. As they came into the large building, Samson told the boy he needed to rest. The lad put him between two pillars. These pillars held up the building they were in. Samson prayed to God, “Please, God, strengthen me just once more and let me die with the Philistines.” God answered his prayer. Samson regained his super strength and pushed the two pillars until the whole building came crashing down with all the Philistines in it. Thousands were killed, including Samson, the strongest man who ever lived.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the angel tell Samson’s mother to be careful not to do while she was pregnant and also after he was born?
2. What animal did Samson kill along side of the road?
3. What was the riddle about?
4. What was the loser to give to the winner in the riddle?
5. Who won the riddle? How did they find out the answer?
6. When the Philistines burned Samson’s wife and her father, what did Samson do? What kind of animal did he set loose in their fields? How many were there?
7. What was Samson’s girlfriend’s name? Did she really love him? Why did she betray him?
8. The Philistines thought they had Samson captured when they locked the gates, but how was it he was able to escape?
9. What were some of the things Samson told Delilah would cause him to lose his strength?
10. What was the real secret to Samson’s strength?
11. What did the Philistines do to Samson when they captured him?
12. Why did the Philistines send for Samson at the arena? How did Samson kill them all?

SAMUEL

This story can be found in I Samuel 1 - 8.

There was a woman named Hannah who had no children. It made her very sad. She prayed and prayed for a child. She told God if He would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord to serve with the priest. One day, when she was praying, the priest, Eli, heard her and told her to go in peace and that the God of Israel would grant her request. Hannah did have a son and she named him Samuel, which means, “heard by God,” because he heard her prayer. When the child was still young, she took him to Eli, the priest, for service to God as she had promised. Every year around the holy days Hannah would come see Samuel and bring him new clothes that she had made for him. Because of her faithfulness to God, she was blessed with three more sons and two daughters.

Eli had two sons of his own, but they were wicked. They did not fear God. They stole money and bullied people around. Eli knew this was going on and told them to behave, but that did not stop them. He should have dealt with them for their rebellion against God, but Eli loved his sons more than he loved God. He allowed them to continue in their wickedness.

One night after everyone had gone to bed, Samuel heard a voice calling him, saying, “Samuel.”

He answered, “Here I am.” He then ran to Eli and said, “Did you call me?”

Eli said, “No, Samuel. I didn’t call you.” So Samuel went back to bed. A little while later he heard a voice call him again, “Samuel.”

Again he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. Did you call me?” But again Eli said that he had not called him.

When it happened a third time, Eli said to Samuel, “It must be God calling you. Go and lay down and when you hear the voice call you again, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’”

Samuel went back to bed. The Lord called him again and this time Samuel said, “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.”

Then the Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I will do something in Israel

which will cause both ears to tingle of every person that hears it. I will perform this against Eli because his sons acted wickedly and he did not stop them.”

The next morning Eli wanted to know what God had said to Samuel. Samuel was afraid to tell him, but Eli insisted. When Samuel told him, Eli said, “Let Him do what seems good to Him.” Actually, Eli should have repented and shown God that he was sorry that he had not obeyed Him, but again Eli put his sons before God, which is breaking the first of God’s Commandments that you should have no other gods before Him.

Samuel grew and all of Israel knew him and liked him. They knew he was a just man before God and Israel.

Battle with the Philistines

Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. The battle was very intense and Israel was beaten. The people decided to bring the ark of the covenant to the battlefield, thinking God would surely help them to win if the ark was with them.

The ark of the covenant was made after God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel. It was a beautiful box made of very fine wood overlaid with gold. It had two angels on top. Inside the ark of the covenant was the tablets of stone God had written the Ten Commandments on with His own finger. Also inside was Aaron’s rod that had turned into a snake in front of Pharaoh in Egypt and some manna that the children of Israel had eaten in the wilderness. The ark was very holy. The people were not even to touch it. Four rings were fastened onto the ends of the ark where four poles could slip through it in order to carry it.

The children of Israel had been very wicked before God, setting up their own idols and worshiping false gods, but at a time when they needed God to save them in battle, they thought He would give them favor if the ark was on the battlefield. But God would not listen to them because of their wickedness.

The Ark Captured

When the ark of the covenant was brought onto the battlefield, the Israelites shouted so loudly that the earth shook. Even the Philistines were afraid when they saw the ark of the covenant brought onto the battle-

field. They were afraid of the God of the Israelites. They had heard the stories of the plagues on Egypt, the battle of Jericho, and other miracles.

But because of the sins of the Israelites and the sins of Eli's sons, God would not help them. They were defeated and the ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines and the sons of Eli were killed in battle, just as God had told to Samuel. A messenger ran back to Eli and told him the news that Israel had lost the battle, his sons were killed, and worst of all - the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines. Eli was 98 years-old. He was very heavy and almost blind. He was shocked by the news of the death of his sons, but when he heard the terrible news that the ark of the covenant was captured, he fell over backwards and died.

Ashdod Suffers

The Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to a city called Ashdod. They brought it into a house and set it beside their god, a wooden figure named Dagon. When the people of Ashdod rose early in the morning, Dagon had fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. They took Dagon and set it up on its place again. The next morning, there was Dagon fallen on its face again in front of the ark, except now its head and hands were cut off. The people of Ashdod were struck with tumors and many died. The people of the town said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not stay here because their God will kill us and our god, Dagon."

They took the ark to another city called Gath, but when the ark was brought to this city these people were also struck with tumors and many died here. Now they said, "Let's send the ark to Ekron."

But the people from Ekron cried out, "We don't want the ark here!" They asked their priests, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us how to send it back to the Israelites."

The Ark Returned

The priests said, "Take a new cart and hitch two cows to it, then let it go where they will. Watch, and if it goes up the road toward where the Israelites live then we will know it was God, but if it goes the other way, then we will know that all the plagues and tumors only happened to us by chance and that it wasn't God who brought these things upon us."

The men did as the priests said and set the ark on a cart and had the cows go where they wanted. The cows headed straight for the road to the Israelite camp. Then the Philistines knew it was God who had brought the plagues on them for capturing the ark of the covenant. They were just glad to see the ark go!

There were some Israelites working in a field when the cows came over the hill carrying the ark. They rejoiced greatly when they saw it. They ran to tell the others that the ark had returned. Some of them made a terrible mistake. They opened the lid of the ark, even though they knew better. They never should have touched the ark because it was holy. God had given special instructions concerning the ark and it was never to be opened or touched. Fifty thousand Israelites died that day because they were disrespectful to God and did not obey His instructions concerning the ark. The Israelites cried before Samuel.

Samuel told them to put away their idols and obey God. They should serve God only. The children of Israel fasted and said, "We have sinned against the Lord." Then the Philistines came again to battle against the Israelites and this time God helped Israel defeat them.

"We Want a King!"

It came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. His sons were evil and wicked, just as Eli's sons had been. The people gathered together to speak to Samuel and said, "Look, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now give us a king to judge us like all the nations. Samuel was very upset at this request.

He prayed to the Lord and the Lord said to Samuel, "Hear the voice of the people, for they have not rejected you, Samuel, but they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them. But warn them and tell them how a king will rule over them and what he will demand from them."

Until this time God had been the King over Israel, their Ruler. Now the people complained. They wanted a king like all the other nations. They had rejected God as their King.

Samuel told all the people, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you. He will take your sons and daughters to work for him. He will take the best of the fields and vineyards for himself. You will pay taxes to the king and be his servants." But all the people still wanted a king to rule over them instead of God.

They said, “We want to be like all the other nations and have a king to rule over us and fight our battles for us.”

Saul Chosen to be King

There was a man of the tribe of Benjamin (one of the sons of Israel) named Kish. He had a son named Saul. Saul was the most handsome man in all Israel. He was also taller than anyone in Israel. God told Samuel that this was who he was to anoint to be king over Israel. Even though the Israelites had rejected God as their king, He still was so kind and loving to them. He chose the best man to be their king. Knowing that they would judge by appearance, God chose the best looking and tallest man in Israel. Saul was also very humble and shy. Samuel anointed Saul as the first human king to rule over Israel.

Notice that God appointed Saul to be king. There were no elections like are held today. People did not vote for whoever they thought would be best. God does not like politics. He appointed the person He knew would best serve the people.

Then Samuel called all the Israelites together. He told them, “This is what the Lord God of Israel says to you, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of your enemies, but you have today rejected your God, who, Himself, saved you from all your enemies and from all your troubles.’ You have said to Him, ‘No, but we will not have God be our King, but a man.’ Now therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your families and I will show you who is to be king.”

All the people got into groups by their tribes and then lined up according to families. God showed that the new king was to come from the tribe of Benjamin, from the family of Kish. Then God showed the people that the new king chosen would be Saul.

But when they looked for Saul, he could not be found. God told them, “There he is – hiding among the equipment!” Saul was hiding because he was shy and afraid. They all ran to get him.

Samuel said to them, “Do you see whom the Lord has chosen that there is no one like him among all the people?”

The Israelites shouted, “Long live the king! Long live the king!” But not everyone was happy about God’s choice. There were some who were jealous and despised him.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Samuel’s mother’s name?
2. What does the name “Samuel” mean? Why did Hannah name him “heard by God”?
3. Who was the priest that Samuel worked under?
4. How many sons did Eli have? Were they good or bad?
5. When the children of Israel were losing the battle against the Philistines, what did bring onto the battlefield, thinking God would surely help them. Did God help them? Why not?
6. What was the message that someone brought to Eli concerning the battle? What happened to Eli when he heard the bad news?
7. What happened to the cities that captured the ark of the covenant?
8. How did they give the ark back?
9. What was in the ark of the covenant?
10. Why did God kill fifty thousand Israelites because some looked into the ark?
11. Who did God tell Samuel to anoint King of Israel? What tribe was he from?
12. What special features did Saul have? Was everyone pleased with God’s choice to make Saul king? Why?

DAVID & GOLIATH

This story can be found in I Samuel 16 - I Kings 2.

Because of his sins, Saul was rejected by God as King over Israel. Samuel was told by God to go to Bethlehem to anoint another man to be king. He was told that the new king would be someone from the family of Jesse. Samuel went and found Jesse.

Samuel saw several of Jesse's tall handsome sons. As one passed by him, he thought, "This surely must be the one." Then another strong handsome young man would pass by him. "Maybe this is the one I came to anoint."

But God said, "Samuel, you are looking on the outward appearance. I don't judge on how a person looks on the outside. It is what is in the heart that really counts."

Samuel asked Jesse, "Is this all the sons you have? The Lord has let me know it is none of these."

Jesse said, "Well, I have just one more son, but he is out tending to the sheep. He is the youngest."

Samuel said, "We will not sit down to eat until he comes."

David was told to come in from the fields. When Samuel saw him, God let him know, "This is the one I have chosen!" Samuel rose and took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brothers to be the future King of Israel. The Spirit of the Lord was with David from that day forward. David was only a boy and did not have the strong stature that his brothers had. He was probably only a teenager at this time. He was ruddy looking with bright eyes. He loved tending to the sheep, especially at night when he could look at all the stars and think about God. David had musical talent and played the harp.

Even though Samuel had anointed David to be king of Israel, it would be some time before David would take the throne. Until God removed King Saul, David would have to wait.

Tending to the sheep was not a wimpy job. David had to make sure wild animals did not attack and carry off his flock. He had to be on constant guard. Sheep are pretty helpless animals with many enemies

that want to eat them. They are dependent on the shepherd. David became skilled with the sling shot. He practiced to become accurate. In those days, they did not have guns. A knife would mean you had to get too close to the wild animal in order to kill it, but a sling shot could be just as deadly as a gun if you knew how to use it. To use a sling shot, you would put a rock in a piece of cloth, sling it above your head several times until you got it going real fast, take aim, then let go of one end of the cloth so that the rock would shoot out like a bullet. It took a lot of practice. When you are trying to kill a lion that is about to attack your flock, you don't want to take any chances and miss. It could cost you your own life.

David's brothers were all in the army of Israel to fight off enemies. The Philistines were gathered together on one side of a hill to battle against the Israelites who were gathered on another hill with a valley below them. Out steps a giant of a man from among the Philistines. He was over ten feet tall! He had armor that covered almost his whole body. He had a helmet that protected his head. There was even a man who walked in front of him whose job was to hold up a shield to protect him. The soldier looked invincible. His armor alone weighed about three hundred pounds and he carried a huge heavy sword. When the Israelites took one look at him, they all took a giant step backwards.

"I am Goliath, a Philistine from the city of Gath," the giant shouted at the Israelites. "I have come with a plan to make this war simple and quick. Instead of our two armies fighting, why not settle this by using one man from each side to battle? Who will come out and fight me? I will fight Saul or any man among you who is brave enough. If he is able to kill me, then our army will surrender to you, but if I am able to defeat your man, then your army will surrender to us! Send out your bravest soldier!"

All the Israelite soldiers trembled. Even if they sent out a dozen soldiers, there was no way to beat Goliath. No one volunteered to take on the Philistine. Goliath came out and taunted them day after day. "What's the matter? Are you just a bunch of cowards? Is there no one in Israel who would stand up and fight? Is there not even one brave soldier among you?" Goliath and the Philistine army laughed and sneered at their enemies. He came out every day for forty days and demanded a challenger come out and fight against him, but every day the Israelites cowered back. No one would fight him.

Jesse told his youngest son, David, to take some food to his brothers who were in Saul's army. They had not heard the news of Goliath. David loaded his donkeys with food and provisions and went to find his three brothers. When he got to the camp, he heard all the shouts and threats Goliath was making towards the Israelites. "Who is going to come out and fight me! You are a bunch of cowards! Is there not a man among you who will fight?"

"Who is this man?" David asked. The soldiers told him about Goliath and how he challenged them daily. They told David that King Saul promised that any man who would fight Goliath and defeat him would be given riches and the King's daughter for a wife, but still no one was brave enough to fight the giant.

David was angry. "How dare this Philistine defy the army of the living God! Who does he think he is? God is with us! We can defeat this heathen. I will fight him myself!"

David's brothers caught up with him, "Go home, David. You don't know what you are saying. Go back and tend to the sheep. What are you doing here anyway?" David told them how he was sent by their father to bring them some food. "Fine," they said, "leave it and go home."

But when some of the soldiers had heard David volunteer to fight Goliath, they brought the news to King Saul. It was the first volunteer they had. Even if he was an inexperienced, young man - at least they had someone willing to go out and fight. Saul asked him, "Are you sure you want to do this?"

David answered him, "I have guarded my father's sheep. I have killed a bear and a lion and this Philistine will be no different than one of them. How dare he defy the armies of the living God! The Lord will be with me and I will defeat him!" David was unafraid.

Since there sure weren't any other volunteers, Saul decided to let him fight. He told his men to put armor on David and prepare him to battle, but after they put the heavy armor on David he couldn't even walk. "I can't wear this. I can't move. Take it off. I don't need it. God will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." They removed the armor. David went to a nearby stream and selected five smooth rocks and put them into his shepherd's bag.

Goliath confidently walked down the hill again with his armor bearer in front of him. "Who will fight against me? You are a weak nation with a

bunch of cowards." Then he saw David, a young man without even any armor on coming down the hill. He was insulted that they would send such a person to try to defeat him - the Great Goliath. This was ridiculous!

"Am I a dog that you send this kid to fight against me? Have you no warriors to fight? Is this the best you can do?" When Goliath could see that David wasn't going to back down or run away in fear, he turned his attention to him. With clenched teeth he told David, "Come on, kid. I'm going to rip you apart and give your flesh to the birds to eat."

David was not afraid of the giant's threats. "You come to me with a sword and a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I will cut off your head, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. All will know that the Lord does not save with the sword and the spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands!"

Then David started running toward the giant. He had his sling in his hand. He whirled it around his head faster and faster. Then he let the rock go and it hit the giant right smack in the forehead killing him instantly. He fell to the ground with a great thud. The battle was over quickly. There was silence as both sides were in shock. David ran over to him. Because he had no sword of his own, he took the giant's sword and cut off the head of Goliath. There was a sudden thunderous cheer from the hillside where the Israelites were watching. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. The Israelites chased them and defeated them that day.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was David's father's name?
2. Who anointed David to be king? Why did Samuel think it might be David's brothers instead of David that might be king? What did God let him know?
3. What weapon did David use to protect the sheep?
4. What musical instrument did David play?
5. What was the name of the Philistine who challenged Israel? How tall was he?

6. Why did no one want to fight Goliath?
7. Why did David come to see his brothers? Were they glad to see him?
8. When David saw Goliath, why was he not afraid? Why was he angry?
9. What did David use as a weapon against Goliath? How much armor did David have on?
10. Where did David strike Goliath with the rock?
11. Who's sword did David use to cut off the head of the giant?

ELIJAH

This story can be found in I Kings 17 - II Kings 2 & II Chronicles 19 - 20.

The Kings of Israel were very wicked, but one of the most wicked was Ahab. He reigned over Israel for 22 years. He was married to a very evil queen named Jezebel. Together, they led the Israelites into the worship of Baal. God was very angry with Ahab.

God told His prophet, Elijah, to bring a message to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years except at my word." So, it was exceedingly dry and the crops all died. God told Elijah to go to a certain brook and stay and He would take care of him. There, the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and evening and he drank from the brook, but after a while, even the brook dried up. God told Elijah to go to a certain widow's house and she would take care of him. A widow is a woman whose husband has died.

When Elijah saw the widow, she was gathering sticks. He asked her for some water and she very kindly went and got it for him. Then Elijah asked her for some bread. She told him she had only a handful of flour left and a little oil and she was about to make the last food for her and her son and then they would die. Elijah told her not to worry. He said her flour and oil would not run out until God again sent rain on the earth, and so for the rest of the drought the widow and her son had plenty to eat. Her flour and oil never ran out no matter how much they used. The widow cooked and took care of Elijah.

Then one day the son of the widow became sick and died. The widow was very sad. Elijah took the boy in his arms and carried him upstairs to his room. He prayed to God. Elijah stretched himself out on top of the lad three times and cried out to God to please let the child live. God heard Elijah's prayer and the boy came back to life again. His mother was very happy and thankful.

The Prophets of Baal

After three long years of drought on the land, God told Elijah to go back

to Ahab and He would send rain on the earth again. When King Ahab saw Elijah he said, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"

Elijah answered him, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have because you have forsaken the commandments of God and have worshipped Baal. Now therefore send and gather together all the people of Israel on Mount Carmel, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the goddess, Asherah." Baal and Asherah were actually from the worship of Nimrod and Semiramis. Asherah is another name for Easter. These were the idols and false gods that Ahab and Jezebel were worshipping and causing the Israelites to worship. Elijah told Ahab to bring all his false prophets together to Mount Carmel with the children of Israel.

When they were gathered, Elijah said to the Israelites, "How long will you falter between two opinions If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is god, then follow him." The children of Israel were silent.

Elijah said, "I alone am left as a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Let us have two bulls. Let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it into pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. I will prepare the other bull the same way. Then you call on the name of Baal to light the fire under your bull and I will call on the name of the Lord to light the fire under my bull." All the people agreed it was a good idea.

The prophets of Baal cut up their bull and placed it on an altar. From morning to noon they called upon their god saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no answer. They leaped around the altar, cutting themselves with knives, hoping that would make their god notice them.

Elijah made fun of them, "Hey, where is your god? Why doesn't he answer you? Maybe he is sleeping, or on vacation, or maybe he's in the bathroom and can't hear you. You better cry louder!" The prophets tried everything, but there was no answer because their god was not real.

Elijah told the people to come near. He repaired the altar of the Lord that had been broken down, since no one had been sacrificing to God on it for many years. Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel and he repaired the altar. He then dug a trench all around the altar. He put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood and said, "Fill four water pots with water and pour it on the sacrifice and on the wood. Do it a second time and a third time."

The water ran over the sacrifice and the wood and into the trenches.

The people thought, "This will be so much harder now. No fire could burn that sacrifice. It is soaked with water."

Then Elijah prayed to God, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Just then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and even the dust around it. The fire was so hot it licked up all the water that was in the trenches.

The Israelites jumped back and fell with their faces to the ground. They all shouted, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

Elijah said to them, "Quick! Seize the prophets of Baal. Do not let them escape." They seized them and killed them all.

Rain Finally Comes

Then Elijah said to Ahab, "You better go because it is about to rain very hard." There had not been rain for a long time in the land. Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel to pray.

He bowed low to the ground and prayed to God for it to rain. He then told his servant who was with him, "Go and look toward the sea and tell me if you see rain coming."

The servant went and came back. "There is nothing, " he reported.

Elijah said, "Go again." The servant went back seven times.

Finally, he came back and said, "There is a little cloud about the size of a man's hand, but that's it." Elijah knew that was his answer. He told his servant to tell Ahab he better hurry and leave in his chariots before it rained so hard they would get bogged down in the mud. Even though it was such a small cloud, Elijah had faith that God was about to cause a big storm to come. Sure enough, the sky became very dark and it started to thunder and lightening. Ahab went as fast as he could in his chariot back to the palace. God was with Elijah, who did not have a horse or a chariot. God caused Elijah to beat Ahab back to the palace. This must have surprised Ahab tremendously. He knew Elijah was on foot. How could he beat him back?

Jezebel Tries to Kill Elijah

When they got back to the palace, Ahab told Jezebel all that had happened. Jezebel was furious that her prophets of Baal were killed. She

screamed and threw a temper tantrum and ordered Elijah be killed at once. Elijah ran for his life. He escaped to the wilderness and sat down under a tree. He prayed that God would just let him die. He was very discouraged. He fell asleep under the tree until an angel came and woke him up. "Come and eat, Elijah." There beside him was a nice cake freshly baked and a jar of cool water. He ate and drank and laid down again. After a long nap, the angel woke him up and fed him again. After this, he went 40 days and 40 nights without eating or drinking. God had to have given him strength or he would have died. Elijah told God that he was discouraged because he felt like he was the only one who was obeying Him.

Elijah said, "I have been very zealous for You and have killed the servants of Baal, and torn down their altars, and now I am alone and Jezebel and Ahab are looking for me to kill me."

God encouraged him and said, "There are seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal. You are not alone, Elijah." There were people who Elijah did not even know about who also refused to worship Baal.

Naboth

There was a man named Naboth who had a vineyard next to the palace of Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab spoke to Naboth and asked if he could buy the land from him. Naboth answered, "No, my lord, for this land has been in my family for many years. I couldn't sell it." Ahab was very upset about this. He really wanted that land for a vegetable garden. He sulked and pouted the rest of the day. He went to bed and wouldn't eat.

When Jezebel found out why he was sad, she told him, "You are the king; you can have anything you want. Get up and eat. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth." Jezebel plotted against Naboth. She hired two scoundrels to tell lies about Naboth. Because of the lies, Naboth was taken out and killed. Jezebel told Ahab, "Naboth is dead. The land is yours." Ahab happily went and took possession of the land. Can you name the Commandments Ahab and Jezebel broke?

God told Elijah to confront Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. When Ahab saw Elijah, he stood up from his garden and said, "Have you found me, O enemy of mine?"

Elijah said, "I have found you because you murdered and stole this

land from Naboth. Now God is going to cut you down and all you children. You and Jezebel are going to die a horrible death because of your sins. And all your children will die, too. Your family will be cut off from being future Kings of Israel."

Ahab Repents

When Ahab heard these words, he believed what Elijah said. He repented and put on sackcloth and humbled himself before God. Putting on sackcloth was a sign of humility.

Even though Ahab had been terribly wicked, God forgave him and had mercy on him. God told Elijah to tell Ahab, "Because you have humbled yourself before Me, I will not bring this calamity in your days, but it will happen in the days of your son." God was still going to remove Ahab's household from being kings over Israel, but He would do it after Ahab's death. When we repent of our sins, God is merciful to us.

However, Ahab's repentance did not last long. After a while, he went back to his evil, nasty ways.

The Death of Ahab and Jezebel

Three years passed by. Then Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and Ahab, the king of Israel, went to war against Syria. Jehoshaphat said, "Do you know of a prophet that we can talk to about this war we are about to enter?"

Ahab said, "Yeah, I know of one named Micaiah, but I hate him. He never says nice things about me."

Jehoshaphat rebuked him, "Don't talk that way about God's servant. Bring Micaiah here," he commanded.

So Micaiah came before the two kings. The kings asked him if they should go to war against Syria. Micaiah told them, "Go to war. You will win! But Ahab will be killed."

"See, what did I tell you?" ranted Ahab. "He never says anything nice about me! Throw him into prison until I return!"

Micaiah answered, "If you return, then God has not spoken through me."

Jehoshaphat and Ahab went to war against the Syrians. Ahab disguised himself so the enemy would not know he was the king. He wore armor for protection. He thought he was surely safe, but a Bowman shot an arrow and it landed in his chest in a small space between his armor

and killed him. His son became king, but only for a short while.

Remember what God had said to Ahab? His family would be killed and would not continue on as kings of Israel. All seventy of his sons were murdered. What happened to the wicked queen, Jezebel? She was also murdered by being thrown from her palace window to the ground below and the dogs licked her blood.

God Fights for Jehoshaphat

Not long after Ahab died, a huge army came to together to fight against Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. When Jehoshaphat heard the news, he gathered the Jews together to come before the Lord with fasting and prayer to ask God for protection.

Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the Lord and said, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? O God, will You not judge our enemy? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." Jehoshaphat and Judah were completely humbled before God. They knew only God could save them from such a vast army.

Then the spirit of God came upon one of the prophets who was there and he spoke, "Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you."

Jehoshaphat bowed his head and face to the ground and all Judah bowed before the Lord with thankfulness. They sang praises to God and rejoiced because God answered their prayers.

The army fast approached Judah, their horses thundering across the land. Judah could hear them coming, but they trusted in God. But before the enemy could even reach Judah, they suddenly turned on one another. They started killing each other. When Judah came to the battlefield, they were all dead! No one had escaped. Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the spoil of the enemy. They were surprised to find such wealth of gold and precious jewelry on them. It took them

three whole days just to carry off the spoil from the battle they did not even have to fight. God had delivered them and blessed them with great wealth.

Elijah meets Elisha

God told Elijah that his work was over. It was time to give him a rest, so Elijah met Elisha, who was plowing his field. Elijah threw his coat over Elisha as a sign that Elisha would take his place as a prophet of God. Elisha followed Elijah. Just wait until the next story to find out what happened to Elijah!

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was the wicked king of Israel?
2. What was his wife's name?
3. How did God feed Elijah when the famine came?
4. Who did Elijah stay with during the famine? What miracles were performed for the widow?
5. Who was the false god Ahab and Israel served?
6. How many prophets of Baal came to Mount Carmel to face Elijah?
7. What was the test to see who was the true God on Mount Carmel?
8. What did Naboth have that Ahab coveted?
9. Why didn't Naboth want to sell it to Ahab?
10. How did Ahab get the garden?
11. After the angel fed Elijah, how long did he go without food and water?
12. Who was the prophet who said Ahab would die in battle?
13. Who was the king of Judah who went into battle with Ahab against the Syrians?
14. What happened to Ahab and Jezebel?
15. When Jehoshaphat knew a huge army was about to attack, what did he and all of Judah do?
16. What did God tell Jehoshaphat to do about the army?
17. What happened to the army that was about to attack? How many of them died? How many from Jehoshaphat's army died?
18. How many days did it take to carry off the spoil?
19. Who took Elijah's place as the prophet of Israel?

ELISHA

This story can be found in I Kings 19 - II Kings 13.

After Elijah's work was finished, God told him he would be taken away and allowed to live out the rest of his life in peace. Elisha would take his place as the prophet in Israel.

Elijah, Elisha, and the fifty prophets with them knew that it was about time for the Lord to take Elijah away. Elisha would not leave his side. "Stay here," Elijah said. "The Lord has sent me to Bethel," but Elisha would not leave him. Later, Elijah said, "Stay here while I go to Jericho," but again Elisha stayed right with him.

One of the prophets asked Elisha, "Don't you know that the Lord will take Elijah away?"

Elisha answered, "Of course I know, but keep silent! I don't want to hear about it." Elisha was sad that his friend was about to leave. He followed Elijah everywhere.

As the two men walked to Jericho, they came up to the Jordan River. Elijah rolled up his coat, called a mantle, and touched the waters with it and the waters divided, so that they crossed over on dry land. Do you remember any other times in the Bible when the waters parted?

The fifty prophets who were with them stayed on the other side of the river. Only Elisha followed him over. "Before I leave," Elijah asked Elisha, "is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, there is," answered Elisha. "Please let a double portion of your spirit be on me."

"You ask a hard thing, my son." Elijah knew he had no way of granting this request. This would be up to God. "If you see me taken away, God will grant this request, but if you don't see me taken away, then the answer from God is no."

Finally, it was time. As the two men were talking, suddenly, a chariot of fire with bright fiery horses appeared and Elijah was whisked away. Elisha ran after them, "My father, my father." It was sad for Elisha to see him go and know he would not see his friend again until the Kingdom. Elisha did see him go! This meant God would grant him the request he

made - that a double portion of Elijah's spirit would be upon him.

Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah and went and stood by the river bank of the Jordan. Elisha said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" He struck the water with the mantle, and the water parted for him to walk through to the other side. Elisha was sure now that the God who had helped Elijah so many times was now with him.

The fifty prophets who had been on the opposite side of the river ran up to Elisha. "Let us go and search for Elijah in case God put him somewhere and he needs our help." Elisha knew that it was God who had taken him, and certainly God could take care of him, but the men persisted until Elisha finally said, "Go if you want to." Elisha knew that God had hidden Elijah and that it was not His will that Elijah be found.

The fifty prophets searched for three long days. Finally, they gave up and came and told Elisha, "We couldn't find him anywhere."

Elisha said, "Didn't I say, 'Don't go'?"

Bad water

Elisha came into Jericho. The men of the city told him, "This is such a nice city to live in, but the water is bad and the ground is dry."

Elisha told them, "Bring me a new bowl and put salt in it." They brought it to him. Then he went out to the source of the water and threw the salt into the water. Elisha told them, "The Lord has healed the water." The water was good from this time forward. Elisha was righteous in that he gave the credit to God. He knew he had no powers of his own. He did not ask Elijah for "magical" powers." He asked for a double portion of God's Spirit on him. He knew the power and the miracles were from God.

The children who mocked God's prophet

When he went up to Bethel there were some children who came running up to him and mocked him, saying, "Go up you, baldhead!" They yelled and laughed at him calling him "baldy." They danced around him, making fun of him. They were very mean and cruel.

Elisha turned around and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears came out of the woods and mauled and killed forty-two children. God does not take it lightly for anyone to make fun or mock one of His servants. This story was written as a

lesson for us to be careful that we should always be respectful. Those children will all be raised up in the Great White Throne Judgment period, pictured by the Last Great Day. Do you think they will be a little more respectful then? This story is recorded as an important lesson. We must always have respect and show honor to those God has put in authority.

God delivers Israel and Judah

After Ahab died, his son Jehoram became king. He was evil in the sight of the Lord. However, he did tear down the statue of Baal that his father Ahab had made, but he continued in the sins of Jeroboam, which was keeping Sunday instead of the Sabbath. He also did not keep God's other holy days. These were very serious sins before God.

The king of Moab came against the king of Israel, Jehoram. Jehoram went to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and also to the king of Edom to see if they would help him against the Moabites. The three armies set out to make war with the Moabites, but they ran out of water after seven days. There was no water for their armies or for their animals.

The king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, said, "Is there a prophet we can inquire of?" So they sent for Elisha.

When Elisha came and saw Jehoram, he said, "What have I to do with you, king of Israel, for you are a wicked man? If it was not for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I wouldn't even have come. For his sake, I will help." Elisha did not want anything to do with Jehoram, an evil man before God.

The Water that Fooled the Moabites

Elisha told them, "This is what the Lord says, 'You will not see wind, nor rain, yet this valley shall be filled with water so that you and your animals may drink.' This is a simple thing for God to do, and He will deliver the Moabites into your hands. Dig ditches all around. Make this whole valley full of ditches."

So the Israelites dug ditches all over. The next morning God had filled all the ditches with cool refreshing water. The Israelites drank and gave to their animals. When the Moabites looked out at the sun glistening on the water, it looked like blood! God had caused it to appear to be red in color. "After all," the Moabites said, "it couldn't be water. It hasn't even rained. It must be blood!" The Moabites shouted for joy. "The

Israelites must have killed each other! This will be easy. Now all we have to do is go down and 'spoil' them." The meaning of "spoil" is to take another's possessions. This was often done in war. After the enemy is killed or captured, the winners "spoil" or take their possessions. Now, the Moabites thought they could just go in and spoil the Israelites.

But when they came into the camp, they were surprised. The Israelites rose up and attacked them. When the king of Moab saw he was losing the war, he took his oldest son and offered him as a burnt offering to their god. This shows how incredibly wicked the Moabites really were. God delivered the Moabites into the Israelites hands that day. He caused them to see the water as blood. The Israelites were able to "spoil" the Moabites instead.

The widow woman

A widow woman came up to Elisha and begged for mercy. "My husband is dead and the creditors are coming tomorrow to take my two sons to be slaves. I have no money to pay them. Please help me."

Elisha asked her, "What shall I do for you? What do you have in the house?"

The woman answered, "I have nothing but a jar of oil." She was very poor and all she had left was a jar of cooking oil, and it was almost empty.

Elisha told her, "Go, borrow vessels from your neighbors, empty jars and containers, and gather as many as you can."

She went and borrowed all sorts of empty jars, bowls, pots and other vessels. When she brought them into her house, they were filled with oil. Finally, she said, "That is all the jars I could find."

Then Elisha told her, "Go and sell the oil and pay your debt and you and your sons will live on the rest of the oil." It was enough to pay her debts and still have enough left over for her and her sons to live on for quite a while.

The Shunammite woman

Whenever Elisha went to Shunem there was a kind woman who always asked him to stay and eat with her family. She asked her husband, "The holy man of God passes by here regularly so let us build a room for him to stay when he comes." They made him a nice room with a bed, a table

with a lamp, and a comfortable chair. Elisha was very pleased.

One day, Elisha called his servant, Gehazi, to him and said, "This Shunammite woman has been so kind to us. What do you think we could do for her in return?"

Gehazi said, "Well, she has no children, and she and her husband are quite old. We could ask God to give her a son." Elisha thought that was an excellent idea.

He called for the woman. "You have been so kind to me, so I have a present for you! Next year about this time, you will embrace a son!" The woman was so shocked, "Oh, please don't lie to me!" She said. She just couldn't believe it. By the next year, she did have a son. She was so happy.

A few years later, the young lad was out in the field with his father. All of a sudden he grabbed his head and started screaming! "Oh, my head, my head!"

His father told the servants, "Quick! Get him into the house to his mother." The little boy laid in his mother's lap until about noon, then he died. She went and laid him on Elisha's bed.

The woman called to her servants. "Please, go quickly and bring me a fast horse that I may hurry to see Elisha, the man of God." She wanted to bring Elisha to her son. She went very fast.

When Elisha saw her coming, he told Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman. Something must be wrong. Go to her fast and see if she is well." But she brushed past Gehazi and fell at the feet of Elisha. Gehazi tried to push her away, but Elisha stopped him. "Let her alone, for she is deeply troubled, and the Lord has not told me why."

The Shunammite woman said, "Did I ask for a son from you? Now he is dead and my heart grieves."

Elisha told Gehazi, "Take my staff and go quickly to the child. Do not stop and talk to anyone. When you get to the boy, lay the staff on him." The woman would not leave Elisha. She was afraid for her only child, and she wanted Elisha to go with her, so they both left for her home.

Gehazi got to the house before them. He laid the staff on the boy, as Elisha had told him, but the boy still did not breathe. Gehazi went back and met them on the road, "He is dead. We are too late." When Elisha went into the house, he saw the child lying dead on the bed. He went in and laid on top of the child and put his eyes on the child's eyes, his nose on the boy's nose and stretched out himself over the child. In

a few minutes the little boy opened his eyes and sneezed seven times. The woman was very grateful to have her son alive again.

Poison stew

When Elisha was gathered together with some of the prophets, they had made a pot of stew from herbs they had found growing wild in the fields. When they started to eat it, they realized it was poison! One of them cried out, "Man of God, this stew is poison! We will all die!" Elisha told him to bring some flour. When he put it into the pot, he said, "It is safe to eat it now." The stew was free from the poison.

Naaman, the leper

There was a man named Naaman, who was the commander of the army of the king of Syria. He was a great and honorable man, strong and mighty, but he had leprosy. Leprosy is a dreaded disease of the skin. It causes horrible bumps and turns your skin white. There is no cure for leprosy. Usually, people only get worse and grow so horribly disfigured that no one will be around them.

The Syrians had gone on raids and had brought back captive a young girl from Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. One day, she told her mistress, "If only my master could visit the prophet who is in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy." She told them how God had been with Elisha and that he had healed many people. So Naaman went to the king of Syria and told him. The king told Naaman to go to the prophet of God and that he would also send a letter to the king of Israel. Naaman took many gifts with him and went in search of the prophet Elisha. When Elisha saw him and heard his request, he told Naaman, "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River and your flesh will be restored and you shall be made well."

Naaman became furious. He wanted the man of God to come and wave his hand over him and call on God. He wanted to see a big elaborate show. He sure did not expect Elisha to tell him to take a bath! That was too easy. "Besides," he said, "we have better rivers in Syria than the Jordan River." If he was just going to bathe in a river, it might as well have been one closer to home. He was mad because this was not what he expected at all.

Naaman, enraged, turned to go home. His servants said to him, "If

the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? Go ahead and wash in the Jordan River and see if it will heal you.” They knew that Naaman would have climbed the highest mountain or gone to battle and killed many enemies or done anything to be well again. He just could not believe it could be so simple as to bathe in a river, but the healing is not really in the river, is it? Many people have bathed in the river and never been healed of diseases. The healing was in obedience to do what the prophet had told him to do. Naaman was looking for something “magical” and not to do something so simple as to obey God’s servant.

After talking to his servants, Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped in seven times according to what the prophet had told him. He felt silly. After six times of washing in the river, nothing happened. He still had leprosy. But when he dipped in the seventh time, his skin was made well. He was cured of the leprosy! His skin looked clear and smooth. He was so excited! He hollered and screamed with joy! His servant were happy too!

Naaman ran to Elisha. “I know now that there is no God in all the earth except the God of Israel. Please accept a gift from me so I can show how grateful I am.” Elisha refused. Naaman pleaded with him, but Elisha still refused. Elisha knew the healing came from God and not from him.

Gehazi, the Greedy Servant

Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, was a greedy man. He heard Naaman offer such wonderful gifts to Elisha, and he heard Elisha turn them down. After Naaman left, Gehazi followed him carefully so Elisha would not know. When he caught up with him, he said, “My master has sent me to tell you that we will accept your generous offer of a few gifts, after all. Just as you were leaving, two young prophets rode up and needed some clothes and maybe some money, too!” Gehazi lied. “Oh, and about the clothes, those fellows are about my size.”

That Gehazi was greedy! He wanted money and clothes that he did not deserve. Naaman was all too happy to give the gifts to Gehazi. When Gehazi returned back home, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Oh,” he stammered, “I haven’t been anywhere.”

Elisha knew he was lying. “Because you have sinned, Gehazi, and lied about it, the leprosy that was on Naaman will be on you and your descendants forever.”

Gehazi must have been horrified. The money and the new clothes meant nothing to him now. He had thought he could hide his sins from God and from God’s servant. Now he knew better, but it was too late. He was stricken with leprosy for the rest of his life.

The Axe That Floated

The group of prophets who lived together decided to build a bigger house. They worked hard chopping down trees. While one of the men was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell in the water. The poor man cried out, “Oh no, and it was a borrowed axe.”

Elisha came over to him, “Where did it fall, my son?” The man pointed to spot in the river that it had fallen into. Elisha cut off a stick, and threw it into the water and the axe head floated to the top. The young man happily retrieved it. This was a miracle because iron is heavy and does not float.

Protective angels

The king of Syria was making plans to go to war against Israel, but every time he came up with an idea, Elisha would know about it and warn the Israelites. “They are planning to attack over here or over there,” Elisha would tell them. “Don’t cross over there because the Syrians will be there.” Elisha always knew because God told him.

It was frustrating to the king of Syria. “Who keeps telling the Israelites our plans? Is there a spy amongst us?”

One of his servants said, “There is no spy among us, my King; it is Elisha, the prophet in Israel. He tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in your bedroom. He knows everything!”

The king of Syria told his men, “Go and bring back Elisha.” They sent horses and chariots and a great army to surround Elisha.

In the morning, when a young prophet walked outside, he saw a huge army all around the mountains surrounding them. He comes running back into the house screaming, “What shall we do? What shall we do? There is a huge army all around us. We are completely surrounded. There is no way out!”

Elisha calmed the lad. “Do not fear,” said Elisha, “for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Elisha prayed, “Lord, I pray open his eyes so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the young man’s eyes and what he saw surprised and delighted him. The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around them. God had sent His angels to protect them. The young man realized right away that the Syrian army did not have a chance. The Syrians could not see the angels. They thought they had an easy battle before them. They had no idea!

When the Syrians started to come down the mountain, Elisha prayed that God would blind them. God struck them with blindness just as Elisha had asked. Elisha led the blind army to the king of Israel. When the Syrians were in the camp of the Israelite army, Elisha prayed that God would open their eyes. When their eyes were opened they were very afraid. Here they were now, right in the middle of the enemy’s camp. The king of Israel asked Elisha, “Should we kill them?”

Elisha answered, “Don’t kill them. Give them food and water and let them go home.” The Syrians were very grateful. A great feast was prepared for them, and they ate and drank and they went back to their king.

Elisha’s Death and the Miracle that Followed

When Elisha died and the men went to bury him, there was another man who had just died also, so they put him in the same tomb, but when his bones touched the bones of Elisha, the man came back to life! He stood on his feet and walked out. It must have scared all the people who were at the grave! Elisha had no powers on his own. It was God who brought the man back to life to show the people how important his servant, Elisha, was to Him. God did many miracles through Elisha, His prophet.

QUESTIONS:

1. Elisha took the place of which prophet?
2. What did Elisha ask of Elijah? What did he have to do to receive it?
3. What happened when both Elijah and Elisha touched the river with their mantle?
4. What happened to Elijah? Why did the fifty prophets want to search

for him?

5. What was wrong with the water at Jericho? What did Elisha do that made it good?
6. What happened to the children who came out and mocked Elisha calling him “baldy”? What animal killed the children? Why did God do this to the children?
7. When the king of Moab came against the kings of Israel and Judah, what did they think was in the ditches? What happened?
8. What did the Shunammite woman make for Elisha?
9. How did Elisha repay her? What happened to her son?
10. What did Elisha put in the poisoned stew to make it healthy?
11. What disease did Naaman have? What did Elisha tell him to do? How many times did he tell him to bathe in the Jordan River?
12. Who was Elisha’s greedy servant who lied to Naaman and told him Elisha wanted money and clothes for healing him? What happened to Gehazi?
13. What did Elisha throw into the water to make the axe float?
14. Why was Elisha not afraid when the young prophet came running into the house screaming that they were surrounded by the Syrian army? When God opened the young man’s eyes, what did he see? What happened to the dead man who was buried next to Elisha?

JONAH

This story can be found in the book of Jonah.

The Lord God came to Jonah and said, “Jonah, arise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” Nineveh was a very large city in what is today Iraq. Nineveh was in an important area, in the central location that was between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. It was a gateway for the east and the west. Much wealth went through Nineveh, which made it a very popular city. Nineveh was also the capital of Assyria, who had long been enemies of the Israelites. Jonah was not happy about going to Nineveh. He did not like the Assyrians.

Instead of going to Nineveh like God told him to do, Jonah hopped a ship going in the opposite direction. He thought God would surely forget all about him and find someone else to go to Nineveh. He thought he could just run away from God.

The Lord sent a great wind on the sea that tossed Jonah’s boat all about. The sailors were all afraid and told every man to go and pray to his god for help. They noticed that Jonah would not pray to his God for help. Instead, he just slept in the bottom of the boat. “Get up, man, and call on your God to save us.” But Jonah knew he had done wrong by running away from God. He refused to pray. The sailors threw everything they could overboard to try to save the ship, but nothing helped. They said, “Let us cast lots so we can tell who is causing this trouble.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Casting lots was done many times in the Bible. It is mentioned over 70 times. No where does it say exactly how casting lots was done. It could have been similar to drawing straws or flipping a coin. God told the Israelites to cast lots to see which goat was to be sent out on Atonement. Casting lots was also used when Judas Iscariot had to be replaced in the New Testament.

When the lot fell on Jonah, the sailors knew the storm was about to sink their ship because of this stranger, so they asked him, “Please tell us who you are, where you are from and what is the trouble you are

causing us?” Jonah told them that he was a Hebrew and that he was trying to run away from God. The men asked him what they should do so they would not all perish.

Jonah said, “Throw me overboard because I know the storm is because of me.” Nevertheless, the men rowed harder and tried to return to the land, but the sea only got rougher. Finally, they had no choice but to throw Jonah overboard. The sea immediately became calm and the men feared the Lord.

The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. He was in the belly of the fish for three whole days and three whole nights. It was very scary. There are stories that mock this event. One of these stories is Pinocchio. When is swallowed by a whale he is sitting on a raft fishing. This story makes fun of Jonah and mocks God. Jonah was not sitting in a well-lit belly on a raft fishing. It was dark and scary. This fish swam constantly, as fishes do, making Jonah incredibly seasick. The acids in the fish’s stomach that are used to digest food were eating away at Jonah’s flesh. It was hard to breathe. He had no food or water and was very weak. He was scared to death, too! He went through this for three whole days and nights. He knew he would die as the fish slowly digested him, like a snake digesting a mouse. He was sorry now that he had foolishly tried to run away from God. Oh, if he just had another chance.

Jonah prayed to God, and after three days the fish came upon the shore and vomited Jonah out. The smell must have stayed with him for a long time. His skin was bleached white from the acids in the fish’s stomach. He was a mess, but he was alive! Now he was ready to listen to God. He knew running away would only get him into more trouble.

God told Jonah again, “Go to Nineveh and give them the message that I tell you.”

So Jonah did as God told him and he cried out in the city, “In forty days, God is going to destroy this city because of the wickedness.” The people had been exceedingly evil, worshipping the goddess Ishtar, who was Semiramis. Jonah was glad God was going to destroy Nineveh because he did not like the Assyrians.

But the people did something Jonah did not expect. They believed God and repented! The king proclaimed a fast for all the people, even the animals. The king put aside his expensive clothes and put on sackcloth, a sign of humility. The king said, “Let every man, woman, and

beast fast before God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will change His mind and not let us perish?"

Then God saw their works, that they had turned from their evil way, and God did change His mind and did not bring on them the disaster that Jonah had proclaimed. God had mercy on them because of their repentance.

Jonah was not happy about it. Jonah said, "I knew You would be merciful to them and not kill them. I knew You would forgive them. I shouldn't have even come. Just kill me, O Lord. Just let me die."

The Lord answered Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

Jonah went out of the city and sat on a hilltop. There he sat to watch and see what God would do to the city. It was hot and his body ached from being in the fish's belly, but the Lord God was merciful to Jonah. He prepared a plant that grew quickly and gave shade to Jonah so he would not be so miserable. Jonah was glad about the plant. It gave some relief to his bleached skin from the hot sun.

But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm to come and eat the plant. When the sun came out, Jonah was hot and miserable. Then God added to it by causing a strong hot wind to beat down on Jonah's head. It became so unbearable that Jonah fainted in the hot sun. When he came to, he was angry. "Just let me die, God."

God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

Jonah answered Him, "It is right for me to be angry about the plant - even to death!"

The Lord said, "You have pity on a plant that you did not even work for. You didn't plant or water it. I gave it to you to comfort you, but you can't have mercy on a big city where more than 120,000 people live who are so lost they do not even know their left hand from their right hand?"

God was teaching a lesson of mercy to Jonah. It is a lesson for us, too.

Later on, when Joshua Christ was asked what sign he would show that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, he answered that no sign would be given except that when he died he would be in the grave for as long as Jonah was in the belly of the fish.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God want Jonah to do?
2. Why did Jonah get on the ship?
3. What happened to the ship at sea?
4. How was it determined who's fault it was that the sea was so rough?
5. What did the men do to Jonah?
6. How long was Jonah in the fish's belly?
7. When Jonah was vomited on shore, did he try to run away again?
8. Nineveh was the capital for what people?
9. How long did the people in Nineveh have to repent before disaster would come?
10. Did they repent?
11. Why was Jonah unhappy that they repented?
What did God prepare to make Jonah more comfortable while he sat pouting on the hilltop?
12. What happened to the plant?
13. What lessons can we learn from the story of Jonah?
14. What was the only sign Christ would give to prove that he was the Messiah, the Son of God?

ESTHER

This story can be found in the book of Esther.

This story could be entitled “Beauty and the Beast,” but we will call it what the Bible does: Esther. Beauty, which is Esther, saves her people from the beast. See if you can tell who the beast is. It is a story of love, beauty, loyalty, pride and humility. See if you can tell WHO fits these characteristics.

There was a king named Ahasuresus who reigned over a very large portion of the earth - from India to Ethiopia. In the third year of his reign, he made a great feast for all the noblemen and princes of the area that lasted 180 days – that is 6 months! For the last seven days of the feast King Ahasuresus had a special feast in his palace gardens. On the seventh day the king commanded that Queen Vashti come before him so all could see her beauty. The Queen had her own party going on, and she refused to come. The king was furious. No one disobeyed the king - not even the queen. His wise men in his court told him that the queen’s behavior would become known to all the women of the kingdom and pretty soon none of the wives would obey their husbands. They suggested that King Ahasuresus put Queen Vashti away, like a divorce, and find a new queen. King Ahasuresus liked the idea. Queen Vashti was banished from the king and all the beautiful maidens from the kingdom were sent to the king for him to pick a new queen. Each spent an entire year at the palace to be specially groomed and bathed in scented oils before they could even see the king.

A beautiful Jewish girl named Esther was also sent to the palace. She was from the tribe of Judah, one of the sons of Jacob. Esther’s parents were dead and she had been raised by her Uncle Mordecai. Esther obtained favor from all who saw her. The king loved Esther more than all the other women and Esther was made queen. Then the king made a great feast, the “Feast of Esther,” for all his officials and servants. Mordecai had told Esther not to reveal to anyone that she was Jewish, and Esther wisely listened and obeyed all her uncle told her to do.

Mordecai had overheard a plot to kill the king. He told Queen Esther

about the plot and she told the king that Mordecai had brought the matter to her. When an investigation was made, it was true, and the two traitors were hanged. All the information was recorded in a book called the chronicles.

King Ahasuresus promoted a man named Haman to be above all the nobles and princes in his court. All the king’s servants bowed and paid respect to him as he walked past him. All but Mordecai. Mordecai would not bow to him. This made Haman very angry. It bothered him every day that Mordecai would not bow to him or show him respect. He was filled with hatred and anger toward Mordecai. He would not try to openly hurt Mordecai because he knew he was a Jew who was loved among his people, and he was afraid all Mordecai’s Jewish friends would turn on him.

Haman plotted a way to get rid of all of Mordecai’s people - the Jews. He told the king that there were people scattered among the kingdom who had their own laws and did not keep the king’s laws, therefore, it was not fitting for the king to let them remain. Haman told the king, “If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring money into the king’s treasuries.”

The king took the signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. The king said to Haman, “The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.” A letter was sent to all the king’s provinces that the Jews were to be destroyed on a certain day. All Jews, both young and old, even women and children were going to be killed. The decree went out by law because it was signed by the king’s ring, and when something was signed by the king’s signet ring, it could not be changed.

When Mordecai learned of all that happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth because he knew all the Jews were going to be killed. He cried out with a bitter cry. In those days, when someone was humbled or very sad, they took off their nice expensive clothes and put on sackcloth. It was a sign of humility. There was great mourning among the Jews. Many put on sackcloth and cried bitterly because they knew they were about to be killed.

Mordecai told Esther about Haman’s plan and how he intended to give a great sum of money to the king for this horrible crime. Mordecai

reminded Esther that she was also a Jew. He told Esther, "Don't think that you will escape in the king's palace anymore than all the other Jews." Mordecai told her that maybe this is the reason she became queen, to save her people. Esther told Mordecai to go and tell the Jews who were close by to fast for three days and nights. She and her maids would also fast. Then she would go before the king.

On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and came before the king. You could only come before the king if he called for you or if he held out his royal scepter. If he did not, you would be killed. When he saw Esther, to her great relief, King Ahasuresus held out the royal scepter for her to come to him. "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you - up to half the kingdom!" said the king.

Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the King and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared."

Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, and we will go to the queen's banquet." At the banquet the king again asked Esther, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you - up to half the kingdom."

Queen Esther replied, "If I have favor in your sight, please let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare tomorrow and I will tell you my request."

Haman went out that day, joyful and happy to be invited back. As he was leaving he saw Mordecai in the gate, and when Mordecai did not bow and tremble before him he was filled with hatred and anger. When he got home he sent for his friends and family. Haman told them of his great riches and his honor before the king. He told them, "Queen Esther invited no one but the king and ME to her banquet tomorrow. Yet all this means nothing to me as long as long as that Jew, Mordecai, is alive."

Haman's wife said, "Build a high gallows and let Mordecai be hung on it."

"Yes. Yes!" said Haman, and he ordered gallows to be built right away.

That night, the king had trouble sleeping. He opened the book of the chronicles and read. He read the account where Mordecai had saved his life by revealing the plot of the two traitors. The king asked his servants, "What reward has ever been given to Mordecai for saving my life?"

His servants answered, "Nothing has ever been done for him."

About this time, Haman came into the king's court. The king asked Ha-

man, "What should be done to honor someone that the king delights in?" 60

Of course, the king was talking about Mordecai, but Haman thought, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" He thought the king was talking about him, so he said, "Let a royal robe that was worn by the king be given this man and one of the king's horses be brought in. Let this man be paraded through the city on horseback with people shouting, 'This shall be done to the man whom the king delights in.'"

"Splendid!" said the king. "Now hurry. Take the robe and the horse as you have suggested and do so for Mordecai, the Jew. Leave nothing undone of all you have said."

WHAT? Haman was shocked! He thought the king was talking about him, not his worst enemy! All the wonderful things that he had suggested were now going to Mordecai.

Haman took the robe and horse and arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, shouting, "Thus shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor." What a funny site this must have been. Haman did what the king told him to do, but his heart surely was not in it. But it sure was fun for Mordecai.

Afterwards, Mordecai went back to the king's palace. Haman went home in a very bad mood. He told his wife and his friends everything that happened and how humiliated he was as he paraded his worst enemy all over town praising him. He was sad and miserable. But to his delight, the king's servants approached his house to take him to the royal banquet with the king and queen. He thought that now at last he would be praised and recognized. Not even Mordecai could spoil a wonderful banquet as the guest of honor with the king and queen, right?

At the banquet the king again asked Esther, "What is your request, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you - up to half the kingdom."

The queen answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O King, please spare my life and my people." (Remember, neither the king nor Haman knew that Esther was Jewish.) The queen continued, "For my people and I have been sold to be destroyed, to be killed!"

King Ahasuresus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"

Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" Haman grew white and pale with fright before the king and queen.

DANIEL

This story can be found in the book of Daniel.

After King Solomon died, Israel divided into two different kingdoms with two different kings. One kingdom consisted of the tribes of Judah and Levi. They became known as Judah, or the Jews. The other ten tribes were known as the house of Israel.

Because of constant rebellion and disobedience to God, Israel went into captivity by Assyria. Unlike Israel, Judah occasionally had a righteous king, but for the most part, they also disobeyed their Creator. Finally, they also were sent into captivity. The Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and took the gold from the temple and made captives of the Jews.

King Nebuchadnezzar selected the best educated captives for a special purpose. He told Ashpenaz, a trusted official, to bring certain of the young Jews to the royal court. Ashpenaz selected handsome young men who were well educated and who had special talents and abilities. The king wanted to train these youths to serve him in his court. He put them through a three-year period of intensive training in the knowledge of Babylon's most learned men. Among the Jews chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Even in captivity these teenagers continued to obey God. Although the Babylonians tried to influence their religious beliefs, the young men continually looked to the one true God.

King Nebuchadnezzar provided food from his own table for the youths in special training. Daniel and his three friends obeyed God's laws of clean and unclean meats and they would not eat the king's food of pork and other unclean animals. Daniel talked to the man in charge of their diet, concerning himself and his three friends. "Please prove us," he said. "Give us vegetables, grain and water for ten days. Then compare our looks to those who eat the king's food." Although the man was afraid, the diet would not work, he agreed to a short ten day trial. At the end of ten days, Daniel and his friends looked much healthier than those who ate from the king's table. From then on, they were given a healthy diet.

Then the king arose in his anger from the banquet table and went into the palace garden. Haman stood before Esther, pleading for his life, for he knew the king was very angry with him. Haman fell across the lap of Esther who was sitting on the couch. The king walked back into the room and there was Haman draped over the queen. Now the king was really mad! "Hey, are you trying to kiss my wife in my own house?"

Before Haman could say anything else, the servants came in and seized him. One of them told the king that there were some gallows which Haman had built to hang Mordecai. The king shouted "Hang him on it!" So Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he had built to hang an innocent man.

There was still the problem of the Jews to be killed on a certain day. Remember, the decree was signed by the king and sealed with his ring that all the Jews were to be killed. The king told Mordecai that he could write a new decree and that he would seal it with his ring. Mordecai came up with a plan that all the Jews could band together and protect themselves. The order was signed by the king and sealed with his ring.

The Jews armed themselves with weapons and they were able to fight off their attackers. The Jews then declared a feast of celebration called the Feast of Purim, which is celebrated to this very day because God had spared them. Mordecai was honored and made second in command to the king.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was the "Beauty"?
2. Who in this story would you consider the "Beast"?
3. Why did King Ahasuerus put Queen Vashti away?
4. Who was filled with pride?
5. Who was humble?
6. Why did Esther and the Jews fast? How long did they fast?
7. Why did the king want to honor Mordecai? What did Haman have to do to honor him?
8. How was Mordecai related to Esther?
9. What was the name of the feast the Jews celebrated after being saved from destruction?

The young captives were given Babylonian names. Daniel became known as Beltshazzar. Hananiah was named Shadrach. Mishael was called Meshach and Azariah's new name was Abed-nego.

When the three year training program was over, Daniel and his three friends were the best of all the students. The king himself talked with them and considered them ten times wiser than all the so-called "wise" men in Babylon, such as the magicians and astrologers. The king gave Daniel and his friends important positions in his kingdom.

As the months passed, Daniel continued to obey God and keep His Commandments. Besides wisdom and good judgment, God also gave Daniel special understanding to interpret dreams and visions. Daniel was well aware that this understanding came from God.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

One night, Nebuchadnezzar had an especially troubling dream. It bothered the king so much he could not sleep. He knew the dream was important and wanted to know its meaning. In the morning, Nebuchadnezzar called his wise men together. "Tell me the dream and its meaning," he commanded.

"O King, live forever!" the wise men answered. "Tell us the dream and we will tell you the meaning." They knew they did not have the power to know what the king had dreamed, but the king knew that they could just make something up for the interpretation. If they could tell him the dream, he could be sure that the interpretation would be true.

"If you do not tell me what the dream was about," the king shouted, "you will be cut into pieces and your homes will be burned to the ground! On the other hand," the king continued, "if one of you is able to reveal the dream and its meaning, I will give him gifts, rewards and great honor."

Again, the astrologers and magicians begged the king to tell them the dream. They said, "There is not a man on earth who can do such a thing."

The king was furious. "Out! Out! All of the wise men in Babylon will die!" The king's decree included Daniel and his three friends. When the men came to get Daniel for execution, he was shocked at the news.

Daniel asked Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, "Why is the king's decree so hasty?" Arioch then told Daniel the story of the dream

and how no one was wise enough to tell the king's dream and interpret it. Daniel requested and was granted permission to appear before King Nebuchadnezzar. He then asked the king to give him time and that he would then tell the king the dream and its interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar agreed.

Daniel went immediately to his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and told them what happened. He asked them to pray that God would grant them mercy and reveal the dream and its interpretation so they would not have to perish with the rest of the wise men in Babylon.

All four men prayed fervently, and God heard them. In a night vision, God revealed the dream to Daniel. He praised and thanked God for His answer and then went to see the king. As Daniel revealed the dream to the king, he showed great humility. He did not brag about how much he knew. Instead, Daniel made it very clear to Nebuchadnezzar that God deserved the praise and honor because it was He who revealed the dream to Daniel.

Daniel began to tell the king about his dream. "You saw a great image like a man. Its head was of fine gold, and its chest and arms were silver. The image's belly and thighs were brass. His two legs were iron and his feet were part iron and part clay. You saw a stone hit the feet of the image. The image broke into many pieces and was scattered in the wind. The stone which hit the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

"That was the dream, and here is the meaning. O, King, you are the head of gold. The God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. The other parts of the body represent kings who will rule after you. The stone which crushed the image and became a great mountain represents the Kingdom of God which will overthrow all other kingdoms and last forever. The great God has made known to you what will happen in the future. The dream is certain and its interpretation is sure," Daniel concluded.

Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed that he fell on his face before Daniel and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods." He then made Daniel one of his chief officials and gave him many gifts. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were also given high positions at Daniel's request.

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image

Although Nebuchadnezzar had learned from Daniel about the supreme God in heaven, the king did not worship Him. Instead, he built a great golden image and commanded everyone in his kingdom to bow down and worship it when they heard a special music playing. The king was very proud of the gigantic image. He decreed death to anyone who failed to bow down to the image when the music played.

Bowing down to this image would have broken the First Commandment, so Daniel and his friends refused. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were caught not bowing down, they were brought before the king. "Is it true," asked the king, "that you refuse to bow and worship the image? Because if it is true, you will be thrown into a fiery furnace and burnt up! Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we don't have to answer you. Our God whom we serve is able to save us from the fiery furnace and deliver us from your hands, but even if He doesn't, we still won't worship the golden image that you have set up." They knew God was capable of saving them. They did not know if God would save them or not, but either way, they were still going to obey God, even if they had to die.

King Nebuchadnezzar was so furious at their answer that he commanded that the furnace be heated up seven times hotter than usual. He ordered his strongest soldiers to bind the three men and cast them into the fire. The soldiers quickly obeyed the king's orders and threw them into the furnace. The heat was so intense that it instantly killed the soldiers.

Watching from a safe distance, Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace and was astonished at what he saw. The men were walking freely about in the fire! "Weren't there only three men thrown into the furnace?" asked Nebuchadnezzar. "Why do I see four men, and why are they not hurt?"

After a few moments the king commanded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to walk out of the furnace. Not only were they unhurt, but there was not even the smell of smoke on them. The fourth person in the fire was an angel sent from God.

God used these three faithful men to remind Nebuchadnezzar that there is a supreme Ruler in heaven. Nebuchadnezzar still would not humble himself, but God would surely humble him soon enough.

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

One night, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed an unusual dream that none of the Babylonian wise men could interpret. In this dream, he saw a great tree so big that it reached to heaven and provided food and shelter for many animals, but a being from heaven caused the tree to be cut down, leaving only a stump. The being from heaven said, "Let his heart be changed from that of a man's and let a beast's heart be given to him, and let seven times pass over him."

Daniel knew immediately what the dream meant. He was hesitant about telling the king the meaning. "Tell me the meaning," said Nebuchadnezzar, "even if the news is bad."

Only your enemies would care to hear what I have to say," said Daniel. "Here is the meaning of the dream. You are the great tree. You have become great and strong, and your kingdom rules the world. The cutting down of the tree on God's order means you will lose your position as King of Babylon. For seven years you will live as a wild man among the beasts." Daniel added, "Before this happens, it would be wise to stop sinning and begin to show mercy to the poor. If you were to do that, these miserable events might not happen for a long time."

Nebuchadnezzar Becomes Insane

Nebuchadnezzar did not change his ways. One year after the dream, the king was walking in his palace boasting about all his possessions. "See great Babylon. I have built it by my power for the honor and glory of my majesty!"

Just as he was speaking, a voice from heaven said, "O King, the kingdom is departed from you."

At this precise time, Nebuchadnezzar became completely insane. He became like an animal. For seven years he wandered in the fields as a beast. His hair grew long like an eagle's feathers and his nails like claws. He was just like an animal, without a mind. The mighty King of Babylon ate grass like the oxen. He lived outdoors like a wild beast.

At the end of seven years, God restored sanity to Nebuchadnezzar. He was quick to praise God at that time. God allowed him to rule over Babylon several more years before he died.

Handwriting on the Wall

Following Nebuchadnezzar's rule, the Babylonian Kingdom lost much power. A wicked and idolatrous man named Belshazzar became king.

One evening while Belshazzar was feasting with his officials, he decided that the ordinary drinking cups were not good enough for such a great king and his guests. He commanded that wine be poured into the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had looted from the Temple in Jerusalem.

Belshazzar drank wine from the golden cups and praised his gods of gold, silver, and brass. He should have praised his Creator God who made these things. During the feast, a mysterious hand suddenly appeared. It was not attached to an arm or a person - just a hand! A finger from the hand began writing on the wall. The king stared in fright. He was so scared, he wet his pants. The finger wrote, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."

None of the kings so-called "wise" men could interpret the meaning. Then someone remembered Daniel, who lost his high rank in the kingdom soon after Nebuchadnezzar's death. Belshazzar commanded that Daniel be brought to him immediately.

"The words which were written on the wall," explained Daniel, "mean that your kingdom is at an end. You have proven yourself to be an unwise ruler. Your enemies are already at the gates of the city to take your kingdom from you." "MENE, MENE" was an amount of money used at this time. "TEKEL" meant to weigh in balances. "UPHARSIN" meant to divide. Daniel explained the writing to the king:

MENE, MENE: God has numbered your kingdom and it is finished.

TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

UPHARSIN: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

That very night Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom taken and divided between the Medes and the Persians. Darius, the Mede, became king.

Daniel and the Lion's Den

Daniel was set up as governor over a region. He was the most honest and trustworthy official in the kingdom. Some of the other officials became jealous. They tried to find fault with him, but were unable because he faithfully carried out his duties. They knew he prayed three times a day and hoped to use this against him.

These wicked officials went to King Darius and flattered him. "Let us have a royal decree in your honor," they said. "Let no man ask any petition of anyone but you, O great King, for thirty days. Anyone who does should be thrown into a den of lions." The idea pleased Darius. He wrote out the decree and signed it. The sly officials knew that no official decree of a Median king could be changed.

Soon, Daniel heard of the decree. This did not stop him from praying three times a day, something he had always done. When it was time to pray, he went into his house by his open window. He kneeled as he always did and prayed to God. What would you have done? God expects us to obey those in authority over us, but when man's laws conflict with God's laws, we should always obey God.

Daniel feared and trusted the Eternal more than any physical king. The men plotting against Daniel waited for him to start praying, then they burst into his house and arrested him. They brought him before Darius. The king was unhappy to hear this. He really liked Daniel and wanted to change the decree to save him, but the king's decree was law and it could not be reversed. Daniel was thrown into the den of hungry lions.

Darius was so upset at what he had done that he could not eat or sleep all night. Early in the morning he hurried down to the lions' den, "O Daniel," he called, "was your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?"

Then to his great delight, Daniel answered, "Yes, my King. God has sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths. I am not hurt."

Darius immediately freed Daniel and had the evil officials thrown into the lions' den. The king then wrote a decree commanding his subjects to honor the living God whom Daniel worshipped.

God called Daniel a righteous man, greatly beloved. Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego set great examples for us to follow. They showed incredible courage, faith, loyalty, and thankfulness.

Questions:

1. Who was the king over the Babylonian empire?
2. Which tribe went into captivity by the Babylonians?
3. Who were Daniel's three friends? When the king served them food from his table, why did these four young Jewish teenagers not want to eat it? What did they ask for?
4. What was King Nebuchadnezzar's first dream? What did he want the wise men to do?
5. With God's help, who told Nebuchadnezzar the dream?
6. What did Nebuchadnezzar build that the people were suppose to bow down to? When were they to bow down?
7. Who was caught not bowing down to the golden image? What happened to them?
8. When Nebuchadnezzar bragged and boasted about his kingdom, what happened to him? For how long?
9. Who took Nebuchadnezzar's place when he died?
10. What did the handwriting on the wall mean?
11. Who took Belshazzar's place?
12. What did Darius sign as a decree that all must do for thirty days? What would happen to those who disobeyed?
13. What was Daniel doing when he was arrested?
14. What happened to Daniel?
15. What happened to the men who tried to have Daniel killed by the lions?

JOSHUA CHRIST

This story can be found mostly in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Before God ever created the earth and mankind on it, He planned His remarkable and incredible plan of bringing man into His family. He knew that people would not be able to keep His commandments perfectly. God planned to give people the ability to think for themselves...to choose whether to obey God or not. God did not want to create robots that were programmed to do exactly what He told them to do. He wanted people to choose for themselves whether to love Him or to love their own selfish ways.

God had a plan to make a family, but He knew that people would be weak on their own. Without God living in them through His Holy Spirit, they could not be good. It would be impossible. They would sin, which is disobeying God. God is perfect. God's way of life leads to happiness. Sin is wrong and always leads to unhappiness. God said the punishment for sin is death. Every person who has ever lived has sinned. That is except one...this is His story.

An angel named Gabriel was sent by God to a young woman named Mary. The angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You shall have a son and shall name Him Joshua. The Holy Spirit will overshadow you, and you will give birth to the Son of God." Mary was not married, but was engaged to Joseph. She was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joshua' Father was actually God. Joshua was born of a human mother, but His Father was God. He was the firstborn in the God Family.

At the same time Mary was pregnant, her cousin Elizabeth was pregnant. Elizabeth was older and had not been able to have children. Her husband's name was Zacharias. An angel told Zacharias that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son and that they should name him John. He would be a great man for God. Zacharias said to the angel, "How do I know you are telling me the truth?"

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news."

Gabriel told Zacharias that he would be mute, which means not able to speak, until the baby was born because he did not believe what he was told. Zacharias was indeed mute and could not speak. When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, Mary came to visit her. When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby in her womb leaped and Elizabeth was filled with God's Spirit. When Elizabeth's baby was born, Zacharias was able to speak again, and he said the baby should be named John as Gabriel had said. He would later be known as John the Baptist because he baptized people.

An angel appeared to Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, and told him that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. The angel told him, "Do not be afraid to take her as your wife. She will give birth to a son and you shall call him Joshua, for He will save His people from their sins." So Joseph and Mary were married.

It was ordered that everyone had to return to their own city to be registered in a census. Joseph and Mary went to the city of Bethlehem because they were of the house and lineage of David. While they were there, Mary gave birth to Joshua. There were so many people in the city because of the census that they did not have a place to stay, so after giving birth she wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a manger, which is a feeding trough for animals. This is the humble beginning for our Savior. God could have allowed him to be born in the most beautiful castle in the world, but this was part of His purpose and plan to show us a humble attitude.

At this time, there were some shepherds living out in the fields tending their sheep. It was early fall and not winter like the world believes. Winter would have been too cold for the shepherds to be living in the fields with the flocks. An angel came to the shepherds. They were afraid when they saw the angel. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news. For there is born to you this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you. You will find the baby wrapped in a blanket in a manger." After the angel left, the shepherds left to go find the new baby who would be the Savior of the whole world. An angel led them and they found the baby in the manger. Later, Mary, Joseph and the baby were moved to a house. The shepherds rejoiced greatly at the birth of Joshua.

Some time after Joshua had been born, a group of wise men from

the East came to Jerusalem seeking the new born "King of the Jews". When King Herod heard about the birth of a new king, he sent for the wise men. He told them he also wanted to go and worship the Son of God, but secretly he planned to kill him. The wise men were led to where Joshua was by an angel and they brought him precious oils as presents.

God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to the king but to go back a different way. When Herod had found that he had been tricked by the wise men from the East, he was very angry. He ordered that all baby boys from two years-old and under were to be killed, but God had already told Joseph to take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.

They stayed there until after the death of Herod. After the king's death, an angel appeared to Joseph and said, "Arise, take the young child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young child's life are dead." They went back to Israel.

God was with the child. He grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year to the Feast of the Passover and Unleavened Bread. When he was twelve, he went with them. When it was time to go home, Joshua stayed behind in Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary did not know where he was. They thought he was with other relatives or friends. When they realized he was not with them, they frantically returned to Jerusalem looking for him. After three days they found him sitting in the temple in the middle of the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard Him were astonished at his understanding and answers. His parents came over to him and said, "Don't you know we were worried looking for you?"

But Joshua said to them, "Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" They did not understand what he meant. Joshua increased in wisdom and favor with God and men. The Bible does not speak of any more of his childhood. He grew up and became a man. His human father, Joseph, was a carpenter.

Joshua grew up working hard with Joseph to build houses, furniture and other crafts. The pictures the world has of Joshua are no where near what He looked like. The world shows a weak, skinny, long-haired man, but the truth is that Joshua was strong from the carpentry work,

tanned from working outdoors, and He did not have long hair.

The Bible says it is a shame for a man to have long hair like a woman. Joshua' hair was short like a man's. Pay no attention to this world's god. They do not know God or His Son. It's another lie from Satan.

John the Baptist came preaching to people to repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. He would travel and baptize people. Joshua came to John at the Jordan River and asked John to baptize Him. John tried to prevent it, saying, "I need to be baptized of You, and You are coming to ME?"

But Joshua answered and said to him, "We need to do this, John, to fulfill all righteousness." Even though Christ had God's Spirit already, He needed to fulfill what God had told Him to do. Also, it was an example for us. So John baptized Joshua Christ in the Jordan River.

Afterwards, a voice was heard that said, "You are My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." A dove came down from heaven and set upon Him.

Fasting Forty Days and Forty Nights

Then Joshua, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Here he was tempted by Satan for 40 days and 40 nights. During all this time, Joshua neither ate any food or drank any water. Joshua knew he had to be close to his Father to be able to withstand Satan. Fasting brought him closer to God. Satan tried all kinds of ways to get Joshua to sin against God and worship him. Satan told Joshua that he would give him all the kingdoms of the earth to rule over now and He would not have to wait until God's Kingdom. He could have it all now! But Joshua told Satan, "Get away from me, Satan, for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.'" He tried to tempt Joshua in many ways, but finally He gave up and left. The angels then brought him food and drink. The fasting made Joshua physically weak, but very strong spiritually.

Joshua Christ performed many miracles and healed many people over the next 3 1/2 years of his life, but his main purpose was to build a church. He called out 12 men to become his apostles to learn and to teach others. Apostle means "one sent out." A disciple means "a student," someone who learns.

The religious leaders of this time hated him and criticized all the

67
things he did. They did not like someone telling them how to obey God. They were self-righteous and thought they were better than others. They did not like anyone showing them they were wrong. They were filled with pride. They could not be disciples because they were not willing to learn. They did not want to be students; they only wanted to be teachers.

While Christ was on the earth, he performed many miracles, healed many people and taught about God's way of life. He told them about God's Kingdom coming and how they could be a part of it. Mostly, He taught only the disciples because in man's age man cannot understand the things of God. They were not ready to accept God and obey Him. Christ knew it. Instead, He spent His time building a Church, not as a carpenter, building a physical church, but teaching the disciples so they could teach others. When you talk to people in the world about a "church," they think you are talking about a building. But the Church of God is not a building; the church is the people. We are the church - not a building.

The people asked Joshua for a miracle to prove who he was. Christ told them the only sign he would give them was that when he died, he would be in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights, just like Jonah was in the belly of the fish.

Feeding The Multitude

One time, a great number of people followed Joshua while he taught them. Joshua told His disciples, "I have compassion on the people because they have now followed me for three days and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry."

His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to feed such a large crowd?"

Joshua said to them, "How many loaves of bread do we have?"

They answered, "Seven loaves of bread and a few little fish."

Joshua told them to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves of bread and the fish and gave thanks to God and passed around the food. All the hungry people ate and were full. They passed baskets back around to take up the leftovers. They gathered up seven large baskets full. The crowd that was fed was four thousand men plus women and children. This was quite a miracle!

The Plot To Kill Joshua

Many of the religious leaders of that day hated Christ and all he taught. They plotted to kill him. They did not like to be told that they were not obeying God. They did not like to be told they were wrong. They wanted to worship God their way - not the way God had instructed them to. People are no different today. They want to keep Christmas and Easter, saying that it is all to worship God, but this is not how God says to worship Him. We must obey God exactly like He tells us to. God tells us not to add to or take away from His instructions.

Christ knew that he would be killed on Passover, just like in the Old Testament when the children of Israel killed the Passover lamb and put the blood on their doorpost so God would pass over them. Remember what we said at the beginning of this story? The punishment for sin is death. Christ had never sinned, but we have. Christ paid for our sins for us. He died in our place so we would not have to.

Passover

When the sun went down on the 14th day of the first month, which was Passover, Christ ate supper with his 12 disciples. He told them that one of them would betray him.

Christ knew who it was - Judas Iscariot. He knew Judas would turn him over to the religious leaders to kill him. He told Judas to go and do quickly what he would do. So Judas left.

Then Christ told the rest of the disciples that he wanted them to remember the Passover every year. They already kept the Passover in memory of the children of Israel in Moses' day, but now, there would be a new reason - a new understanding of Passover. Instead of killing a Passover lamb every year like they had been doing, Christ would now be their Passover lamb. He had a new way for them to keep Passover. This is the way we keep it every year, even to this day.

First, he poured some water in a large bowl. He then began to wash their feet. When he came to Peter's feet, Peter said, "Lord, don't wash my feet. I should be washing your feet!"

But Joshua told him, "Peter, if I don't wash your feet, then you will have no part with me."

So Peter quickly answered, "Lord, then not my feet only, but also wash my hands and my head!"

Joshua told him, "If you are bathed, then I need to wash your feet only."

Peter did not understand that washing their feet was not about bathing them. It was about serving. A long time ago people used to wear sandals. They walked on very dusty roads and their feet got dirty. When they came to visit someone in their home, usually the servants would wash their feet. It was a lowly job. It showed an attitude of humility - of serving others. Even the very Son of God stooped to a lowly job of washing the feet of his students, his disciples. Christ set us an example to serve one another. He said, "Do you see what I have done? I have set you an example that you should wash one another's feet, just as I have done to you." Therefore, once a year we wash one another's feet at the Passover service. It shows an attitude of humility and that we are willing to serve each other, just as Christ did for his disciples.

Then Christ gave them a small piece of unleavened bread and told them, "Eat. This represents my body, which I give for you." This is a memorial that we do each Passover to remember how Christ gave his life for us. Then he gave them a small drink of wine and said, "Drink this. It is my blood that was shed for the payment of sins." Because, remember, sin requires the death penalty. We do eat and drink this every Passover, not just as a memorial of Christ's death, but as a sincere commitment to God of our dedication and faithfulness to Him and our belief and acceptance of Joshua Christ as our Passover, knowing that his blood saved us.

Peter Denies Christ

Joshua told the disciples that the religious leaders would come soon to kill him. He told them that they would deny that they even knew him and would run away. Peter said that he would never deny Christ - even if he had to die with him. Joshua told him, "Yes, you will Peter. You will deny me three times before the rooster crows."

Meanwhile, Judas Iscariot went to the religious leaders and told them that for money he would tell them where Joshua was. They gave him 30 pieces of silver to betray Joshua.

When they came to take Christ, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the men who had come. He probably meant to cut off his head, but when the man ducked Peter lopped off his ear. Christ

reached up and touched the man's ear and healed it. He told Peter to put his sword away. He asked Peter if he did not know that Christ could cause many angels to come and protect him? It was for a great purpose that all this should happen.

Judas Iscariot told the leaders that the sign of who was the Christ would be whomever he kissed. When he saw Joshua, he greeted him very friendly and gave him a kiss on the cheek. They seized Christ and took him captive. The disciples all ran away, just as Joshua said they would. Peter secretly followed them to town to see what would happen to Joshua.

While Peter stood outside the courtyard, a servant girl came to him and said, "You were with this fellow, Joshua."

Peter got scared because he was afraid he would be captured too, so he denied it, "I don't know what you are talking about. I don't know that man!"

Then another girl approached Peter and said, "You were with Joshua."

Peter denied it and said he did not know who this "Joshua" was. And yet, one more girl came up to him later and said to him, "You also were one of them because your speech betrays you." This meant that Peter had an accent and talked like the other disciples.

Then Peter began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the man!" Immediately, a rooster crowed - just like Joshua said would happen.

Peter remembered the words Joshua said to him, "Before the rooster crows you will betray me three times." Peter went out cried because he was sorry.

Christ, the Son of God, was then taken away and killed by the people. Remember, he told the people that the only sign that he would give to prove he was the Son of God was that he would be in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights. He died on a Wednesday on Passover around three o'clock in the afternoon. He was put in the tomb just before sundown before the First Day of Unleavened Bread, a Holy Day.

Early on the first day of the week, Sunday morning, two of his disciples, both named Mary, came to the tomb, but he was not there. He had already risen. He had risen out of the grave just before sundown Saturday evening.

Can you count the three days and three nights? He rose exactly

like he said he would. God, His Father, rose Him up from the grave and restored His life to Him. He was the firstborn of many who will be risen back to life or changed into spirit beings when He comes back to earth.

Joshua Christ came back for 40 days, teaching his disciples after he had risen from the grave. He had to make himself look like a human again, since they could not see spirit.

Now Christ is at the right hand of His Father in Heaven, waiting to come back to earth to be King of Kings, which is soon to happen.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Joshua' mother? Who was his father? Who was his physical father?
2. What job did Joshua help his father do?
3. Who were John the Baptist's parents?
4. What did John the Baptist do to Joshua? Where was he baptized? What descended from heaven after he was baptized?
5. Why did the religious leaders not like Joshua?
6. What was the only sign that Joshua told them would prove who he was? He would be in the grave for as long as who was in the belly of the fish?
7. What was the miracle that Joshua did when he fed the people?
8. Who betrayed Christ? What did he receive for it?
9. Who told Christ he would never deny him? What did Christ tell him?
10. At night, on the beginning of the 14th, what new symbols did Christ give to the disciples and to his church that we keep today? What did the unleavened bread represent? What did the wine represent? Why do we wash each other's feet?
11. What did Peter try to do to one of those who came to arrest Christ? And what did Christ do?
12. Christ died on Passover day about 3 in the afternoon. What Holy Day would be at sundown? What day of the week did He die on? How many days would he be in the grave? What day did he come out of the grave?
13. How many days did he stay with his disciples after he had risen from the grave and became a spirit being? How were they able to see him?

CLEAN & UNCLEAN MEATS

They are listed in Leviticus 11 & Deuteronomy 16.

When the Bible speaks about clean and unclean meats, it is referring to meat that is good to eat and meat that is not good to eat. God did not make all animals for the purpose of food. Some animals were created to clean up the earth. For example, have you ever seen a buzzard along the side of the road eating a dead animal? Buzzards help keep the earth clean. Shrimp do the same thing for the ocean. They help to keep it clean. Think of them as the garbage cans of the world. Do you want to eat the garbage can?

Some animals were made for work or for pets. Can you name some that are good for work? Horses and elephants have made man's life easier with the work they do. Dogs and cats make very good pets, but you would not want to eat them! Animals were created for different purposes, just like plants were. Not all plants are edible. You would not eat poison ivy would you?

Noah knew about clean and unclean meats. God told him to take seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals into the ark. He knew exactly what God was talking about because he had already been keeping the health laws. God wanted him to take more of the clean animals because he would be able to use them for food.

God gave simple rules to tell the clean from the unclean animals. If an animal chews the cud and has parted hoofs, it is good for food. Cows, as well as moose, elk, and deer are some of the animals who eat their food without spending time to chew it good enough. They later bring mouthfuls back up from their stomachs for more careful chewing. These rechewed bits are called cuds. But remember, they must chew the cud AND have parted hoofs. A pig has parted hoofs, but does not chew the cud, so a pig is not good to eat. A camel chews the cud but does not have parted hoofs. Horses do not chew the cud, so they are unclean. It's simple! Some animals do not have parted hoofs or chew the cud, like cats, dogs, squirrels, bears, and zebras. Would you eat a skunk burger? How about rabbit stew? Why not?

One of the most popular unclean meats is pork. Some people seem to think as long as something tastes good, it must be good to eat. Here are some interesting facts about pigs. But be warned, this gets gross.

A pig is a real garbage gut. It will eat anything, including urine, excrement, dirt, decaying animal flesh, maggots, or decaying vegetables. They even eat the cancerous growths off other pigs or animals. The meat and fat of a pig absorbs toxins like a sponge. Their meat can be 30 times more toxic than beef or venison. Unlike other mammals, a pig does not sweat or perspire. Perspiration is a means by which toxins are removed from the body. Since a pig does not sweat, the toxins remain within its body and the meat. The pig is so poisonous and filthy that God had to prepare him a type of sewer line, or canal, running down each leg with an outlet in the bottom of the foot. Out of this hole oozes pus and filth his body cannot pass into its system fast enough. Some of the pus gets into the meat of the pig. So why did God make such a creature? Certainly not to eat!! The pig is a garbage collector.

God also tells us not to drink the blood of the animals. Yuk!

Water Creatures

God tells us how to know which water creatures are good for food also. To be clean, they must have two characteristics - fins and scales. A shark has fins, but does not have scales, so it is not good for food. Tuna, bass, trout, and perch are some examples of clean fish. Shrimp, lobster, octopus, and clams do not have fins or scales, so we know they are not good for food. God made them for other purposes. Also, the Bibles list other unclean creatures that inhabit the water. Frogs, turtles, eels, and squid were not made for people to eat.

Birds

God lists the different kinds of birds that are clean and unclean. We can tell by the list, the same characteristic in the clean birds. They all have the same six characteristics in common. Unclean birds lack at least one of these characteristics. All clean birds have all six of these characteristics:

1. A clean bird has a crop, which is good for digesting food. A crop is part of the stomach.
2. A clean bird has a gizzard. The gizzard helps grind the food for the

bird to swallow.

3. A clean bird does not prey on other birds. Some examples of birds that eat other birds are the hawk and the buzzard.
4. A clean bird does not devour food while it is flying, like the sea gull and the hawk.
5. A clean bird has a hind toe and a middle toe that are both long.
6. When a clean bird stands on a perch, it spreads its toes so that the three front ones are on one side of the perch and the hind toe on the opposite side.

All unclean birds lack at least one of the characteristics just mentioned. Some examples of unclean birds are woodpeckers, pelicans, storks, sea gulls, roadrunners, penguins, parrots, ostriches, and owls.

Some examples of clean birds are chickens, geese, ducks, quail, turkeys, and pheasants.

God also named other creatures that should not be eaten. Some of those are mice, lizards, ants, snakes, moles, worms and weasels. We also should not eat anything that has died of disease.

A creature that is good to eat is the grasshopper. John the Baptist ate locust, which is like the grasshopper. It may not sound good to eat, but it is clean and fit for eating.

God gave us specific guidelines to be healthy. They are meant for all people through all times, not just the time the Bible was written, or just for specific people.

We should do the best we can to obey these laws to live healthy lives as God intended.

QUESTIONS:

1. What two features do we look for in land animals to know if they are good for food or not?
2. Does “clean and unclean” mean the animal is dirty or muddy? What does it mean?
3. Name animals that are good for food. Name some that are not good for food.
4. What two features do we look for in water creatures to know if they

are good for food?

5. Is the whale good for food? Why not?
6. Is the sea turtle good for food? How about the shark? How about salmon? Why?
7. What guidelines can you name for birds? Can you name a clean bird? Can you name an unclean bird? What about the ostrich? What about a buzzard?
8. What did John the Baptist eat?
9. Can you name the two chapters that clean and unclean meats are listed?

GOD'S PLAN THROUGH HIS HOLY DAYS

Long before Adam and Eve were ever created, God already had His plan in place for mankind. God wanted a family with many children, but He could not have them fighting and bringing misery to themselves and everyone else. The only way they could be good is for God to dwell in them with His Holy Spirit. Without God, no one can be good. God did not create people evil, but He knew without His Spirit living in them, they would naturally become evil. God does not want beings in His Family who are going to fight and bicker. He knows everyone would be miserable if they lived like this. Man would need to choose God's way. People would need to learn the lessons that their own ways would not bring happiness, so God had a plan to bring them into His Family. This plan would be revealed in His holy days.

The holy days are like a map from God that leads us to a great and awesome treasure. We have to follow the map carefully to find the treasure. This treasure is the Kingdom of God. You cannot find the treasure without the map. So let us follow step-by-step the map that God has given to us. We must go carefully, though. It is important that we follow in the exact order God gave to us. But like all maps, we must start at the beginning.

Passover

The first of God's great plan is the Passover. God knew that every person who ever lived would sin. What is sin? I John 3:4 tells us exactly what sin is. Sin is the transgression of the law, which means breaking the law - the Ten Commandments. Therefore, sin is breaking the Ten Commandments. God also tells us in Romans 6: 23 that the penalty for sin is death. God's laws are so important that there has to be rules set if they are broken. There are laws set in motion. If you drop a ball, which way does it go? Does it ever go up? No, never. The law of gravity always makes the ball go down. It cannot help it because it is a law. God's other laws are like this, too. They never fail. God says sin is so bad that

the penalty must be death. But we already know that we cannot keep God's laws perfectly. Therefore, God, in His great wisdom, gave us Passover as the first step on our map. Without this first step, we could go no farther.

Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. God wants to dwell in us with His Spirit, but He will not be around sin. Because Christ took away that sin, God's Spirit can now dwell in us.

In the time of Moses and the children of Israel in Egypt, God told Moses to tell the Israelites to put blood from a lamb on their doorpost and to stay inside all night. When God came and killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, it would "passover" those who had the blood on their doorpost. God sent His firstborn Son, Joshua Christ, to save us with His blood. Joshua was perfect in all His thoughts and actions. He had God's Spirit since birth. He never sinned. He was not under the penalty of death because He had not broken any of God's laws. He was perfect. But what about the rest of us? We have not been perfect. We have all broken God's Commandments. Therefore God, in His plan, gave His firstborn Son to pay that death penalty for us. Joshua Christ, in His unselfish love, gave up His life so that the penalty could be paid for us. He was killed on Passover by the very people He had died for. Three days and three nights later, just as He said would happen, He was risen from the grave by His Father and is now in heaven, the firstborn in the God Family.

Because Christ died in our place, we are under "grace." To be under grace means that the penalty was paid for us. We did not deserve for Christ to do this - it was a gift for us so we could live. We actually deserve to pay that penalty. After all, it was our own sins that brought the penalty on us in the first place, but God and Christ were merciful to us.

Since Christ paid that penalty for us, is it all right to be bad and sin more? Can we just do whatever we want and keep sinning? The Bible gives us an answer in Romans 6:15, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the (penalty) of the law but under grace? Certainly not!"

If there was a man in prison who was going to be executed for killing someone and the warden decided to have mercy on him and let him go free, is it okay for him to kill again? This man should be so thankful for the pardon that he is careful never to break the law again. If he does it again, he may not be pardoned. He may have to pay the penalty for his

crime. God is merciful, but we must do everything we can to be good and choose to live the right way of life, keeping the Commandments.

Passover is a wonderful plan, but we must not use it for an excuse to be bad. Without Christ paying that penalty for our sins, we could go no farther in God's plan because we would all be dead. It is also very important that we are grateful to God and Joshua for the Passover. We don't deserve it. Just like the man in prison did not deserve to get out. It was a free gift, a pardon. We should always remember how God will "passover" our sins because of the blood of Joshua Christ. This is the first step in the treasure map, but we are not there yet. There are six more steps on the map. We must complete them all to get to the treasure!

Days of Unleavened Bread

Immediately following Passover, when Christ's death paid the penalty for our sins, God's plan brings us to the Days of Unleavened Bread. We keep it for a whole week. After our sins are forgiven, we have to make special efforts not to sin. As said before, just because that penalty is paid for us does not mean we can be bad. Actually, just the opposite is true! The Days of Unleavened Bread helps us to focus more on getting rid of our sins. Do you remember what sin is - breaking God's laws - the Ten Commandments. But why unleavened bread? What does bread have to do with sin?

When bread is made a leavening agent like baking soda, baking powder, or yeast is added to make the bread rise or "puff up." When you make bread you have to set it aside for a few hours, and when you come back the bread is twice as high as before. The leavening in the bread makes it do this. God takes this simple example and helps us to learn an important lesson from it.

There are two words that are important to learn about this holy day. One is pride and the other is humility. They are opposites. These two words are the KEYS to this part of the treasure map. You cannot unlock the meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread if you do not have the keys. Hang on to these keys because we will need them again for Atonement.

Pride, or proud, means to think highly of yourself and look down on others, to think you are better than others. This was Satan's greatest

sin. He was proud and thought he was better than God. He thought he could run things a lot better than God. How foolish he is! Pride is a terrible sin that needs to be replaced with humility.

Humble, or humility, is the opposite of pride. It means to not look down or think you are better than others, to be willing to serve others. People who are humble are easy to teach. They are "teachable." People who are proud think they know it all and are not willing to be taught. Do you listen when you are being taught? Are you humble when someone tries to show you a better way of doing something? God loves this attitude!

God cannot work with those who are proud because they do not want to be taught. They think they know everything, but those who are humble love to be taught. They also love to serve others and help others.

What does all of this have to do with bread? Can you show me a proud look? Is your chest swelled up or puffed up and your nose in the air? Hey, that's pride! Of course, you can have pride on the inside without looking like this, but when we see pride on the outside, this is how it looks - puffed up! Leavened bread will puff up. God uses the example of leavened bread to remind us of pride. For seven days God tells us to get all the leavening out of our homes. We aren't to eat it for a whole week. Instead, we eat unleavened bread to remind us of how we are to be - humble and not puffed up. During this week in the year, leavened bread is a reminder of pride and sin. God wants us to think about it all week. We eat unleavened bread to remind us to focus on putting sin out of our lives. We need to be reminded not to be "puffed up" like the leavened bread.

Can children have pride, too? Do you listen to your parents? When they tell you that you are wrong in something, are you teachable? If you aren't, then you are prideful. Being stubborn is pride, too. God loves a humble attitude. If you want to continue with the treasure map, you must proceed with humility.

Pentecost

After the children of Israel came out of Egypt, God gave them the Ten Commandments on Pentecost on Mount Sinai. They were simple to understand, but without God's Spirit living in the Israelites they were impossible to keep. The Israelites never were able to keep them right-

teously before God. Their pride and human nature always got in the way. There was something missing - it was God's Spirit. People needed to see that without God living in them, they would not be able to keep even ten simple commandments. Without God's Spirit, man is limited in his reasoning, his understanding, and his ability.

Thousands of years later, on the first Pentecost after Christ died, God gave to the baptized people in His Church His Holy Spirit to live in them and help them understand more about His laws. God's Spirit dwelling in us does not make us do anything. It does not make us be good or bad. It only gives us better understanding of God's law. God wants us to choose His way of life - not force us to live it against our will. With God's Spirit we can better understand what is right and wrong so we can make the right choices. Most important is that God's Spirit helps us to understand why they are right and wrong, so we can be in complete agreement with God. Without God's Spirit we cannot fully understand the spiritual meaning of His laws. We can only be a part of God's Family if we have this special gift from God. We can only have this gift because Christ died so we could be clean from our sins. God will not dwell in sin. The sin has to be gotten rid of first.

So, what is the Spirit of God, and how do you get it? You actually have a spirit living in you! It is the spirit of man. This spirit is what makes you different from the animals. Just like people, all animals have a brain. Scientist have tried for years to figure out why humans can think and animals cannot. They are baffled by the mystery. They cannot see any difference. Do you know why? You cannot see spirit. They do not understand that God added a spirit to the human brain so we can think, learn, cry, and laugh. The human spirit is what gives you a "mind." Animals do not have minds, only brains. You cannot see, hear, taste, feel, or touch a spirit. This is why scientists cannot find it.

Some animals have much bigger brains than we do, but they still do not have the spirit in them that God gave to us. God gave the animals instinct to know how to build nests, hunt for food, and take care of their babies. They can learn tricks, but they are very limited in what they can do. You never see a dog build a house, do you? Or have you ever seen a horse put on a suit and go to work? How about a lion going to school? They cannot do those things. They cannot reason like people do. God gave people a spirit to think, plan, and understand. People

learn and make choices. Animals do not have that capability.

The human spirit only allows people to think and reason about things pertaining to physical. God is not physical - He is Spirit. To understand spirit - you need God's Spirit added to your human spirit. This is why Pentecost is so important on our map!

When you are grown, the first step to receiving God's Spirit is repentance. This means you are truly sorry for the sins that you have done. You decide you do not want to live your own way of life anymore. You choose God and want His way of life. The next step is to be baptized. The minister dunks you under the water. It is a symbol of washing away your old sins and coming out new and clean. God wipes away all your past sins. They are completely forgiven and you start new. It's kind of like washing the blackboard at school. You get a completely clean slate! The minister then lays his hands on your head and ask God to give you His Spirit. From that point on, God's Spirit grows in you - helping you to understand God's plan and His laws more and more.

Do people with God's Spirit still sin? Unfortunately, yes. Humans make mistakes, but they are quick to repent and ask God for forgiveness and try to do better. As long as we are human, we will sin, but we are never to give up trying to live by God's laws. God says that when we become Spirit beings, we will never sin again.

We cannot come out of sin, as the Days of Unleavened Bread pictures, unless God's Spirit lives in us. God knew we had to have this as the next step. God gave us His Ten Commandments so we would know how to live. The first four Commandments tell us how to love God. The last six Commandments tell us how to love other people. The Commandments are simple and easy to understand, but without God's Spirit living in us, they are impossible to keep. We need God's Spirit to help us. Without Pentecost, we could go no farther in our treasure hunt. We would be helpless without God.

All of God's holy days, with the exception of Pentecost, are set on specific dates, such as Passover being on the 14th day of the first month. Pentecost is different. "Pentecost" means "count fifty." It is very important in our treasure seeking to count exactly like the map says. Count fifty from precisely the point God instructs us.

If you were looking for a treasure that was buried fifty paces from an oak tree, but you decided that you would rather step off the paces

from a pecan tree instead, would you find the treasure? Of course not. You must follow the treasure map exactly!

Pentecost is seven Sabbaths, or 49 days, plus one more, which is 50, and this always ends up on Sunday. God says to start counting with the first day of the week that is during the Days of Unleavened Bread. What day is the first day of the week? Sunday. By counting fifty days starting with Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread, you will know the exact date Pentecost is to be observed. It will always fall on a Sunday. If you start counting fifty with the Sunday that falls after the Days of Unleavened Bread, then you are like the fellow counting fifty paces from the pecan tree. He did not follow the map! The clue to this step is to make sure you count starting with the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

All the other holy days can fall on any day of the week. Pentecost is the only holy day we can be sure always falls on the same day of the week - Sunday. Its an awesome plan, but you have to be able to read the map and follow instructions exactly as God gives them.

Let's take a break from our treasure hunting and look carefully at our map. We need to see where we are now. Here are the steps we have already followed:

1. Passover is the first step. Christ died so our sins could be forgiven and God's Spirit would be able to dwell in us.
2. Days of Unleavened Bread remind us not to go back to the sins Christ had to die for. We need to focus on putting sins out of our lives more and more. Leavening reminds us of pride. Never forget the two keys - pride out and humility in!
3. Pentecost is the time when God gave the Israelites His Ten Commandments, and He gave the church His Holy Spirit to be able to keep them.

Pentecost is an exciting holy day for God's church. This is the day that Christ will return and set up His kingdom. 144,000 faithful people, most of whom have already died, will be brought back to life to rule alongside Him. People such as Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel, Mary, and many more will be resurrected back to life, but not as human beings. They will be resurrected into a spirit body and become a

part of God's family. Christ will take over the governments of the world and will rule with fairness and justice. The 144,000 will have an opportunity to be a part of that government to help people. The rest of the people will also have an opportunity later on. We need to get back to our treasure map! There's more to come!

Feast of Trumpets

The next holy day is the Feast of Trumpets. This feast comes in the fall of the year. On the first day of the seventh month is a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets. So we call it the Feast of Trumpets.

Trumpets are used for different purposes in the Bible. Different types of trumpets with different sounds were used. The Israelites had trumpets made of silver and other metals, and trumpets made of the horns of rams, which were very loud. Some were used for the journey of the children of Israel in the desert. They directed the movement of the camps, announced the beginning of months, called the children of Israel into an assembly, and announced holy days. Remember the children of Israel didn't have microphones, loud speakers, cell phones and the things we have today. There were millions of Israelites who had to hear the commands to know what to do, when to break up camp, stop for the day, and such things. Communication to that many people would have been very difficult. But even the small children knew the different sounds of the trumpets and immediately knew what the commands were.

Some trumpets were made specifically for sounding an alarm and for war. They were loud and piercing so everyone would know that danger was near. Have you ever heard the siren warning sound go off when bad weather is near your home? When you hear that sound you know exactly what it means and what you are suppose to do. The same as the children of Israel knew when they heard the trumpet blasts.

Trumpets were used to go into battle with the enemy. They were used in the battle at Jericho. Remember how the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days? Then on the last day they shouted and the trumpets blasted and the walls fell.

Later trumpets were sounded when crowning a new king. Some trumpets are musical and happy. Certainly, though, the children of Israel knew the difference between a trumpet that made music and one that warned them of danger.

There are seven trumpets mentioned in the book of Revelation concerning the end times.

Each trumpet sound is a warning of destruction that will come upon this world to humble people into accepting God's way of life. The final trumpet blast announces the return of the one who God appointed as King of kings – Joshua Christ who will gather His firstfruits to reign with Him in God's government.

The Feast of Trumpets 2008 was a very special feast that declared several exciting announcements. It announced the final time for choosing those who can become sealed in order to become the last ones added to become part of the 144,000 who will reign with Christ when He returns. It announced the countdown to the actual physical destruction that will take place as a result of the seven trumpets which sounded. The Feast of Trumpets is a memorial of the blowing of trumpets!

Day of Atonement

Even though this day can be a little harder to rejoice in (because we have to fast), it is a very special holy day. After Christ comes back, it will be a time when the world will finally be at one with God. Atonement is at-one-ment. The world right now is not at one with God. That is why there are wars, killings, fighting, stealing, and all the unhappy things that are in this world. Every single thing in this world that is unhappy is because it goes against God's laws.

We fast to be humble. Remember how important humility is? Which holy day did we discuss that talked about humility and pride? To be humble before God is so important. When we fast, we cannot help but be humble. We realize when we are hungry and thirsty how much we need God. We realize how weak and puny we are. We need God for everything. Be thankful God does not ask you to go without breathing for a day. How long can you hold your breath? We even depend on God for the air we breathe.

In order for man to be at one with God, Satan must be gone. Atonement pictures a time when Satan and his demons will be sent away from the earth and all the people. He is a real problem in causing people to disbelieve God. From the time in the Garden of Eden to now, Satan influences people to make wrong decisions. Even though we are

thirsty and hungry on Atonement, it has a very happy meaning.

In the Old Testament, God had the children of Israel build a tabernacle. There was a room in it called the Holy of Holies. No one could enter this room but the High Priest once a year, on Atonement. This room, which housed the ark of the covenant, was separated by a veil. On the top of the ark of the covenant was the mercy seat, overlaid with pure gold. Two golden cherubim (angels) sat on the ark. Their wings spread out and covered the mercy seat.

Once a year, only on Atonement, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies and offered a sacrifice for himself and the people for sins committed in ignorance. The people were not allowed into the Holy of Holies.

At the time of Christ's death, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. It was a sign from God that Christ's blood covered our sins, and now we can be atoned to God. Because Christ was our Passover, we are able to come to God at anytime. We are atoned, or at one with God because of Christ's shed blood. We have access to the Holy of Holies, God's throne, to come before Him with our prayers.

Remember, pride and humility were the keys to Days of Unleavened Bread. They are also keys to the Day of Atonement.

So far we are on the right track. We are so close! This is the best map ever! Let's don't quit now. We are almost to the greatest treasure ever to be found!

Feast of Tabernacles

This is the most fun time of the whole year. The Feast of Tabernacles is when we all come together with brethren from all across this country and others to celebrate. During the feast, we go to church everyday and learn more about God than any other time of the year. It is a time we can be with our friends, many that we only get to see during the feast.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures that peaceful, wonderful time in the future called the Millennium when all the world will keep God's laws and live very happy lives. The feast lasts for seven wonderful days. Millennium means "one thousand." This is how long this time period will last – one thousand years.

God tells us to save a tenth, or a tithe, of our money so we can enjoy the feast. The feast pictures a time of great abundance in the world

tomorrow - the Millennium. The whole world will be in God's church at this time. Everyone will be keeping the feast then, too. All your school friends, your cousins, and your neighbors will all be going to the feast. They will finally be able to enjoy what you get to now. They do not even know what incredible fun they are going to have, but you do! Isn't it exciting to know how much they are going to love it? You already know how great it is!

God's 7,000 year plan for mankind is based on the seven day week. God gave the first six thousand years for man to rule himself. The last thousand years will be under God's rule. The Feast of Tabernacles is about that last thousand years of man. It will be a much better time to live than the first six thousand years.

It is hard to imagine that the whole world will be filled with such happiness, but just like the Feast it will be a wonderful time of friendships, laughter, and abundance. During this one thousand year period, people everywhere will be able to live happily and peacefully under one government - God's government. Everyone will be keeping the Ten Commandments and God's holy days, just like you do now.

There is one final step in our map. What about all those people who have lived and died? What about the people who never knew about God's Commandments? What about all the babies who died? Do they get a chance?

The Last Great Day

This holy day comes right after the 7-day period of the Feast of Tabernacles. It comes immediately after because this event will follow right after the Millennium. The Last Great Day pictures the time of 100 years when those who have ever died will be able to brought back to life again as a human being. Everyone who died as a baby, a child, an adult, and even an old person will have a chance to live again. Only this time, it will be different! This time they will have a chance to understand God's way of life. They will have a chance to live without all the sufferings of this world. Some of those people who will be resurrected were killed in war, or they died of diseases, and some even died just from being hungry. Do you know someone who died that you would love to see again? You will see them again! When they are resurrected they will be healthy and most important of all - this time they will have God's laws to make them happy.

When they are resurrected back to life again, they will be so happy to see each other. Right now, they are just like being asleep. They do not even know they are dead. They do not feel any pain or have any thoughts at all - just like being asleep. When they are resurrected they will see family and friends that had died before them that they thought they would never see again.

This is the most exciting part of our treasure map so far. People will be so happy to see each other. They will also be happy to have their minds opened to understand God's laws. Now they are ready to listen. For most of them their lessons have been learned and they are eager to hear the correct and happy way to live. Even the animals will be tame. The Bible says that a little child can play with a poisonous snake and not be hurt; a lamb will lie down next to a lion and not be afraid of being eaten. It will be a peaceful exciting 100 years as people will be able to hear about God's laws and holy days. You already have a head start.

But this isn't the end of the treasure map. Now we come to the most valuable treasure, not just in the world, but in the whole universe!

For 100 years, people will be able to hear all of God's teachings. But they aren't robots and God is not going to force any of them to want it. They will have to make choices. They will have every opportunity to be a part of God's Family, but they have to choose right over wrong. They have to live by and love God's laws and commandments. When the hundred years is over - The treasure is eternal life forever and ever in God's Family. The Bible says our minds can't even begin to imagine what's it will be like. Exploring the universe? Going to the bottom of the oceans? Flying with the eagles? A trip to Mars or Pluto? We will never have to worry about food, water, or air. There will be no more sickness or death. We will never be bored without something to do and learn. It's beyond our wildest dreams! It's the greatest treasure ever! It's all waiting for you! The map of the holy days lead us to the awesome and wonderful treasure.

So just to be sure we got all the clues, let's go over what we learned.

1. Passover is when Christ died and paid the penalty for our sins, so that God's Spirit could live and dwell in us to enable us to live God's way of life.

2. Unleavened Bread pictures putting sin out of our life. Leaven is symbolic of sin.
3. Pentecost is when God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites and His Holy Spirit to His Church so that we can keep God's law. It also pictures the return of Joshua Christ and the resurrection of the 144,000 to eternal life.
4. Feast of Trumpets is the announcement of the 7 trumpet blasts.
5. Atonement is when Satan and his demons will be put away and can no longer influence people.
6. The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the wonderful rule of Joshua Christ and the 144,000 during the Millennium, which last a thousand years.
7. The Last Great Day is the time when those who have ever lived and died will be able to be brought back to life in a great resurrection and given a chance to live God's way of life. Wow, what a wonderful map! It takes a lifetime to follow this map. But with God's help, we can do it, and then we can turn around and help others follow this same map to the incredible awesome treasure of God's Kingdom!

10. What does Pentecost mean? What day of the week does Pentecost always fall on? How do you count Pentecost? When do you start counting?
11. How does a person receive God's Spirit?
12. On which holy day will Christ return?
13. Why do we fast on Atonement? What does Atonement picture will happen to Satan? What is the key for Atonement (hint: same key for Unleavened Bread)
14. What future time period does the Feast of Tabernacles picture? How long does the Millennium last? What does Millennium mean?
15. What will happen on the Last Great Day? How long will this time period last?
16. What is your favorite holy day?

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you name all the holy days in order? Why is it important we keep them in order?
2. What is sin? Who has sinned?
3. What is the penalty for sin?
4. Who paid this penalty for us so we do not have to die? After Christ died for our sins, what does God give to help us? Why did Christ have to die for us in order for us to receive God's Spirit - why couldn't He just give it to us without Christ dying?
5. What are the two "keys" to understanding the Days of Unleavened Bread?
6. What is pride? What is humility?
7. What does leavening do to bread?
8. What does leavening picture during Days of Unleavened Bread?
9. What was given on Pentecost to the Israelites? What was given to the church?

THE ORIGIN OF VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day, kept on February 14th, has its origins all the way back to Nimrod. Nimrod was a mighty hunter who hated God. After the flood, Nimrod built a tower that reached very high so God could not kill the people again with another flood. Nimrod had built a city called Babel with walls all around. The people were afraid of the wild animals and Nimrod was a great hunter who protected them. Nimrod and his evil mother / wife, Semiramis, were set up as gods that the people worshipped. All the world's evil holidays go back to the time when the people worshipped Nimrod and Semiramis. These include Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and Valentines Day.

One of the festivals that people kept was called Lupercalia. It was in honor of Lupercus - the hero-hunter god. Lupercus was the "hunter of wolves." Nimrod and Semiramis had many different names. Lupercus was one of the names for Nimrod. At the tower of Babel that Nimrod had the people build, God confused their languages. People began to leave the area and go with others who spoke their own language. They took with them the gods they had worshipped. Only now, they had different names for their gods. The Bible mostly refers to the worship of Nimrod as Baal. The Greeks called Lupercus by the name of "Pan." The Semites called Pan "Baul," who received it from the Babylonians who called their god "Baal." But it was all the same pagan god.

Later, the Catholic Church did not want to be known for pagan worship, so they just changed the names of the holidays and called them "Christian." They made up different stories of a man named St. Valentine who helped people, but even among themselves their stories conflicted. It is hard to keep a lie straight. All the symbols and customs that are used during Valentine's are from the ancient practices of keeping Lupercalia.

Another name for the child Nimrod was "Cupid," meaning "desire." It is said that when Nimrod's mother saw him, she lusted after him - she desired him. Nimrod became her Cupid, her desired one, her Valentine.

So evil was Nimrod's mother that it is said that she married her own son! Inscribed on the monuments of Egypt are inscriptions that say Nimrod (the Egyptians called him Osiris) was "the husband of his mother." The pictures of Cupid show a winged chubby boy with a bow and arrow. Remember, Nimrod was a hunter who used a bow and arrow.

As Nimrod grew up, he became the child-hero of many women who desired him. He was their Cupid! In the Book of Daniel, he is called the "desire of women" (11:37). Moffatt translates the word as Tammuz, a Babylonian name of Nimrod. Tammuz was actually another son of Semiramis. Nimrod had died and when Semiramis gave birth to Tammuz, she told the people it was Nimrod resurrected back to life. Therefore, the names Nimrod and Tammuz became the same god, using the same name. Nimrod / Tammuz provoked so many women to jealousy that an idol of him was often called the "image of jealousy" (Ezekiel 8:5). Nimrod, the hunter, was also their Valentine. The pagans commemorated their hero-hunter, or Baal, by sending heart shaped love tokens to one another on the evening of February 14th as a symbol of him.

The Catholic Church, wanting to merge paganism with Christianity, encouraged the people to keep the same customs. It was easier to convert the people if they could celebrate the same days and traditions, but call it Christianity.

Lupercalia was an important holiday for the pagans and Romans. Records indicate that Mark Antony was master of the Luperi College of Priests. He chose the Lupercalia festival of the year 44 B.C. as the proper time to offer the crown to Julius Caesar.

According to the lies and legends told, the story of Romulus and Remus begins with their grandfather, Numitor, king of the ancient Italian city of Alba Longa. He was ousted by his brother Amulius. Numitor's daughter, Reha Silvia, was made a Vestal Virgin by Amulius and forbidden to marry since her children would be rightful heirs to the throne. Mars, the god of war, fell in love with her and she gave birth to twin sons.

Fearing the boys would grow up and seek revenge, Amulius had them placed in a basket and thrown into the freezing flooded waters of the River Tiber. Can you think of a true story in the Bible, where a baby was put into a basket and put in the river? This story of Satan's mocks the true story of Moses. As the fable continues, the twins were found by a she-wolf who nourished them with her milk. The boys were later found

by Faustulus, the king of the shepherd. He and his wife adopted them and named them Romulus and Remus. They grew up to be strong, bold young men, and eventually led a band of shepherds in an uprising against Amulius, killing him and rightfully restoring the kingdom to their grandfather.

Deciding to build a town of their own, Romulus and Remus chose the sacred place where the she-wolf had nursed them. Romulus began to build walls on Palatine Hill, but Remus laughed because they were so low. Remus mockingly jumped over them, and in a fit of rage, Romulus killed his brother. Romulus continued the building of the new city, naming it Roma or Rome after himself. Rome is where the Catholic Church has its headquarters.

The name "February" comes from purification ceremonies. February occurred later on the ancient Roman calendar than it does today, so Lupercalia was held in the spring and regarded as a festival of purification and fertility. Each year on February 15th, the Luperci priests gathered on Palantine Hill at the cave of Lupercai. Vestal virgins brought sacred cakes made from the first ears of last year's grain harvest to the fig tree. Two naked men would sacrifice a dog and a goat at the site. The blood was smeared on the foreheads of the young men and then wiped away with wool dipped in milk. The two men would then put on loincloths made from the skin of the goat and would lead groups of priests around the base of the hills of Rome. As they ran, they would lightly strike the women along the way with strips of the goat hide. It is from these implements of purification, or februa, that the month of February gets its name. The act supposedly provided purification from curses, bad luck, and infertility. Februa were the skins of sacrificial animals used for purification on the 14th.

One of the customs was to put the names of available young maidens in a box and the young men would draw one out. Each man accepted the girl whose name he drew out as his love for the duration of the festival, or sometimes longer. This is where Valentine's cards originated.

Later, the Catholic church decided some of these pagan customs were a bit too immoral to be called "Christian." So in 496 A.D., Pope Gelasius did away with the festival of Lupercalia. He chose Valentine as the patron saint of lovers who would be honored at the new festival on February 14th. Instead of drawing out names of young maidens, the

names of saints were placed in a box for drawing. One would pull the name of a saint out of the box and for the following year study and attempt to emulate that saint. This went on for several hundred years.

Why did the Romans choose February 14th to honor Lupercalia or should we say Nimrod? Nimrod, or Baal, the sun god of the ancient pagans, was said to have been born during the winter solstice, which was in the time period of December through January 6th. Later, the Catholic Church settled on the date of December 25th as Christmas Day, but Nimrod's original birthday was January 6th. It was the custom for the mother of a male child to wait forty days after the baby was born to come into public again. Forty days after Nimrod's birthday would be February 15th. Lupercalia was celebrated on this day, with the festivities starting on the 14th. Later, the Catholic church changed the holiday to February 14th and called it Valentine's Day.

Is God pleased with people celebrating a day for a pagan god? If you have pagan customs but call it Christian, does this make it okay? Remember what God has to say about it:

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (Deut 12: 30-32)

THE ORIGIN OF EASTER

Easter is a holiday celebrated by millions in the springtime. It is associated with bunnies, colored eggs, hot cross buns, and what is thought to be the resurrection of Joshua Christ. But when was Easter first observed? And how does Joshua Christ fit in with these odd rituals? What is Lent, Good Friday and sunrise services? Are they a part of God's plan?

The origin of Easter goes all the way back to thousands of years before Christ. After the Flood, Noah's grandson, Cush, married a woman named Semiramis. They had a son named Nimrod. When Cush died, Nimrod married his own mother and set himself up as king. They were a very evil duo. When Nimrod died, his wife/mother did not want to lose control of the people, so she told them that he had ascended to the sun to become the sun-god, Baal. He was to now be worshipped in the sacred flame or candle, which is why many churches today use candles in their religious services. Nimrod would now be the god of fire, known to many as Molech.

Semiramis claimed that she had come down from the moon in a giant moon-egg. What a silly story, but people really believed it! Semiramis became known as Ishtar, Easter, or the moon goddess.

The Many Names of Semiramis and Nimrod

Do you know why Semiramis and Nimrod had so many different names? Do you remember the story of the Tower of Babel? Satan, through Nimrod and Semiramis, started his own religion, mocking God. He knew God's plan of a son who would be born later. Satan's new religion encouraged sun and moon worship, human sacrifices, idolatry, and much more. It was in Nimrod's city of Babel that a very tall tower was built. Nimrod knew about the flood that had once destroyed the earth. He thought if he could just build a tower tall enough, even God could not kill him. Of course, Nimrod did not know about God's promise that he would never destroy the earth with a flood again. Do you re-

member what the sign of that covenant was? The rainbow was the sign. 81

During the time of the building of the Tower of Babel, there was only one language in all the earth. Soon after the flood, the people had once again become as evil as before. God needed to slow down the progress of the wicked of people. One day, while they were working on the tower, suddenly, they could not understand each other. God had confused their languages. The constructing of the tower had to be stopped. The people just could not work together anymore. Those with the same languages banded together and left the area, but they took with them the same Babylonian religion. Nimrod became known in other languages as Baal, Bal, Baalim, Molech, Saturn, Kronos, Vulcan, as well as other names. Semiramis became known as Ishtar, Easter, Astarte, Ostara (which comes from "east"- the direction which the sun comes up), Ash-toreth, and many others. She was known as the queen of heaven, the mother goddess, Goddess of Fertility, and Mother Nature. She was a goddess of many names, worshipped in the springtime when the earth was renewed with new life and green vegetation.

After Nimrod's death, Semiramis became pregnant and told the people that the father of her baby boy was the Sun, or Baal, the sun-god. She named the baby Tammuz. She said he was the reincarnation of Nimrod, which means Nimrod came back to life again as Tammuz. This was as silly as the story that she was born from a moon-egg. But do you think people believed it? They did! How about you? Do you think Semiramis was born from a moon-egg, and that her husband/son was the Sun-god, and her newborn son was Nimrod who had come back to life again?

Tammuz became a hunter, just like Nimrod. One day, he was killed by a wild boar, which is a large, fierce hog with sharp tusks. Semiramis told the people that Tammuz had ascended up to his father, the Sun-god. Now the two of them would be worshipped together in the sacred flame as the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Lent and Hot Cross Buns

Semiramis proclaimed a forty day period of time each year for mourning Tammuz prior to the anniversary of his death. During this time, no meat was to be eaten. Their grieving with Semiramis would ensure their own fertility and success of crops. Worshippers were to think about the

religion of Baal and Tammuz and to make a “T” in front of their hearts as they worshipped. They also ate sacred cakes with the “T” marked on top. Today, the Catholic Church calls this forty day period Lent, and the sacred cakes are hot cross buns. This pagan holiday still bears the name of Easter.

The children gather the wood, the father’s kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVN, and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. (Jeremiah 7:18)

...to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her. The women also said, “And when we burned incense to the QUEEN OF HEAVEN, and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make CAKES for her, to worship her. Because you have burned incense and have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed His voice or walked in His law, calamity has happened to you this day. (Jeremiah 44:17-19)

Easter Bunny And Easter Eggs

Tammuz’s favorite animal was supposedly a rabbit. Rabbits were considered sacred in the Babylonian religion. Rabbits are also a sign of fertility. This means they have lots of babies. Semiramis was known as the goddess of fertility. The well-known fable is that the Easter bunny lays colored eggs. But do rabbits lay eggs? Of course not! Baby rabbits are born alive like humans, or puppies, or kittens. The Easter bunny actually represents Semiramis, and where did she say she came from – the moon-egg. The egg was very sacred in the Babylonian religion. It is a sign of springtime or new birth of the earth and fertility. In some parts of the world, decorating the egg was part of their sacred festivals.

Sunrise Services

Sunrise services are a part of the Easter tradition. Where did it originate? Remember Nimrod, also known as Baal, was the sun-god. Sun worship was a big part of the Babylonian religion. Bowing to the east where the sun comes up in the morning was very traditional in the early days.

And He said to me, “Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing.” So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord’s house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there WEEPING FOR TAMMUZ. Then He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.” So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east. And He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here?” (Ezekiel 8:13-17)

Joshua Christ

So what about Joshua Christ? Does this pagan holiday have anything to do with Him? Does God tell us to use the same pagan practices to worship His Son?

False religions today keep Easter because they think Christ died on Friday, known as “Good Friday” and rose on Sunday morning. But this is wrong. Christ died on a Wednesday afternoon and rose on the seventh day Sabbath. Christ told us that the sign He would give that He was the Son of God, would be that He would be in the grave for as long as Jonah was in the belly of the fish. How long was this? Three days and three nights. Can you count three days and three nights from Friday to Sunday? Of course not. Can you count it from Wednesday evening to the Sabbath evening? Yes. Christ died in the afternoon on Passover day. That evening would be the First Day of Unleavened Bread - a Holy Sabbath day. He was buried just before the sunset Wednesday. Exactly three days and three nights later, on a Sabbath evening just before sunset, he was risen from his grave.

In the year 325 A.D., the Catholic Church came together in what was called the Council of Nicaea. This was the first conference of the bishops to decide important matters. One of the doctrines they changed was keeping Easter instead of Passover. The Catholic Church wanted to separate themselves as much as possible from the Jews, so

THE ORIGIN OF HALLOWEEN

they decided to do away with Passover and set a date for Easter that would never coincide with God's true holy day. By this time, most of the church was keeping Easter on Sunday, but there were still a few who kept Passover on the 14th. The Nicene Creed made it official that Easter was to be kept on Sunday and Passover was not to be kept at all. During this conference, the date for Easter was set. It was to always be on a Sunday and never on the 14th day of the Hebrew calendar. Does man have a right to change the Holy days that God set?

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from among you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying "How did these nations serve the gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. What ever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it or take away from it. (Deut 12:30-31)

Because they do not know Christ, they do not keep the holy days God has given Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day. These are the true holy days ordained by God.

When God's kingdom is ruling this world, everyone will keep the right Holy days in the right way - God's way. Satan's evil pagan holidays, like Easter, will be abolished forever!

The term Halloween is shortened from its original name, All-Hallows-Even, as it is the evening before All Hallows Day, which is also known as All Saints Day, a day the Catholic Church set aside for honoring their dead saints. It has roots thousands of years ago when it was called Samhain.

Samhain was said to be the time when spirits rise from the dead and wandered around trying to return to their homes. The people were frightened and set out food and drinks to try to appease them. They were afraid if they did not set out their best, the spirits might become angry and kill their animals or destroy their property. They were afraid the spirits would play evil tricks on them.

Some of the poor went door to door and begged for treats so the spirits would not come into their homes. Eventually, people started dressing up like ghosts and witches to scare people into giving them food and drink.

The only thing the superstitious people knew to do was to masquerade as one of the demons themselves in hopes to blend in with them and not be noticed. They put black soot on their faces or wore masks. As foolish as all this sounds, there were people who really believed it and were frightened.

It was celebrated at the end of the summer harvest. It was both "summer's end" and a time for the dead to come around. People believed that during Samhain both good and evil spirits came to rejoin the living. It was full of superstitions and evil magic. Jack-o-lanterns were carved out of pumpkins and placed next to the fire to keep away demons. Bobbing for apples signified the passing of your soul from this life to the hereafter. Some even believed if you held a mirror and ate an apple at the same time, you would see your future husband or wife in the mirror.

Samhain was a favorite pagan holiday of the people in Ireland, known as the Celts. They believed during this time the spirit world was

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

more active. The Celtic priests who carried out the pagan rituals were called Druids. They held bonfires to sacrifice animals and even sacrificed people to plead for their gods to cause a good harvest for the next year. The word “bonfire” comes from the words “bone fire,” meaning from the bones of those who were sacrificed in the fire. Bonfires were also a way of lighting the path for the souls of the dead as they wandered from the world of the living back to the underworld. Some people hoped the fires would scare off any spirits that meant them harm. Today, bonfires are part of the Halloween tradition.

Another custom was for the poor to go begging for “soul cakes.” Housewives would give them bread they had made in exchange for prayers that were promised for their dead. Over time, the custom changed and the town’s children became the beggars. They were given sweets, apples, and money. Good luck was promised to those who gave generously and bad luck was on those who were stingy.

What does “trick or treat” mean? Is it God’s loving way to threaten people that if you do not give them something - a treat - then you will play a mean trick on them? This does not seem like God.

Black cats were believed to have special powers. They were thought to hold the souls of the dead. They also were believed to be witches. Sometimes cats were thrown into fires on Halloween night.

Black and orange are colors associated with Halloween. Orange, because it is the time of harvest and because of the jack-o-lanterns used in Halloween. Black is also a color associated with Halloween because it is primarily a symbol of death and darkness. The black of the witch’s cloak and the black cat are a reminder that Halloween was once a festival of the dead.

The Catholic Church attempted to mix so-called Christianity with the paganism of Samhain. They adopted the name All-Hallows-Eve. Hallow means “saint.” The church told the people it was a good time to remember all the saints who had died, but the pagan customs continued on.

The world’s holidays are filled with lies, paganism, superstition, and evil. These are Satan’s holidays, not God’s. We are not to have any part of them.

The world celebrates Christmas as a “Christian” holiday, but does it really come from God and Christ? If not, who’s birthday are they really celebrating? Where do some of the traditions come from that are celebrated - like the Christmas tree, giving presents, and Santa Claus? When did Christmas originate? You will be surprised!

The origin of Christmas goes all the way back to Nimrod and Semiramis. Do you remember the story of the tower of Babel after the flood? Nimrod was a mighty hunter who was worshipped by the people. His mother was also his wife. Her name was Semiramis. Nimrod called himself the Sun-god. The day of worship for him was SUNday. The Sabbath was completely discarded by the people and replaced by Sunday worship. Do you think God was pleased with this?

Satan knew the plan of God. He created a deliberate counterfeit to deceive people. He knew that God would have a son, Joshua Christ, so he set up an evil plan to confuse people so they would not worship God.

Christmas was originally called Saturnalia, in honor of the Saturn, the god of farming or agriculture. Saturn is also associated with Opis, the mother of the earth, or “Mother Nature.” Saturn is actually Nimrod, and Opis is Semiramis. They had different names depending on where you lived. After God confused the languages at the tower of Babel, the people scattered to different areas of the world. They took with them the same false gods they had been worshipping, but now they had different names for them.

Here is the ritual spoken during Saturnalia. Remember Saturnus was Nimrod, the mighty hunter. See if you can pick out the real message behind this ritual.

*Before the mighty Gods that rule the world
from high Olympus’ snowy peak were born,
Saturnus was the king of all the Gods*

and Ops, His sister, was His wife and queen. (Nimrod and Semiramis)
 But when the time had come to yield His throne
 in favor of a younger God, His son,
 then Father Saturn would not step aside.
 A fight ensued between the old and new,
 Till Jove had thrown Saturnus from the sky. (Satan was thrown to the
 earth by God)
 He tumbled down to Earth, and with His wife
 He made a ship and sailed to this, our land.
 He taught the people many useful arts,
 to save the seeds and sow them in the ground,
 so we need never have to search for food.
 He showed us how to breed our animals (Nimrod was a mighty hunter)
 so we might always have their meat and fur,
 so they would help to plow the fertile Earth.

Saturnus first taught folk to strike bright coins
 from shining silver, glittering gold and bronze.
 He showed how money might be put away,
 and saved, and put to use another day.
 In these and other ways Saturnus made
 our lives much easier and free.
 His happy reign was called the Golden Age,
 when there was food enough for everyone,
 and people shared the bounty that they had,
 and no one ever stole or fought or lied.
 But when the end had come to Saturn's reign,
 He wisely chose to set aside His crown.
 He sailed away beyond the Northern Wind,
 to Hyperborea, where He now sleeps,
 upon a hidden island at the Pole, (Remember Santa supposedly lives at
 the North Pole)
 where He awaits another Golden Age.
 But till that happy time is come again,
 in this, the coldest season of the year,
 we go in thought to Saturn's snowy realm
 to wake from sleep the ancient kindly king,

and ask Him once again to walk with us,
 and let us live for this short time with Him,
 enjoying blessings of His Golden Age.
 I wish you, "Bona Saturnalia!"

Do you see Nimrod and Semiramis in this poem? It is all about them!

Saturnalia was observed for a week, ending on Christmas day. People exchanged gifts to one another. A mock king was chosen by drawing lots. His role was to preside over the festival. He would often make ridiculous demands of his subjects, such as asking them to dance naked. When his brief reign ended, he was to be killed or to sacrifice himself on the altar by cutting his own throat - shedding his blood.

All of this is a complete mockery of Joshua Christ, the true Son of God, a future King of all the earth, who died by shedding His blood to pay for our sins. Do you see what the counterfeit Satan has done? Do you see the resemblance?

The Saturnalia, of course, celebrated Saturn—the fire god. Saturn was the god of sowing (planting) because heat from the sun was required to allow for planting and growth of crops. He was also worshipped in this dead-of-winter festival so that he would come back (since he was the “sun”) and warm the earth again so that spring planting could occur. The planet Saturn was later named after him because of its rings and bright red color.

Virtually every civilization has a fire/sun god. The Egyptians, and sometimes Romans, called him Vulcan. The Greeks named him Kronos, but they also called him Saturn. The Babylonians called him Baal or Molech. These were all just various names for Nimrod. The ancient Babylonians would sacrifice their own children to their “fire god.”

Another truth about the origin of Christmas springs from the modern word “cannibal.” A cannibal is someone who eats people.

This practice has its roots in a prime function of all priests of Baal. The Hebrew word for priests is “cahn.” The Levitical priests were told that they must eat of whatever was offered as a sin-offering (Numbers 9,10), but of course, these were clean meats, like a bull or goat. But the priests of Nimrod, or Baal, followed the same rule of eating of the sin offering. Only they did not sacrifice clean meats - they sacrificed people,

usually children. They ate these people after they were sacrificed. This is where we get the word “cannibal” or “Cahan-Bal,” meaning the “Priest of Baal,” who ate human flesh. This is horrible to think about, but it shows how truly evil Baal worship is.

Keeping Christmas is worshipping Baal, celebrating the birthday of the wicked and evil Nimrod, the enemy of God.

Santa Claus

Santa was a common name for Nimrod throughout Asia Minor. This was also the same fire god who supposedly came down the chimneys of the ancient pagans and the same fire god to whom infants were burned and eaten in human sacrifice. Telling children there is a Santa Claus is a lie. Which Commandment does this break?

Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree dates as far back as Nimrod as well. The people believed that Nimrod came back after death as an evergreen tree. They decorated the tree and placed gifts to their god under the tree. They exchanged gifts to one another to bring good luck for the new year coming up.

Tree worship was central to the religious beliefs of the Teutons and Druids (pagans) who built their temples in the woods. Trees were regarded as possessing spirits, and they were only cut down out of necessity. The Romans decorated evergreen trees and wreaths at the Saturnalia, and an evergreen shrub called the “herb of the sun” was especially favored. Remember, who was the sun god? Nimrod.

The Christmas tree is actually mentioned in the Bible. It is recorded in Jeremiah 10, many years before Christ was ever born, but it was not spoken of as a good thing, but as evil that we should not participate in:

Thus says the Lord: Learn NOT the way of the Gentiles. Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are futile (vain). For one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold. They fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak.

This verse describes a Christmas tree exactly. The heathens were putting up Christmas trees long before Christ was even born.

Gifts at Christmas

The custom of exchanging gifts at Christmas comes from ancient times of giving small tokens or charms in hope of bringing people good luck for the following year. Common gifts were lamps (symbol of light) or silver and gold (wealth). It was all based on superstition.

Most people know that Christ was not born anywhere near December 25th. He was actually born in the late summer or early fall. We can know this because the Bible says the shepherds were in the fields tending to their flock when He was born. It is too cold in December. The shepherds would not have had their flocks in the fields at that time.

Change the Name

Christmas was not celebrated for several hundred years after Christ was born. The Catholic Church tried to get people to stop practicing paganism. When they were not successful, they just joined in and called the holiday by a different name. Instead of Saturnalia, it would now be called Christmas. The same customs of the old pagan holiday were kept, but under a new name. They told people that it would be all right for them to celebrate the same holiday with all the ancient customs, but call it Christmas instead of Saturnalia.

Have you ever heard of the saying, “A rose by any other name is still a rose”? What does this mean? You can call a skunk a cat if you want to, but he is still a skunk. And if you are in doubt, just get a little closer! You will find out. Changing the name of Saturnalia to Christmas does not mean you are worshipping God.

Do you remember the story of Moses when he went up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God? Aaron and the other Israelites became impatient waiting for him to return. They made a golden calf to worship. The Bible says that Aaron told the people, “Tomorrow will be a feast unto the Lord.” But it really was not a feast for God, was it? It was just called that. They were worshipping a calf. Christmas is the same thing. It is worshipping Baal, but saying it is for Christ. It is a lie!

Do you think God is pleased with mixing paganism with worship-

ping His Son or Him? Of course not! God gave us the holy days to worship Him on. We are told not to add to or take away from anything in God's Bible. You will not find Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or Valentine's Day in all the Bible. They are pagan holidays in worship of Baal.

If God would have wanted us to celebrate Christ's birthday, He would have told to and given us the proper date to do so, but the date of Christ's birth was not given to us. We know its not in December. God didn't intend for us to celebrate Christ's birthday. We keep the holy days as God instructed us to do.

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be CAREFUL to observe it, YOU SHALL NOT ADD TO IT NOR TAKE AWAY FROM IT. (Deuteronomy 12: 30-32)

Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar. (Proverbs 30: 5-6)

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophesy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophesy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev 22: 18-19)

That is a stern warning from God!

We are not to worship God the way WE choose. We are to worship God exactly as He tells us to - not adding to and not taking away. The children of Israel followed Baal worship just as the rest of the world has

done. God gives us the holy days to keep. They have wonderful meanings about God's plan for mankind. Satan's holidays are evil and empty. We should have no part of them! When Christ comes back to the earth all those wicked holidays will be abolished forever! There will be no more worshipping Baal. What a wonderful time to look forward to!