

**GOD'S PROMISES**

**COME TRUE**

## **PREFACE**

THE BIBLE is God's revelation of his plan for the redemption and recovery from death of the human race, which lost life because of sin. It has been provided by the Creator primarily as a guide for his own people. It has also been used by God as a witness to the world of mankind in general, and in this respect its influence has been a powerful one for good, wherever and to whatever extent its standard of righteousness has been accepted and obeyed.

There is no better time to begin learning and practicing what the Bible teaches than early youth, yet the Bible is not written in such a simple, understandable manner that a child can easily comprehend much of its message. To simplify the stories and teachings of the Bible so that children can understand them is the objective ought in "God's Promises Come True."

The publishers trust, moreover, that this book will prove to be more than merely another book of Bible stories for children. It does contain most of the main stories of the Bible, beginning with the time before man was created, and ending with the Apostle John's vision on the Isle of Patmos. But these stories are in the Bible for a purpose. In them is interwoven the larger and much more important story of God's plan of redemption and restoration of a lost race, and we have tried to follow the theme of this larger story in relating the incidental narratives of the Scriptures.

This explains the reason for the title which has been chosen for the book, "God's Promises Come True." It is in these promises that God reveals his plan; and the real value of the Bible for children, as well as for all, is in the understanding of this plan, and in the assurances that it will be successfully consummated. In these days of distress and fear, when the best that human wisdom can do is to devise instruments of destruction which threaten to annihilate the human race, what could be more reassuring for children than to learn that God has an unfailing and loving plan for the security and blessing of all mankind?

One of the features of the book is the story of the Bible itself - Part I concerning the Old Testament, and Part II dealing with the New Testament. Necessarily these two stories concerning the Bible are brief. In them we have endeavored not to weary young minds with too much history, nor great detail concerning the contents of the many books which comprise the Bible. But we believe that what has been said will help children to grasp the general content of the Scriptures, and that this will in later years be a step toward a more detailed study of the sacred Word.

Christian parents do not need to be reminded of the privilege of instructing their children concerning the Word of God, "God's Promises Come True" is not intended to supplant this privilege and responsibility of parents. We trust, rather, that it will stimulate a greater interest in helping children to know and love the Bible and its divine Author more than ever before.

The preparation and publishing of "God's Promises Come True" has been a joy to all who have had a part in it. It has been a cooperative effort in which many hands and hearts have had a share. And with all the effort there has been the prayer that God may bless it to his glory. It is with this prayer that we send it forth, and commend it to all who in every place may wish to use it in the further instruction of their own children or the children of others.

## God Who Made Us

ONE thing that all boys and girls should learn is that there are many things they don't know. That is true of grownups too. But boys and girls, and grown-up people as well, should also know that because there are some things they cannot understand it does not mean that those things are not real. Let us think a minute about the radio, or better still, television. In England they call the radio the "wireless." that is a good name, too, because it means there are no wires between the radio in your home and the broadcasting station from which the programs come.

Well, as you know, we sit in our homes and listen to programs of different kinds. In a children's program we hear boys and girls singing and playing music. That beautiful music comes out of the radio just as though the people were right there in the room. And in television we see the singers also. Isn't that wonderful? Now, you might think this is because those in the radio or television station are singing and playing so loudly that it can be heard far away, but that is not so. They don't sing and play loudly at all, yet the music comes through the air for miles and miles, and when we tune in we hear it.

Now I imagine you saying to me, "Please explain how that is done. What makes the music come through the air?"

Well, I just don't know, so I cannot explain it. The only ones who can explain that are those who made the stations and the sets which we have in our home. But just the same, even though we can not explain it, we know that radio and television are real and we enjoy them. And we know, too, that the reason we have these things is because somebody made them.

Then there are so many other things we cannot explain. We look up into the sky at night and we see hundreds and hundreds of beautiful stars. They twinkle so brightly that we often wish we could reach right up and take one of the stars in our hands, but we know that we cannot do that. They are so very far away that it is impossible for us to reach them, no matter how hard we might try. Sometimes we see airplanes up in the sky, and they are so far away that they look just like little birds, don't they? Well those stars are ever so much farther away than any airplane could ever be.

The stars look like fine sparks of fire, but actually they are great big worlds, much larger than this earth on which we live. They look so little because they are so very far away. Now I know what you are thinking! You are wondering who put the stars up in the sky. Perhaps you think it must have been a very tall man with a long ladder. But that's not right. No one on this earth could possibly reach the stars, nor would anyone be able to put them up in their places in the sky. "Well," you ask, "how did they get there?"

Boys and girls, it is very important that we know and believe the right answer to this question. It was God! But you ask:

"Who is God, and what does he look like?"

The Bible tells us who God is, and that he is the One who made the earth and the stars, and all the other wonderful things of nature we see around us. The Bible calls him the Creator, which means one who makes things. The Bible does not tell us, though, what God looks like, and no one on this earth has ever seen him.

We know that we would not be able to make the stars, just as we couldn't make a radio. But someone who knows more than we do made the radio, and so someone who knows more than anybody on this earth made the stars. The Bible tells us it was God, and we know that the Bible is true. So now we have two very important things to remember.

There is something else we should know and remember, which is that while we have wonderful eyes, we cannot see everything. You may have a book with many nice pictures in it. When you hold the book in your hand you can see and enjoy the pictures, but if someone should take the book out into the street and then you tried to see the pictures in it, why, of course, you wouldn't be able to see them. Your eyes are not made to see pictures so far away. But the pictures are just as pretty out there on the street as they were when you held the book in your own hands, only your eyes can't see them.

Well, our eyes can't see God, either. Our eyes are not made so that we can. God is different from us. He is so different that we couldn't see him even if he were close to us. He has to be different, or else he could not have made the stars. But God is very real, and much more wonderful and powerful than anyone we have ever seen. God made many other things beside the stars.

He also made those wonderful beings which the Bible calls angels. They, too, are different from us. They are heavenly beings, and that is why our eyes cannot see them.

The very first one of these heavenly beings which God made was called the Archangel. This name means that he was the most important angel. The Bible also calls him the "Son of God." This dear Son of God was, the Bible explains, the "beginning of the creation of God." This means that he was the very first heavenly being that was made. Then, this wonderful heavenly Son worked with God in making everything else. That is what the Bible tells us. In fact, the Son made everything almost by himself, but he did it for God, and God gave him the power and wisdom to do it.

I don't know how to build a house, but if someone asked me to build a house, and showed me just how to do it, and gave me everything to work with, then I could build the house. Now that's the way it was with this wonderful Son of God. God furnished everything to work with, and gave him the wisdom he needed to do the work.

And God's Son certainly did make a lot of things! All the stars were made by him. And he made the angels also. Among these angels was a very handsome one who was named Lucifer. The Bible tells us that the Son of God, together with Lucifer and all the other angels, sang together because they were so happy over the wonderful works of God. How grand that music must have been - more beautiful, I am sure, than anything we have ever heard.

But, you know, there is a sad part to this story. Lucifer became proud and jealous. It's a terrible thing to be proud and jealous. I just hope that none of you ever get that way. If some other children have more good things than you, be happy about it. Just say to yourself, "I'm glad they have such nice things!" If you think about it in the right way, you can be just as happy as they are!

Try it, and see if I am not right!

But Lucifer didn't look at it that way. He did not have as many favors as were enjoyed by the Son of God, so he decided that he was not being treated fairly. He decided that God was to blame for this, so he began to oppose God. When boys and girls begin to feel jealous they become unhappy and sullen. They pout and are cranky, and when their parents want them to do something, they sniffle and cry.

Well, I don't suppose angels pout and sniffle, but Lucifer did turn against God, and has been God's enemy ever since. I want you to know this, because the Bible tells us a lot about Lucifer. He has caused a great deal of trouble right here on the earth; but if we know about him, and how he works, then he can't cause us so much trouble. When Lucifer started to work against God, his name was changed. He was called Satan, and the Bible also calls him the devil.

After all the angels were made, and all the stars were made, and the sun and the moon, God's Son began the work of making things here on earth. Just think of all the wonderful things that were made for our enjoyment! There are rivers, and mountains, and trees, and flowers, and fruit, and nuts, and so very many other things. Then there are all the animals, and birds, and fish - all these were made by God's Son and put here on the earth to live and to enjoy themselves.

But, you know, I haven't even mentioned the most wonderful thing that was done here on the earth. It was so wonderful that I'll have to make a whole story out of it, which will be the next story - the story of Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman.

## GOD WHO MADE US QUESTIONS

What are some of the things which boys and girls and grownups cannot understand?

Who made the stars, and why are they like little sparks of fire?

Why is it not possible for us to see God, who made us?

Whom else did God make besides people who live on the earth?

## At Home In a Garden

YEARS and years and years ago there was just one person in the whole wide world. He had only one name, and a very short name at that-it was Adam! This was a very long time ago, before there were any automobiles, or trains, or telephones, or radios. or television sets. It was so long ago that no houses had been built. In fact, there was no one to build houses, and no one to live in them if they had been built. Why, Adam didn't even have a bed on which to sleep! Perhaps you would like to know how long ago it was that Adam lived all alone. It was more than six thousand years. That is a long time, isn't it?

Now, just because Adam had no house, we must not think he didn't have a nice place in which to live. Before Adam was made, God planted a beautiful big garden which he called Eden. There were ever so many wonderful flowers and trees in that garden. They were the most beautiful flowers and trees that anybody has ever seen. There were plenty of nice vegetables, and all kinds of fruit.

And God put Adam into this perfect garden to take care of it, and to enjoy it forever.

While there were no men or women or children to keep Adam company, he was not all alone, because the Bible tells us that there were many birds and animals in Eden. God, who made Adam, asked him to give names to all the animals.

And what a task that must have been!

If you don't think so, the next time you go to a zoo or to a circus and see all the animals, try to imagine what you would call them if they did not already have names. You would look at the giraffe and I guess you would call him Mr. Longneck; or maybe you would just call him funny. So Adam had to settle down to real business and think up very good names for all the animals. And he did it well, too.

Of course, it wasn't necessary for Adam to hunt all over the garden for the various animals in order to see them and to give their names. The Bible tells us that he was made a king, or a ruler over them, so they all obeyed him, and would come right up to him when he called them, just as a dog will do for us today.

Even a dog won't do that, though, unless he has been treated well. If you kick a dog and throw stones at him, he will probably run away, whenever he sees you coming, or he will watch his chance and give you a good hard bite, just to get even.

Well, Adam was not only kind to all the animals, but he was friendly with them, even with those which now are wild. He treated them just as we do the pets we have in our homes. Since that time many people have been so unkind to animals that they have become frightened, and some of them are very ferocious and dangerous.

When Adam had finished naming the animals, and had become acquainted with them all, he made a very important discovery. He found out that there were no animals with which

he could talk in the way we talk to each other. The animals were very nice, and he was glad to have them in the garden with him, but he really needed a companion who would be more like himself. Imagine how lonesome you would be if there were no other girls or boys around.

The best dog in the world cannot take the place of a brother or a sister.

Well, that is what Adam discovered. Of course, God knew this all the time, but he wanted Adam to find out for himself. God didn't plan that Adam should remain all alone in the Garden of Eden forever, but he wanted Adam to understand how much he really needed company. In this way, you see, he would be more thankful for what God did for him.

And what did God do?

You have guessed it already! Yes, he created a real friend for Adam, who also became his wife. Her name was Eve. Pretty name isn't it? It means life-giver, because she was the first woman. God wanted Eve to be very much like Adam, so he made her in a very wonderful way. He put Adam to sleep, and while he was asleep God took one of his ribs away from him, and with that rib he made Eve.

Wasn't that wonderful?

In this way, you see, Eve was just like Adam-just like another part of him, yet she was separate-and they could talk together and be real friends to each other. God is certainly very wise and can do wonderful things!

There is no use for us to try to understand how God did such a wonderful thing as that. He has done many great things that we cannot understand, but they are true just the same. We cannot even understand what makes us grow, can we? "Oh," you say, "It is because we eat good, nourishing food." But that is not all there is to it. If our stomachs do not work properly we will not grow, no matter how much we eat. Sometimes, perhaps, our stomachs get upset, and then we don't want to eat, or if we do eat, we get very sick and wish we hadn't eaten.

Suppose God had made us in such a way that we would never want to eat, or that our stomachs would always be upset. I guess we couldn't expect to grow very much then, could we? Well, that's just it. We don't understand how God made us with good stomachs, and eyes, and ears. We just know that he did, and that he made Eve; and that Adam was very glad to have Eve for a companion.

But there was one thing about Adam and Eve that was different from the rest of us. They had never been children. Can you imagine that? While we are children and growing up, we learn a lot of things, don't we? We learn that certain things are right, and that other things are wrong. We learn that if we always do what is right we will be much happier than when we do wrong.

Well, Adam and Eve had to learn this lesson as grown-up persons, because they had never been children. God knew they needed a lesson like this, so he told them not to eat the fruit that grew on a certain tree in the garden. It was called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And God made it very plain to Adam and Eve that it was really wrong to eat the fruit of this tree, and that if they did eat it they would surely die.

Now there was a serpent in the garden, and being tame it probably played where Eve could watch it. In some way this serpent made Eve believe that it would be all right to eat the fruit of that forbidden tree. The serpent may have eaten some of the fruit just to prove to Eve that God was not telling her the truth when he said the fruit of this tree would kill her.

Of course, the serpent wasn't really smart enough to do this all by itself. Satan caused the serpent to act that way. Satan, as I have already told you, was an enemy of God, and that is why he made the serpent deceive Eve.

Yes, Eve was deceived by that serpent, and ate the forbidden fruit. And what was even worse, she coaxed Adam to eat it also. Thus they both did what God told them not to do..

Now the Lord had told Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed him they would die. This meant that they couldn't live on forever and ever enjoying all the wonderful things in the Garden of Eden. instead, sooner or later they would become feeble, and finally die.

Death is a terrible thing, isn't it?

And just think, it is because Adam and Eve did as God told them not to do that people all over the world are dying! If it had not been for this, there wouldn't be any sick people in the world.

Well, Adam and Eve learned a lot in that way, didn't they? If mother or father tells you not to put your hands on the hot stove and then you do so, you suffer for your disobedience; but you do learn that the stove is hot, so you don't put your hands on it any more. Now that is why God let Adam and Eve do what they did. He wanted them to learn for themselves that they would suffer if they did what he told them not to do.

The Bible tells us that some day God will use his great power to make Adam and Eve alive again, and then all that they learned will be a great help to them, won't it? And even better than this, the Bible tells us that all Adam's children who have died will be made alive again, and by and by the whole earth will be just like the Garden of Eden. You see, that is what God really planned to do. He wanted Adam's family to keep making that garden bigger, until it covered the whole earth.

God doesn't change his mind, and he has plenty of power to do everything he wants to do; so the whole earth will be like the Garden of Eden some day. Then you will meet Adam and Eve, and can ask them a lot of questions that I wouldn't know how to answer, such as what they did at night without a house in which to sleep.

## AT HOME IN GARDEN QUESTIONS

Who was the first man, and where did he live?

Who was the first one to give names to animals?

Who was the wife of the first man, and where did she come from?

Why did Adam and Eve have to leave the Garden of Eden and will they ever  
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## **The First Two Brothers**

CAN you imagine what it must have been like when there were only two boys in the whole world? Just think what that would mean! No one to go to school with; no other children to play with-just two boys, all by themselves. Yes, you're right, Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman, were the father and mother of these two boys.

For a little while there was only one boy, and when he was born his mother named him Cain. To mother Eve the name Cain meant that this boy had been given to her by God, and this made her very happy.

As we learned in our last story, Adam and Eve both did what God told them not to do. Because of this God made them move out of the beautiful garden he had prepared for them. They didn't find things as nice outside of the garden. Fruit, vegetables, and other foods were scarce, and hard to grow. The country outside the garden was very much like a desert. The land was dry and hot, and it required a great deal of work to grow enough food to keep them from being hungry. I am sure Adam and Eve were often hungry, and very tired. It was their own fault, though, because if they had obeyed God they could have stayed right in that beautiful garden where good food was plentiful, and everything was pleasant.

Well, they must have had many dreary, unhappy days after they had to move out of the garden, and they probably thought that God had forgotten all about them. Well, he hadn't. They were being punished, but God remembered them, and mother Eve had the right idea when Cain was born-he had been given to her by the Lord.

No wonder she was glad!

It was not so very long after this that God gave Adam and Eve another boy, and his mother named him Abel. This was especially nice for Cain, for now he was no longer the only boy in the world. My how happy Cain must have been to have a brother!

Do you think Cain and Abel went to school just as boys and girls do today? The Bible doesn't tell us everything they did, but I hardly think they went to school as children do now.

How do I know?

Well, I don't see how there could have been schools without children, do you? As Cain and Abel were the first children, and for a long time the only children, I guess we will have to decide that they didn't go to school; at least not the kind children attend now.

But don't start wishing you were Cain and Abel just because they didn't have to go to school, and didn't have homework to do. The Bible tells us that when they grew up to be young men, Cain was a vegetable farmer and Abel was a raiser of sheep. Now you can figure it out for yourself that they had to learn how to do these things while they were

growing up, so after all, in this way they went to what we might call a school, didn't they?

Yes, they had much to learn.

Let's imagine that Adam, the father of these first two boys, was their schoolteacher. The reason children go to school is to learn the things they will need to know when they grow up. What Cain and Abel needed to know was how to farm and to raise sheep. Well, the very best way to learn was to help their father do those things, so I can just see Cain out in the field helping his father dig up the ground and plant the seed, and later care for the plants by pulling out the weeds.

Oh yes, they had weeds too! The Bible calls them thorns and thistles, which are the worst kind of weeds. There weren't any weeds in the Garden of Eden, but there were plenty of them outside, and they surely did cause Adam a lot of trouble.

Adam knew that Cain also would have trouble with the weeds, so he taught him what to do with them, and how to care for the various kinds of plants he wanted to grow in order to provide food for the family. So, you see, there was a great deal for Cain to learn, and maybe his back was quite tired sometimes from tilling the soil and pulling the weeds. But that was really good for him. A little work doesn't hurt boys and girls. In fact, it makes them strong and healthy.

And it's fun, too!

When you are helping mother or father with their work, just make believe it is a game, and you will really enjoy it. But if you say to yourself, "My, this is awful the way I have to work," then you won't enjoy it a bit, and it won't do you nearly as much good.

Abel had a lot of things to learn, also. He decided that when he grew to be a man he would own a big sheep ranch. Well, there's a lot more to a sheep ranch than merely sitting down watching the sheep. You have to know how to take care of the sheep-where to find the best grass for them, and good water, too. And you should know how to take care of them when they get hurt, or become ill, as sheep sometimes do, just like boys and girls.

Aren't you glad that someone knows how to take care of you when you are sick?

Well, probably sheep feel the same way about it, and if Abel was to be a good sheep-raiser, that was one of the things he had to learn. So, you see, he went to school also, not in a big brick or a wooden schoolhouse, but out in the fields where he could watch the sheep and learn to do all the things necessary for them to be healthy and to grow.

Finally, school days for Cain and Abel were over. They were no longer boys, but young men. Don't try to think of them, though, as wearing long trousers, because men didn't wear trousers back in those days. Both children and grownups wore only a simple robe or

cloth around the body. But I doubt if folks thought much about clothes then, as they were kept busy growing food. They couldn't go to a grocery store or a vegetable stand and buy what they wanted, because there were no such places. If they didn't grow food for themselves they just didn't have any. Cain and Abel must have learned their lessons well while they were growing up, because they seemed to be very successful in farming and in raising sheep. Probably they both were hard workers, too, and that is very important.

But even if they did work hard, Cain and Abel were very thankful to God for everything they had, and because they wanted to show God how much they appreciated what he had done for them they brought gifts to him from what he had given to them. Gifts to God are sometimes called offerings, and sometimes they are called sacrifices. In those days offerings to God were placed on an altar, which was usually a pile of stones. When God was pleased with the gift he caused it to catch on fire. Well, Cain's gift to God was from the fruits and vegetables he had grown, and Abel gave God one of his sheep. God was very much pleased with Abel's gift, but he did not accept the offering made by Cain. Of course this was rather strange, but God had a very good reason for it. God has a good reason for everything he does. He doesn't always tell us the reason, and it is not necessary that we should know. But God always knows what is best. That is what the Bible tells us, and we know that the Bible is true!

God wants us all to learn that we should do things the way he wants them done, because he is so much wiser than we, and his way is always the best way. It's just the same as when mother or father wants us to do something. It might not seem right to us, but they know best. Mother may ask Mary to wash the breakfast dishes, but thinks she would rather make the beds. Well, of course, it's a good thing to have the beds made—there's nothing wrong with that at all—but mother has a reason for wanting the dishes washed first. She may not tell Mary the reason, but if Mary is a good, obedient girl she will do what mother wants done, whether she knows why or not.

That is the way Cain should have thought about it. When he found that God was pleased with the offering of a sheep, he could have asked Abel for a sheep. Then he could have made an offering that would have been pleasing to God. But he didn't do that. Instead, he became jealous of Abel. Wasn't that terrible! Just think, these two boys grew up together. They had played and worked together, and now Cain became jealous of his brother. He started to argue with Abel one day, and became so angry—well, I hate to say it, but he killed Abel.

I told you before about Lucifer, who also became jealous. Jealousy is an awful thing. Never, never allow yourself to be jealous. If you do, you will be very unhappy, and you may do things for which you will be very, very sorry.

The Lord was angry with Cain, and Cain ran away. He was punished, too, for he was marked in such a way that everybody who saw him knew that he had done wrong. You know, if we do wrong, people will surely find out about it. The only way to be happy is to do the best we can to please God.

Adam and Eve, Abel's father and mother, must have missed him terribly. But God is very good, and he gave them another boy to take Abel's place. Eve appreciated this very much. You see, when Adam and Eve did as God told them not to do, God said that he would send someone who would punish Satan. Eve seemed to think this would be one of her children. Maybe she thought Abel would be the one, and now that God had sent another son to take the place of Abel, she was sure he was the one.

God spoke of the one he would send to punish Satan as the "seed," which simply means a son, and when Eve's third son was born she said, "God has given me another "seed" instead of Abel." She named him Seth.

Yes, Eve still loved God, and was very glad to think that he would do something for her family. Of course Seth was not really the seed whom God had promised. It was to be a great many years before God would send that seed! But God has never forgotten that promise. In fact, he has already sent the real seed, or Son of promise, as we will learn in a later story. I mention it now because it shows why God was pleased with the gift Abel brought to him. The blood of Abel's lamb was shed, and this offering was like a much more wonderful offering which would be brought to God thousands of years later; one that would be very pleasing to God, brought to him by his Son, Jesus.

Jesus was God's Lamb, who shed his blood so that Adam and Eve, and all the people in the world, can by and by return to the Garden of Eden, which will then be the whole earth made beautiful.

#### THE FIRST TWO BROTHERS QUESTIONS

What were the names of the first two boys who ever lived, and who were their parents?

Did the first two brothers ever go to school?

Why was God pleased with the offering which Abel made to him?

## **The First Ship Builder**

WHAT would you think of a man who built a great big boat right in the middle of a field where there was no water? I guess you'd say, "My, that would be a very strange man." But there was a man who did that a long, long time ago, and he wasn't strange, either! He did it because God asked him to; and God asked him because he knew that some day there would be water in that field, and the man would need a boat to keep from being drowned. And who was that man? His name was Noah!

Of course that was a very long time ago. There weren't nearly as many people on the earth as there are now, but most of the people who were on the earth were very wicked. You see, that same old Satan, who did all he could to make Adam and Eve disobey God, kept right on trying to make people do things that weren't right. And as more and more people lived on the earth they became very wicked, so wicked that God knew the best thing to do was to cover the whole earth with water, in order that all the wicked people would be drowned.

Of course, everybody wasn't wicked. Noah was a very good man. He loved God, and wanted to do everything he could to please God. And God loved Noah, too. He didn't want Noah to be drowned in the water that was coming upon the earth, so he told him to build a great big boat. The Bible calls it an ark.

Noah had never seen a boat of any kind, because he didn't live near the ocean. Besides, there weren't any boats on the ocean-not that long ago. Boats are used to carry things to other people, and to bring things back from people who live in different parts of the world. But when Noah lived on the earth there were no people in other parts of the world, so there was no need for boats.

Well, I guess you wonder how Noah could build a boat if he had never seen a boat! But he could, because God told him how to do it. God told him how long the boat should be, and how high and how wide it should be, and how many decks it should have. How long do you suppose that boat was? Why, it was over five hundred feet long! That is a big boat. It is larger than many of the boats which travel all the way across the ocean today.

Noah's boat had to be large, because God wanted him to put some of all the different kinds of animals into it-and birds too, mind you I God knew that the water would be over all the earth, and he wanted the animals and birds to live on the earth after the water dried up. That is the reason he told Noah to make the ark so big.

Of course there wasn't room for very many of each kind of the various animals and birds. There was just room enough for two of most of them, like lions and tigers and squirrels. There were some animals, though, that were more important, such as cows and sheep, so God told Noah to take seven each of these more important animals.

The next time you go to the circus, or to the zoo, just count up all the animals you see, and then you will know why Noah's ark had to be so big.

And now I suppose you will wonder if Noah was the only man God wanted to go into the ark. Well, not exactly; but still there weren't very many. Noah had three sons who also loved God, and God wanted to save these three sons, too. Their names were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. That last name is a hard one to pronounce, but probably his father and mother liked it all right.

And Noah had a very good wife, too, and she loved God, and he didn't want her to be drowned, either.

Besides, Noah's three sons all had good wives, so God told Noah to take the whole family into the ark. Altogether there were eight people Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives.

Now you will want to know something of how Noah built the ark, and how long it took him to do it. Well, it was a very long job. You see, Noah didn't have all the good tools to work with that people have today when they build boats. They had some tools, though. The Bible tells us that the people at that time had musical instruments, and they would need tools to make those, wouldn't they? So Noah must have had all the tools he really needed to build the ark.

Still, he couldn't build that boat as fast as we build boats today. For one thing, he didn't have very many people to help him. Maybe you think Noah could build that boat in two or three weeks' time, but he couldn't. The Bible doesn't tell us how long it took Noah to build the ark, but it must have taken him a very long time.

I guess you think that Noah must have been a pretty old man when the water came. Well, he was. You know, people at that time lived to be very, very old. Why, can you imagine that Noah was five hundred years old before he even started to build the ark? He was 600 years old when the flood came. And after the flood he lived over 300 years more! My, wasn't he an old man! But he wasn't the oldest man who ever lived.

The oldest man who ever lived was Methuselah. And how old do you suppose Methuselah was when he died? Why, he was nine hundred and sixty-nine years old! That's about ten times older than people live to be now. Do you think you would like to live more than nine hundred years?

Well, by and by people will again be-able to live that long, and much longer, Too! The Bible tells us that the time is coming when people will keep right on living, and won't die at all. Won't that be wonderful? And there won't be any more sickness or trouble, either!

To get back to Noah's ark, it did take him a long, long time to build it. But, you see, God wanted him to build that ark just right so it would not sink when the water came. Besides, it wouldn't have been comfortable for Noah and his family if that boat had leaked, would it? So God told him just how to make it. The last thing Noah was to put on the ark to keep the water out is what the Bible calls "pitch." I guess that was something like tar, and Noah spread it all over the ark.

Finally the ark was built, and Noah arranged to have all the animals go into it. Then he took his wife and his three sons and their wives, and they went into the ark. Noah had built a big door in the side of the ark, and after they were all in God closed the door, and they remained there for seven whole days. My, those must have been long days!

Finally it started to rain. And it rained, and rained, and rained, and rained.

And how long do you suppose it did rain? When it rains now for two or three days we get pretty tired of it, don't we? We wish it would stop and that the sun would shine again, so we could go out to play and do things. But it rained for more than just two or three days after Noah and the animals and birds went into the ark. It rained hard for forty whole long days! Think of that! That's almost six whole weeks. And it just rained, and rained, and rained, and rained!

With all that rain, what a lot of water there must have been!

Noah knew now just why God wanted him to build that ark, because right where he built the ark on that dry land it was now all covered with water. There was so much water that the ark floated. Of course that is what it was made for! It was lucky for Noah and his family that the ark did float, otherwise they would all have been drowned. But Noah built that boat just the way God told him to build it, so it was really a good boat. And even though the water covered all the land, Noah and his family were in a safe place.

There were some things about the boat which Noah built that were quite different from most big boats we see today. It didn't have any big, tall smokestacks; it didn't have sails or engines to make it go, either, because God didn't want the boat to go anywhere. He merely wanted it to float. So after it rained and rained for forty days, and the water covered over the ground everywhere, that ark just floated around. And there was nothing for Noah and his family to do but to wait for the water to dry up, and so they waited and waited.

After they had waited for two hundred and twenty-four days they looked out of the window which Noah had built in the top of the ark, and what do you suppose they saw? Why, they saw the tops of the mountains coming up out of the water, and then they knew that the water was drying up! Of course Noah didn't know just how much water had dried up. They didn't have airplanes, so they couldn't fly over the water to see if they could find some dry land.

So after waiting forty days more, he took one of the ravens-a raven, you know, is a big black bird like a crow-and pushed it out through the window. The raven flew away, and it continued to fly back and forth, so Noah was not too sure how much dry land there really was. Then he sent forth a dove which came back. Seven days later he sent forth the dove again. It flew around and finally came back to the ark with a pretty leaf in its mouth! And then Noah knew that there was dry land somewhere with trees on it.

Noah was a very smart man, wasn't he?

He waited seven days more while the water kept drying up, and then he sent the dove out again. This time it didn't come back at all. And then Noah really knew that there was plenty of dry land. It wasn't long after that when the waters were dried up so much that the ark rested right on the ground again. It was on a mountain which the Bible calls Ararat.

When Noah was very sure that the ground was dry enough, he opened up the big door in the side of the ark and they all came out-his wife, and their three sons, and their wives, and all the animals and birds. My, it must have seemed good to get out of that big boat after all that time! Noah was very happy that God had been so good to his family, so he built an altar of stones, just as Abel did, and he made an offering to God. God was very much pleased with this. He told Noah that never, never again would he let it rain on the earth so much.

God wanted Noah really to believe this, so what do you suppose God did? He placed a beautiful rainbow in the sky, and he told Noah that this rainbow was a sign that never again would he let it rain and rain until all the land was covered with water. Now, isn't that wonderful?

We often see a rainbow even now, don't we? Yes, and whenever we see one, no matter how hard it might have been raining, it tells us not to be worried, that it will stop raining before all the land is covered over with water.

God has a very good reason why he doesn't want all the land covered over with water again. You see God made this earth to be man's home. And as I told you before, some day the whole earth will be just like the Garden of Eden. And then Noah and his family, and all the families who have ever lived on the earth, will come back from their graves, and they will live here in this beautiful big garden.

## THE FIRST SHIPBUILDER QUESTIONS

Who was the first man to build a ship, and why did he build it on dry land?

Why was it necessary for the first ship that was built to be large enough to hold so many animals?

What caused this ship to float in water after it had been built on dry land?

Why were there no engines in the ship that Noah built?

## The Tower of Babel

IF YOU should be out playing some day, and a little boy should come along and say to you, "Vatten," what would you say? I guess you'd say, "My, that poor little boy can hardly talk, can he?" But if you thought this you would be wrong, because he does know how to talk.

You see, he talks a different language than you. When he used that word which sounded so funny to you he was really asking for a drink of water. He was a little Swedish boy, and Swedish boys speak the Swedish language. If you were Swedish, you could have a fine time with him. You could talk about ever so many things. and you would understand each other. But that little Swedish boy was afraid you wouldn't understand him, so he just said one word which meant water, and you didn't even understand that.

Years and years ago all the people in the world spoke the same language, so they understood one another. Of course there weren't as many people in the world then as there are now, because it was shortly after that great flood had drowned nearly everyone as I told you in my last story.

Right after that flood there were only eight people in the whole world-Noah and his family. Noah had three sons, as we learned before, and they all had wives, and after the flood children were born to these families. These children grew up to be men and women, and other children were born. After a while there were quite a few people in the world, you see.

One of Noah's sons was called Ham. One of Ham's children Was called Cush, and Cush had a boy called Nimrod. So, you see, Noah was the great-grandfather of a man called Nimrod. The Bible tells us that Nimrod was a very expert hunter. Many people thought Nimrod was a wonderful man because he was so brave, and could hunt wild animals, so they thought it would be good if he could be their king, and rule over them.

These people decided to work together and build a big city, and they decided also that in this city they would build a great and tall tower. They planned to build that tower so high into the sky that it could be seen for a great distance. The Bible tells us that the people thought this high tower would keep them from losing each other.

They wanted the tower to be very strong, so they learned how to make bricks, and they stuck these bricks together with what the Bible calls slime. It probably wasn't much different from the way we cement bricks together today when we want to build a house.

But God was not pleased to see the people build such a big tower.

God did not want all the people to stay in one place where they could see this tower. He desired them to live in various other parts of the earth. So what do you suppose he did? He did something that got them all mixed up when they tried to talk to each other I Can

you imagine that? Instead of talking together in one language and making plans to build that tower higher and higher, they just couldn't understand one another at all!

You can see that it wouldn't be good for them all to live in one place if they couldn't understand each other when they talked. So they started to move away. Some went in one direction, and some went in another. Probably a few of them could talk to each other, and those who could went away together in one group, while another group who spoke a different language went in another direction.

That's why there are so many languages in the world today. By and by, though, everyone in the whole wide world will be able to talk the same language. It won't make any difference whether a person comes from Sweden, or France, or Turkey, or China, or any other place. Wherever he is in the world he will know how to talk to the people who live there, and everybody will understand him. Won't that be grand?

And the best thing about it is that when all the people in the world learn how to talk one to another they will learn about God. They will learn how wonderful God is, and what great things he can do for them if they will just do the things he wants them to do.

#### THE TOWER OF BABEL QUESTIONS

Why is it not possible for everyone in the world today to speak the same language?

Will a time ever come when all people will be able to speak the same language?

## **Abraham, the Friend of God**

ISN'T it a wonderful thing to have friends? And the very best friends that any of us can have are God and Jesus. But did you know that God himself has friends? Yes, that's right. All the people here on earth who do the things that please him are God's friends. Of course we are all trying to do the things which please God, so we can be his friends.

Long, long ago, God had a very special friend whose name was Abraham. That's a wonderful name! It is a name which really means something. It means one who is the father of many people. Of course Abraham didn't have many children of his own. But, then, the Bible tells us that all the people who have ever lived on the earth, and, who believe God and do the things which please him, are to become the family of Abraham. That's why Abraham is called the father of so many people.

It was a long time after Noah built his big boat and all the water was on the earth that Abraham was a little boy. When Abraham grew up and was married, he lived in a city. Oh, it wasn't New York City, and it wasn't London. It was a city with a very short name. It was called Ur, and it was in a country called Chaldea. Funny name! But I suppose it was a good name in those days.

In all the country of Chaldea there was hardly anyone who believed God. The people in that country thought the moon was God, and so they worshiped the moon. Wasn't that strange? We would not want to pray to the moon, would we? We know that the moon can't do anything for us.

In those days long ago most people didn't seem to know any better. Of course, Abraham knew better. You see, Abraham was born only two years after Noah died, so Abraham knew how good God had been to Noah and his family. Abraham loved God, and worshiped him. Abraham believed everything God said, and that was why he was God's friend.

When Abraham was seventy-five years old, God sent him a very special message, and what do you think it was? He sent word to Abraham that he wanted him to move away from his home city of Ur and to go into another country miles and miles away.

It wasn't easy for Abraham to do this. He didn't have an automobile, and there were neither trains nor airplanes in which to travel. Oh, no! There were only two ways that Abraham could travel. One way was to walk, or if he didn't care to walk, he could ride on the back of a camel or a donkey. But riding on a camel or a donkey such a long distance is very tiring, because they don't walk very fast.

So, to move miles and miles away was something very hard to do! But Abraham believed that God knew best. He was sure that anything God wanted done was the very best thing to. That is another reason, you see, why Abraham was God's friend. God knew he could trust Abraham. That is what it means to have a friend, isn't it?

Abraham's wife's name was Sarah, and of course God wanted Sarah to go with Abraham. And God made a wonderful promise to them . You see, they didn't have any children, but God said that if they did as he wanted them to, they would have a son. God promised also that the children of Abraham would be used to do good to all the other people in the world.

Abraham's brother had a son named Lot, and Lot lived with Abraham's father. And what do you think? Lot decided he, too, would like to go with Abraham. So, you see, when they finally started away from the city of Ur they were quite a family. There was Abraham, and Sarah, and Abraham's father, and Abraham's nephew, Lot.

But that wasn't all!

Although Abraham lived in a city, he must have had a farm outside the city, because he had many cattle and sheep which he took with him. Of course they had to walk. Just imagine Abraham, and his family, and all the cattle and sheep starting out through the country in the direction of the place God asked them to go.

As I told you before, there were no automobiles then, and they didn't have hard roads, either. I suppose most of the way on their journey toward the land which God promised to Abraham they didn't find roads at all.

And they didn't have hotels in which to stay at night. The Bible tells us that they lived in tents. This means that toward the end of each day, as they traveled along, they would have to find a place where they could set up their tents and stay overnight. It must have been very hard to journey that way, but perhaps they enjoyed the trip, anyway. It's fun to go camping if you don't stay too long.

Can you imagine Abraham and his family with their tents all set up at the close of the day? Out in the fields, all around the tents, there would be a great number of cattle and sheep. The cows would "moo" and the sheep would "baa."

Of course the whole family would need to have supper. And maybe Sarah and Lot's wife would be cooking something for the rest of the family. So out beyond the tents we can imagine that smoke is coming up from the fire which they have just made. It is getting quite late in the evening now, and the sun is going down behind a mountain. Yes, it must have been rather pleasant and exciting, too.

But Abraham wasn't taking this journey just as a vacation. Really, he didn't know just where he was going! All he knew was that God promised to show him where to go, and he believed God. He was sure God would show him the way to a good place. And he did!

They journeyed on and on, day after day and week after week. They didn't go very far each day, and I think we can understand why. Finally they came to a place called Haran. Haran was in a country called Mesopotamia, in the country where the Garden of Eden used to be. The country which was called Mesopotamia when Abraham journeyed

through it is now called Iraq. So, you see, it was a real country, and it is still on the earth today, but now it has a different name.

When Abraham and his father and the rest of the family arrived in Haran something happened. What do you suppose it was? Why, Abraham's father died. He was quite an old man, and that is why he died. He wasn't strong enough to keep on traveling day after day. But after Abraham's father died they started on the journey again, and finally they reached the land which God had promised to Abraham.

There was something else that God promised which Abraham wondered about. God promised him and Sarah that he would give them a son, but as yet he hadn't given them any children. This was a good lesson for Abraham, and it is a good lesson for all of us. God does not always do right away what he promises to do. But we can be sure that if God promises to do anything he will do it when the right time comes. There is no doubt about that!

God has promised to do many wonderful things for all the people of the world. Why, God has promised that all the people who have died will be brought back to life again, and we will be able to see them, and talk with them, and live with them. Isn't that wonderful?

It has been a long time since God made these promises, but that doesn't mean that he won't do what he has promised. God has a time for doing everything, and when his time comes, all his promises will come true! Yes, God promised Abraham and Sarah that he would give them a son, but God's time hadn't come, so Abraham and Sarah had to wait.

One day three angels visited Abraham. Of course he didn't know that they were angels as they looked just like men. He thought they were travelers who were passing through the country and just happened to go by his home, which was a tent. He probably thought they were hungry, because, as we have just learned there were no hotels and restaurants in Abraham's time. Maybe Abraham thought his home was the only one these three angels had seen in a long time, having perhaps been on a long journey.

Now, Abraham was a very good man. Not only did he love God, but he wanted to do everything he thought God would do. He knew that God supplies everyone with food, that he makes delicious fruits and vegetables grow right up out of the ground so we can always have something to eat. Abraham thought since God was so good to him, he should give some food to these strangers. In that way, you see, he would be generous like God.

So Abraham invited the strangers to come in. It probably was a hot day, so Abraham didn't take them into the tent, but had them sit down under a big tree out in the field. Abraham asked one of his servants to cook some meat, and he asked his wife to bake some bread. When everything was ready-the meat and bread, and whatever other food they had-it was brought out under the tree. There they sat and ate.

When people eat, they usually like to talk. As they talked, these three angels told Abraham that he would soon have a son. Sarah, who was Abraham's wife, didn't know

exactly who these strangers were. In those days, you know, the wife didn't always sit down to eat with the family when they had company; so Sarah just stood in the door of the tent and waited until they had finished eating.

But she was listening, and when she heard the angels tell Abraham that he was to have a son, and that she would be the mother of that son, it made her so happy that she laughed.

The angels heard her laughing, and when Sarah knew that they had heard her, she felt rather ashamed of herself that she had laughed when there was company! But she was very glad that she would have a son.

By and by, when God's time came, the promised son was born. The name given to this little boy was Isaac, which means "laughter."

And now I want to tell you something very wonderful about the name that was given to him. Abraham and Sarah didn't choose his name. We have a lot of fun nowadays thinking up names for the new babies who come into our homes, don't we? Of course Abraham and Sarah thought Isaac was a very good name, even though they weren't the ones who chose it. It was God who told them to name the baby Isaac.

God told them to call the baby Isaac because it would remind them of the wonderful promise which he had made to them. And it should remind everybody in the whole wide world that they, too, will be happy when all God's promises come true.

And what was that promise?

God promised that through the children of Abraham he would bless all the people on the earth. Now that was a wonderful promise! It meant that some day God would bless all of the people who lived even before that great flood came upon the earth. It meant that Noah and his family and many other people in that long, long ago would be blessed. It meant that God planned to do something wonderful for everybody who has ever lived upon this earth. I suppose you wonder how God can do that, because so many of the people are already dead and in their graves. But God knows how to do it, and the Bible tells us that God will bless them by bringing them back from their graves and making them live again, right on this earth. Isn't that wonderful? All this God said he would do through the children of Abraham.

As I have already told you, Isaac was given to his father and mother by God in fulfillment of a promise that he had made to them. My, how they must have loved that boy, and they must have loved God all the more because he had given them such a wonderful son. When Isaac became a young man, Abraham probably thought that it was almost time for his boy to do something wonderful for all the people of the world, as God had promised.

But what do you think occurred?

Why, God spoke to Abraham, and said that he wanted him to take his dear son and offer him as a sacrifice! Now we have already learned what a sacrifice is. You remember that the very first man in all the world to offer a sacrifice was Abel. He was the son of Adam, as you know. Abel offered a sheep to God. Of course, whenever a person offered an animal to God in sacrifice it meant that the animal first had to be killed. That is what Abel did with the sheep.

Later on, when Noah and his family came out of the Ark, after the water of the flood had dried up, you remember, Noah offered a sacrifice, too. The animals which he offered in sacrifice also had to be killed.

Now just think how Abraham must have felt when God spoke to him and asked him to offer his own dear boy, Isaac, as a sacrifice! This meant, you see, that God expected Abraham to take his boy's life, and put him on an altar to be burned.

What did Abraham do about it?

Why, he loved God, and he knew that God was very wise and very powerful and very loving, and he knew that God could not make a mistake. Abraham loved God so much that he wanted to do as God asked. He had so much faith in God that he believed God would make Isaac live again. Wasn't that wonderful?

So the next morning, after God had told Abraham what he wanted him to do, he arose very early, and took Isaac with him. They walked and walked and walked, and walked all that day! You see, God told Abraham just where he wanted that sacrifice offered, and it was a long distance from Abraham's home. The Bible tells us that they journeyed for three days before they came to the right place. So they walked all that first day, and then they walked all the next day, and they walked all day the third day. That was a long journey!

If Abraham had owned an automobile they could have made that journey in two or three hours, or even less. But they didn't have automobiles in those days, so there was nothing to do but walk, or ride on a camel or a donkey. Poor Abraham, how sad he must have felt every time he thought of where they were going and what he was supposed to do!

But, you see, Isaac didn't know that he was to be the sacrifice, because his father hadn't told him. Finally, when they came to the place where the sacrifice was to be made, Isaac asked his father where they would get the lamb for the sacrifice. He knew that they were going to offer a sacrifice, but they hadn't brought the animal with them, and Isaac wondered where they would get one, now that they had come to the proper place.

Abraham didn't want to make Isaac feel badly, so he just told him that God would furnish the lamb.

Now this sacrifice was to be offered on a high mountain called Mount Moriah. So they walked up the mountain, and there Abraham built the altar. Then Abraham just had to tell

Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice! Isaac loved God, too, and besides, he loved his father. He knew that God couldn't make any mistake. He knew also that his father wanted to do just what God asked him to, so Isaac didn't run away. He just let his father tie his hands and his feet and put him on that altar, ready to be sacrificed.

You see, God wanted to prove whether or not Abraham would obey him, even though he could not understand why God wanted him to do such an unusual thing.

Abraham was ready to take the life of that dear boy of his, but God sent an angel who prevented him from doing what God had asked him to do. The angel told Abraham to look around, and when he did, there in a bush was a lamb that God had sent for Abraham to use in place of Isaac, so he didn't have to sacrifice his son after all. Wasn't that wonderful?

### ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD QUESTIONS

Who was Abraham, and why was he called the friend of God?

Why did Abraham leave his home and travel to a distant country?

What promise did God make to Abraham, and when will that promise come true?

Who was Isaac, and why did his mother laugh?

How will God bless all the people of the world who have died?

Why did God ask Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice?

## **A Bride is Chosen**

MOST boys and girls get married when they grow up to be men and women. It has always been that way, and that is why Isaac, who lived about four thousand years ago, got married. As you will remember from our last story, Isaac was born because God kept his promise to Abraham that he would have a child. This meant that Isaac was a very special child, because God wanted him to be born, and wanted to use him and his children to bring great joy to all the people of the world.

So when Isaac was old enough to get married, his father considered it very important that he have the right kind of wife. I am quite sure if any of us were living in a foreign land where the people were all different from us, we would be thinking about our home country, and if anyone in our family planned to get married, we would prefer him to marry someone from our own country.

Well, that is the way Abraham felt about it.

You see, Abraham had journeyed a long, long way from his home country to the place where he was living when Isaac was born. Of course God wanted him to live in this new country, because it was the land that he had promised. It was the land of Canaan. That land is now called Israel, and it is still referred to by many people as the Promised Land. The people living there at that time were strangers to Abraham, and he knew God would not want Isaac to marry one of these strangers. So what do you suppose he did?

Well, he didn't let Isaac himself seek for someone to marry. No, what Abraham did was to talk the whole matter over with his very best and most faithful servant, whose name was Eliezer. He asked Eliezer to go back to the land from which they had come, and there find Abraham's family. From that family he was to select a very nice girl and bring her back to be Isaac's wife.

Eliezer thought this would be almost too difficult for him to do. He was afraid, you see, that the girl he would choose would not want to come back with him. But Abraham was sure that this was the way God wanted Isaac to obtain a wife. So he told Eliezer that if the girl he selected did not want to come with him he would not be blamed. Eliezer agreed to do the best he could. Abraham told him that God would send one of his angels to lead him in his search for the wife he was to bring back to Isaac. Abraham knew that God, having promised to bless his children and the whole world, would make sure that Isaac had a good wife.

God's promises always come true!

Eliezer got ready for the long journey back to Abraham's home country. There still were no railroad trains or automobiles. They didn't have any steamships, either. Maybe you think Eliezer went by airplane, but he didn't, because there were no airplanes. How, then, did he travel? He traveled on the back of a camel! That is the animal with a big hump on its back.

But Eliezer used more than one camel. He took ten camels with him. Now, of course, Eliezer did not need ten camels on which to ride. But this was a very long journey, and he had to take food and water, and probably tents in which to sleep at night, so camels were needed to help carry all these things. It must have been exciting when Eliezer and the ten camels started off on that long trip! Of course, Eliezer could not take care of all those animals by himself, so it was necessary that others go along with him. Perhaps Eliezer and some of the others rode on the camels, while some of them may have walked. Thus they started off to find a wife for Isaac.

Probably Abraham and Isaac both watched Eliezer and the camels as they started on that long journey. I wouldn't be surprised if Isaac wished he could go along too. But in those days that was not the proper thing to. Isaac had to wait at home for his wife until Eliezer returned and brought her to him. The Bible doesn't tell us how long they were away on that journey, but it must have been a long time.

Finally, though, they traveled in Mesopotamia, near a city called Nahor. They arrived toward the close of day. Now we must remember that cities in those days weren't like our cities today. Some of the people who lived in the city of Nahor were farmers and raisers of cattle and sheep. When they need water for themselves and for their flocks it was necessary to go outside of the city where there were wells. There they would fill large pitchers with water and carry them back to their homes.

When Eliezer came near to the city of Nahor, he stopped near a well of water. As it was toward evening he knew that before long someone would be out from the city to get water from that well. At that time the women were the ones who carried the water. Probably the men had to work very hard, and the women thought that it would be a good idea to help them by bringing the water.

Eliezer had great faith in God, and he knew that God wanted him to find the right woman to be Isaac's wife. So he prayed while waiting at the well. He asked God to help him decide this very important matter. Eliezer's plan was that when a young lady came out to draw water from the well he would ask her for a drink of water from her pitcher. If she gave him water, and also said that she would like to give water to his camels, then he would know that this was the right girl. He asked God to let it be this way.

Eliezer waited only a short time, when along came a young lady by the name of Rebekah, with her water pitcher upon her shoulder. The Bible says that she was a very beautiful young woman. After she had filled her pitcher with water from the well, Eliezer went up to her and asked for a drink of water. She was very friendly. Not only did she give him a drink, but she also offered to get water for his camels.

Eliezer was quite surprised that the very first young lady to come out to the well should be so willing to give him water, and also to water the camels. He had asked the Lord to let it be this way, yet he wanted to make very sure that Rebekah was really the right young lady to be Isaac's wife. So he said to her, "Whose daughter are you?" And she said, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, and the grand child of Nahor."

Nahor was a brother of Abraham; so you see when Eliezer found this out he knew that he was among Abraham's people. Then he was almost certain that Rebekah was the young lady to become Isaac's wife. Eliezer had brought with him a large gold earring, and two beautiful gold bracelets. He gave these to Rebekah, and asked her if there was room in her father's house for him to stay that night.

Rebekah was really very nice about it. She told Eliezer they had plenty of room for him, and that they had food for the camels, and a place for them to stay. This made Eliezer very happy indeed, because now he was sure that the angel of the Lord had brought him to the right people, and that he had already found a good wife for Isaac. Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. When he heard of Eliezer's visit, he ran out to the well and invited him to come into their home. He did this because he knew that God was blessing Abraham, and he knew that God would bless them if they were good to Eliezer, the servant of Abraham. They fixed up the house for the company, and arranged a place for the camels, and they were all comfortably settled for the night. Rebekah's family, were very kind and generous, and prepared a delicious meal for Eliezer. They asked him to eat, but he explained that he would not eat anything until he had told them why he had come.

They were very anxious to know why he had made such a long journey, and they asked him to tell them all about it. So Eliezer related a wonderful story about his master, Abraham. Probably these relatives of Abraham had often wondered how he had been getting along since he left home so many years before, and I can imagine how interested they were to hear Eliezer's story, telling them how good God had been to Abraham. He explained that God had given Abraham cattle and sheep, and silver and gold, and many men and women to help him, and that he had ever so many camels and other valuable possessions.

Then he told them about Abraham's boy Isaac-what a fine young man he was and that he was to have all of Abraham's possessions. Then came the interesting part of his story. He explained that Abraham wanted Isaac to have a wife from among his own people, and that he had been sent all the way to Mesopotamia to get acquainted with the family, and to select a wife for Isaac and take her back to him.

Then he explained how he met Rebekah at the well, and how good she had been in giving him water for himself and for the carriers. He said he knew from this that Rebekah was the one whom God had chosen to be Isaac's wife. When he had finished telling this wonderful story, Rebekah's father and Laban, her brother, said that they were sure God wanted it just that way. They said to him: "Here is Rebekah, take her, and let her be Isaac's wife as the Lord has said."

Abraham was a very rich man, and when he sent Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac he gave him a large supply of beautiful jewelry, and fine clothing to take with him. Eliezer gave a great deal of this to Rebekah; and he also gave presents to her brother and to her mother.

Early in the morning Eliezer wanted to start back home, but it was all so very sudden for the family, that they wanted Rebekah to remain with them for at least ten days. That would have meant that Eliezer would have to remain too. But he didn't agree to this, so the family said that whatever Rebekah decided would be all right with them. Then they called Rebekah, and asked her if she wanted to go right away, or if she would rather wait awhile. And Rebekah said, "I will go."

So they sent Rebekah away, and a nurse went with her. Together with Eliezer and his servants, they started back on those ten camels on the long return trip to the land God promised to Abraham, where Abraham was now living. The Bible doesn't tell us anything about that long journey back to Abraham's home and to Isaac, but when they were nearly home Isaac went out into the field in the evening where he could be alone to think about God and all the wonderful things that God had done for him. And as he was sitting there thinking, he looked up and saw the camels coming in the distance.

At just about the same time Rebekah, who was riding on one of those camels, saw Isaac. She asked Eliezer who the man was that she saw in the field, and Eliezer explained that it was Isaac, the man she had come all the way from Mesopotamia to marry. She got right down off her camel, covered her face with a veil, and went to meet her future husband, Isaac. The Bible says that they loved each other, so we are glad that God blessed Eliezer in finding such a good wife for Isaac.

#### A BRIDE IS CHOSEN QUESTIONS

Whom did Abraham send to look for a wife for Isaac, and where did he go to find her?

How did Eliezer find out who it was that God wanted to be the wife of Isaac?

Where was Isaac when Rebekah first saw him?

## **Rebekah's Twin Boys**

THERE have always been twins and triplets in the world, and sometimes there have been quadruplets and quintuplets. Once there were very important twin boys, the children of Isaac and Rebekah. They had been married for twenty years before these boys were born. Like their father, Isaac, and their grandfather Abraham, these boys were very important in the sight of God, because he had promised such wonderful things concerning Abraham's family.

One thing about these twin boys which was different from many twins was that they didn't look alike. Their names were Jacob and Esau. The Bible tells us that Esau's body was covered with red hair. Wasn't that odd? But this was what made him look so different from Jacob, who didn't have hair on his body. Oh, I suppose he had some on his head, but not much on his body.

When Esau grew to manhood he spent a great deal of his time hunting, and the Bible tells us that he was a very good hunter. His red hair, however, had nothing to do with this. Jacob lived a quieter life, dwelling in tents. Probably he was a farmer, and also raised sheep and cattle.

The Bible says that Isaac loved Esau very much. When Esau went hunting he always brought home a nice meal of meat. But the Bible says that Rebekah, the mother of the boys, loved Jacob more than Esau.

Now God had revealed to Rebekah, the mother of the twins, that Jacob was to be the one whom he would especially bless. Perhaps that is the reason she loved Jacob more than Esau. As we read the Bible story of the two boys, we learn that Jacob was the one most loved by God because he believed that God's promises would come true!

The wonderful promise that God had made to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, and to his father, Isaac, was very dear to Jacob, and he wanted to do everything he could so that that promise would belong to him. In the Bible this promise is called the "birthright."

Esau thought the birthright belonged to him because he was born first and therefore the older of the two. But God had explained to their mother that he wanted Jacob to be the real heir of the promise. No doubt Jacob's mother had told him all about this, and what God had said to her, so he was watching for an opportunity to secure the birthright as God desired.

One day when Esau had been hunting he came home very hungry. Jacob had stayed at home and had cooked a delicious meal of what the Bible calls "pottage." Probably it was very much like bean soup which, as I am sure you know, is very appetizing when it is properly made. So when Esau came in from hunting, and asked Jacob for a meal of his tasty pottage, Jacob told Esau he could have it if he would let him have the promised birthright.

To Esau this seemed like a very good bargain indeed, because he didn't have as much faith as Jacob had in God's promises. When Esau was hungry a very good meal was much more important to him than any promises God had made. So he agreed to sell the birthright to Jacob in order to have something good to eat! As we will see, Esau made a great mistake in doing this.

And that is true now, too, boys and girls. Whatever God has promised to us is much more important than getting something to eat when we are hungry, or satisfying any other craving that we may have. Of course Esau was sorry later for what he had done; but having sold his birthright for the meal of pottage, it was too late to do anything about it. It now belonged to Jacob, not only because God wanted him to have it, but also because he had bought it from Esau. And Jacob appreciated it, because he believed the promises of God.

Years after this, when the boys' father was very old and did not expect to live much longer, he wanted to give his blessing to the boy to whom the birthright belonged. Fathers don't do things like that today, but they did when Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived. It was then the custom, when a father became very old, to call his family together and give them his good wishes and remind them of the promises God had made to him and to his children. They called it "giving a blessing," and when a blessing was given to a child by his father it could not be changed.

Their father did not know that Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob, so he asked Esau to go out into the fields and bring him some meat for supper. He told Esau that he wished to bestow his blessing upon him before he died.

Rebekah, the twins' mother, heard Isaac telling this to Esau, and she knew that the blessing Isaac was planning to give to Esau really belonged to Jacob. Esau, you see, was not quite fair, was he? He had sold the birthright to Jacob, and now, without explaining to his father, he was anxious to get it back for himself.

But Rebekah, who loved God, knew that God wanted Jacob to have that birthright, so she arranged with Jacob to obtain the blessing from his father before Esau returned from hunting. She told Jacob to kill a young goat and she would prepare it for him to take to his father.

Isaac was now very old and blind, and so he wasn't able to see whether it was Esau or Jacob who brought him his supper. Besides, Jacob's mother fastened some hair of a young goat on the back of his hands. This made Jacob's hands feel just like Esau's, and Isaac was sure that it really was Esau, so he gave him the blessing.

In this way Jacob received the birthright from his father which he had bought from Esau. From this day on, all the promises that God had made to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, and to his father, Isaac, belonged to him! Now he was to be the one whom God would use in his wonderful plan to make his promises come true!

## REBEKAH'S TWIN BOYS QUESTIONS

Who were the first twin boys mentioned in the Bible, and did they look like each other?

What is a birthright, and why did Esau sell his birthright to Jacob?

Why did Rebekah, Jacob's mother, want him to receive the blessing of the birthright rather than Esau?

## A Boy Who Dreamed

BOYS and girls, and almost everybody else, have dreams. Most dreams are not important. Whether our dreams are good or bad, it is usually best to forget about them as soon as we can. But in the long, long ago some of the people who were especially loved by God were given dreams from him which had important meanings.

A young man by the name of Joseph was given such a dream from the Lord. In fact, he had two dreams. In both of these dreams God showed to Joseph some of the things that were to come into his life when he grew older. This young man, Joseph, was a son of Jacob. Jacob was, you will remember, the one who bought the birthright from Esau. After Jacob obtained the birthright from his father, Isaac, his twin brother Esau was very angry with him, and he had to flee for his life. He went into the land of his grandfather's and his mother's people. In fact, he found his uncle's home.

This uncle was named Laban.

Jacob stayed at Laban's home for many years. He had twelve boys who are spoken of in the Bible as the twelve sons of Jacob. Joseph was next to the youngest one of these boys. When they grew up they were herdsmen, or keepers of cattle and sheep. Jacob loved his son Joseph very much. Joseph loved God and the promises of God. In order to show how much he loved Joseph, his father made him a beautiful coat of many colors.

This made the other boys jealous of Joseph.

I have told you in other stories how terrible it is to be jealous. It was jealousy that caused Cain to kill his brother Abel. And now these older brothers of Joseph became jealous of him, and the Bible says that they hated him.

Just about this time Joseph had his first dream. He dreamed that he and his brothers were all out in a field gathering grain. Each of them had gathered up a bundle of grain called "shocks." Joseph's bundle stood straight up in the field, and all the other bundles bowed down toward it.

It might have been better for Joseph if he had kept this dream to himself. But he was so excited about it that he told his brothers, and when he told them of this dream they understood it to mean that Joseph expected that some day they would all bow down to him, and that made them more jealous than ever, and they hated him even more.

A little later Joseph had another dream. In this dream, which was even more wonderful than the first one, Joseph saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars bow down to him. Joseph told this dream to his brothers, and also to his father.

His father was just a little angry about it because it seemed to mean that some time in the future he, as the father of Joseph, would, have to bow down to his son. Of course Joseph's brothers were made more angry than ever.

Not long after this Joseph's brothers went to a part of the country called Shechem to find better fields for their flocks. They were too far away from home to come back each night, so after they had been gone for a while, Jacob wondered how his sons were getting along, and how their flocks were faring.

Joseph was too young to work in the fields with his brothers, so he had stayed at home. His father asked him if he would go to Shechem, find his brothers, learn how they were getting along, and bring back word to him. Well, Joseph had the Boy Scout spirit, and he was willing to do this errand for his father. So he started on his way to Shechem.

When he arrived there he couldn't find his brothers, and he was wandering around in the fields when a man came up to him and asked: "What seekest thou?"

Joseph told the man he was looking for his brothers, and the man replied: "I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan."

So Joseph traveled still farther until he came to Dothan, and here he found his brothers taking care of their flocks.

His brothers saw him coming. He was probably walking, and it took him some time to reach them. So this gave his brothers a chance to make some plans. They decided that they would kill their brother, just as Cain, because of jealousy, decided that he would kill Abel. Jealousy, you see, always leads people into trouble.

They called their brother a dreamer. So instead of letting him go back to his father, they seized him, and were ready to take his life. The name of the oldest son was Reuben. Evidently Reuben was not quite so wicked as the others, and he pleaded with his brothers not to kill Joseph. He suggested that they put Joseph in a pit. Reuben's plan was that when the others were not watching, he would rescue Joseph so he could go back to his father again.

Reuben's brothers agreed to this, not knowing, of course, what Reuben was hoping to do. But after they had put Joseph into the pit the brothers noticed that traveling nearby was a group of what the Bible calls Midianites. They were merchants, or storekeepers, from the country called Midian. Joseph's brethren decided to sell Joseph to them. These Midianites were on their way to Egypt, and Joseph's brethren knew that in Egypt, Pharaoh the king, and probably other rich people there, bought slaves.

So they sold Joseph to the Midianites, who took him to Egypt, where he was sold to an officer of the king as a slave. Then the brothers took Joseph's coat of many colors which his father had made for him and dipped it in the blood of a goat, and returned it to their father. When their father saw this coat covered with blood he was sure that his beloved boy Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. So years and years went by, and Jacob thought that Joseph was dead, while all the time his brothers knew that he was a slave in Egypt.

Yes, Joseph's brothers called him a dreamer. Those two wonderful dreams that God gave to Joseph had caused him a lot of trouble. No doubt his brothers thought that those dreams would never come true. How could Joseph ever rule over them now that he was away down in Egypt, working for some rich man as a slave?

But there was one thing Joseph's brothers did not know. They did not know that those wonderful dreams were given to Joseph by God, and that God would be sure to make them come true.

As year after year went by, no doubt Joseph's brethren would remember what they had done, and perhaps they said to themselves with a little chuckle: "We fixed him, all right. He thought that we would have to bow down to him, but he was mistaken."

But was he?

## A BOY WHO DREAMED QUESTIONS

Who was Joseph, and why did his father, Jacob, love him more than he did his other sons?

What were the two dreams of Joseph, and why did the telling of these dreams make his brothers angry?

Why did Joseph's brothers sell him to the Midianites, and how did they make their father believe that Joseph had been killed?

## **A Slave Becomes Ruler**

JOSEPH, that lovely boy who was so truly loved by his father, Jacob, was now in Egypt. It must have been very hard for him to be there among strangers. Probably he was homesick. But Joseph was not alone. The Bible tells us that God was with him, and that God blessed him.

The merchants who bought Joseph from his brothers sold him to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was a very rich man, and he was also an officer of the king. In Egypt they called their kings Pharaohs. Joseph loved God, and he tried to do everything to please God. Even though he was a slave, Joseph knew that God would want him to do all his work just as well as he could do it. Because of this, Joseph was a very good slave indeed, and besides, God helped him, and blessed him in everything he did.

Because Joseph was such a good worker, and was so anxious to please, his master was delighted with him. Because Potiphar was so pleased with Joseph, it was not long before he gave Joseph the job of managing all his business for him. Potiphar did not have to take care of anything, because God helped Joseph to be a good manager and worker. The Bible tells us that all Potiphar had to do was to eat. I hope, of course, that he didn't spend all his time eating!

But one day Potiphar's wife told a lie about Joseph. Her husband believed it, and it made him very angry with Joseph, and he had him put in jail. That was really trying, wasn't it, to be put in jail when he had done nothing wrong! But Joseph still trusted God. Even when he was in jail he tried to do everything as well as he could, and God blessed him there, too.

Before very long the keeper of the jail saw what a good man Joseph really was, and gave him charge over all the other prisoners in the jail. Wasn't that wonderful? The prison-keeper knew that Joseph was a good man, and he trusted him, and God blessed Joseph in the jail.

In those days of the long, long ago, kings and rulers became angry very easily. One day two of Pharaoh's officers did something he did not like, and he became very angry with them and had them put in jail. These were Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. This chief butler and the chief baker were put in jail where Joseph had charge of the prisoners. One night the butler and the baker each had a dream, and when Joseph met them the next morning he saw that they were very sad.

When he asked them why they were so sad, they told him about their dreams, and said that no one could explain what the dreams meant. Now Joseph knew a great deal about dreams, because God had given him two wonderful dreams when he was a very young man while he still lived with his father, Jacob, and with his brothers. God helped Joseph to understand dreams, so he asked the butler and the baker to tell him their dreams, which they did.

The butler's dream had been a good one, and Joseph told the butler it meant that in three days he would be out of jail, and would again be Pharaoh's chief butler. My, how happy that butler must have been!

Joseph was happy, too, and when the butler left the jail Joseph asked him to speak to Pharaoh about him to see if something could be done to get him out of jail. The butler promised to do this, but before he arrived at Pharaoh's house, he had forgotten what he promised Joseph, and did not think about it again for two whole years! Wasn't that awful?

The baker's dream was not a good one. Joseph explained to the baker that his dream meant he was to be killed within three days. Although this was not a very good dream, Joseph knew what it meant, and he told the truth about it. This proved that God was blessing Joseph, and helping him to understand dreams and to be successful in all the other good things he was doing.

After Pharaoh's butler had been out of jail for two years, Pharaoh himself had two dreams. He was very much worried about these dreams. At that time kings and rich men hired people to explain their dreams for them. Pharaoh sent for these men, but they were unable to tell him the meaning of his dreams. They simply didn't know what Pharaoh's dreams meant. This made the king sadder than ever. He was really worried because he did not know what these two remarkable dreams meant. He may have thought some great trouble was coming to him, and he became terribly concerned.

Of course the butler knew how much Pharaoh worried about his dreams. You see, a butler has to be very well acquainted with his master, because he takes care of his master's wines and brings him his meals. The butler found out from talking to Pharaoh how much he was worrying about his dreams.

And then the butler remembered Joseph, that Hebrew youth who had charge of the prisoners in jail, and how correctly Joseph had explained his dream. The butler remembered, too, that he had promised to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph, and now he felt sorry that he had forgotten to do so.

Well, here was a good chance to tell Pharaoh about Joseph, so he did. Pharaoh sent for Joseph right away, and related his dreams to him. They were very strange dreams! In his first dream Pharaoh saw seven fat cows come up out of the water. They were very nice looking and healthy. And then in his dream he saw seven lean cows come up out of the water, and these seven lean cows ate up the seven fat cows.

Wasn't that an odd dream?

Pharaoh's second dream was just as strange. In this dream the king saw seven very large ears of corn. And then he saw seven ears of corn which really had no kernels at all. These seven poor ears of corn ate up the other seven, just as the seven lean cows ate up the seven fat cows.

Of course these were only dreams, because actually we know that lean cows can't eat fat cows, nor can lean ears of corn eat fat ears of corn-can they? But then, strange things happen in dreams, and the things which happened in these dreams were so strange that Pharaoh was greatly worried.

Joseph was a very wise young man indeed. He was wise because God was with him, and helped him to understand dreams. So with God's help Joseph knew what Pharaoh's dreams meant.

He explained to Pharaoh that these dreams meant there were to be seven years when everything on the farms, the grain and everything else, would grow very well, because there would be plenty of rain. Then there were to be seven years when nothing would grow.

So he told Pharaoh that the proper thing to do during the seven years of plenty was to store away all the grain and food they possibly could. Then, you see, everybody would have plenty to eat during the seven years when nothing would grow. Wasn't that wonderful?

Pharaoh was delighted that Joseph could explain the dreams for him because, knowing in advance about these seven good years, they could take Joseph's advice, and thus no one would go hungry. Yes, Pharaoh was well pleased, and what do you suppose he did? Why, he released Joseph from prison, and made him ruler over all Egypt.

From that time on no one in the whole country had any more authority than Joseph, except the king himself. He instructed Joseph to make all the necessary arrangements to take care of the food which would grow in abundance during the seven years of plenty, and Joseph did a very good job of this.

Wasn't it wonderful how God blessed Joseph in all these experiences?

First he was sent as a slave to Egypt and became ruler in Potiphar's house. then he was put in prison and became a ruler there. Finally he was freed from jail and made ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Now what do you suppose was the reason for all this?

#### A SLAVE BECOMES RULER QUESTIONS

For whom did Joseph go to work when he first arrived in Egypt?

Why was Joseph put in jail in Egypt, and how did he get along there?

Explain the circumstances by which Joseph was released from jail and made a ruler in Egypt.

Was Joseph made a ruler in Egypt because he was so wise, or because God arranged it that way?

## When Dreams Come True

YES, Pharaoh's dreams came true, just as Joseph had explained them. There was a great famine in all the land of Egypt, which spread to the land of Canaan, the land that God promised to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob. Joseph's father, Jacob, and his eleven brothers who sold him to be a slave in Egypt, were running short of food because of the famine.

So Jacob sent ten of his sons all the way to Egypt to see if they could buy food. They had heard that although there also was a famine in Egypt, the people there had food for themselves and for others. They did not know, of course, that Joseph was the one who had made provision for the food supplies of Egypt. In fact, Joseph's father thought that he was dead.

Jacob's other son was much younger. His name was Benjamin.

He loved Benjamin very much, and would not let him go to Egypt with the other ten boys. He was afraid that something would happen to him, even as something had happened to Joseph years before.

When Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt and asked if they could buy grain and food, they were taken to see their brother Joseph. Of course they hadn't seen Joseph in many years, and they, too, probably thought he was dead. They were taken before Joseph because he was the ruler of Egypt, and had charge of all the food. Now we would call him a food administrator.

No one could buy food and take it out of Egypt unless Joseph was willing that they should do so. When they explained that they had come from Canaan, and that their father was very old and needed food, Joseph knew they were his own brothers.

Well, I suppose when Joseph saw his older brothers standing before him asking for food, he must have remembered those wonderful dreams that God had given him when he was a young man. Those dreams had shown to Joseph and to his brothers that they would one day bow down before him. And sure enough, here they were, bowing down before their brother Joseph pleading for something to eat.

Of course they didn't know they were talking to their very own brother whom they had sold to be a slave. They probably thought it was very strange that Joseph should ask them so many questions about their father and about their youngest brother, Benjamin, who had been kept home for safety. No wonder, though, that Joseph asked questions! He loved his father, and he loved his brothers, and he was anxious to find out all that had happened to them since they had sold him to be a slave.

Joseph longed to see Benjamin, his younger brother. So he worked out a plan to make his brothers bring Benjamin with them the next time they came for food. And what do you suppose his plan was? It was this! He gave them a supply of grain. To each brother he

gave a sack full. Of course, they paid money to Joseph for this grain; but after filling their sacks with the food, Joseph told his servant to put their money back in their sacks with the grain. You see, he did not really want to take money from his brothers for the food.

But Joseph made his brothers believe that he was not sure they were telling him the truth. He told them he thought they were spies. Naturally they felt very badly about this, and insisted that it was not true. But Joseph replied that there was something they would have to do if they wanted him to believe them. He said that he would keep one of the brothers in Egypt until they returned and brought Benjamin with them. If they did not return with Benjamin, this would prove to Joseph that they were not telling the truth—that they did not really have a brother called Benjamin.

The brothers thought that this was a rather hard thing, , but there was nothing else they could do. So they went back to Canaan to their father Jacob, and to their youngest brother, Benjamin, and related the strange things which had happened to them.

Jacob didn't want Benjamin to be taken into Egypt. He feared that harm would come to him, and that he would never see Benjamin again. He said he had lost Joseph and he just couldn't let Benjamin go with them and perhaps lose him too.

But the famine continued, and again Jacob and his family were in need of food. And you know, when people get hungry they will do things they wouldn't do at other times. So finally Jacob decided he would let his sons take Benjamin and go back to Egypt for more food.

When they arrived in Egypt the second time they were again taken to Joseph. Joseph knew right away who they were, and when he saw his young brother Benjamin with them he felt so glad that he just had to weep. But Joseph didn't want all his brothers to see how he felt, so he went off in a room by himself and had a really good cry. Then he wiped the tears from his eyes and washed his face, and went back to his brothers.

He told his servants to get dinner ready, and then they all ate together. But the brothers thought Joseph was an Egyptian, and it was against the law for an Egyptian to eat at the same table with people of other nations, especially with Hebrews. So Joseph arranged to have a table all by himself. You see, he was not ready to let his brothers know that he was their own brother whom they had sold into Egypt.

That must have been a very exciting dinner! Can't you imagine those brothers wondering what would happen to them next, and why the food administrator of Egypt was serving them such a delicious meal? And can you imagine the many thoughts which were going through Joseph's mind as he remembered all of his experiences since his brothers had sold him into Egypt?

Finally dinner was over, and they all retired for the night. The next morning another supply of grain was prepared for the brothers to take back to Canaan. Again each one was

given a sack full. But this time Joseph told a servant to take his own silver cup and put it in the top of Benjamin's sack.

Now wasn't that odd?

So they all started on their way back to Canaan, but before they traveled very far Joseph's servants came hurrying after them. They stopped the brothers, and explained that Joseph's silver cup had been stolen. Of course the brothers were sure that they had not taken the cup, so they were very willing to take the bags of grain off the donkeys' backs and open them up to prove to Joseph's servants that they had not stolen the cup.

But when they came to Benjamin's sack, there was Joseph's silver cup. My, how badly they felt! They had promised their father so faithfully that they would bring Benjamin back, and now they thought he would be kept in jail in Egypt.

What could they do? Well, here's what they did, and I suppose it was about the best thing to do under the circumstances. All the brothers went right back to Joseph and tried to explain to him that they were not to blame for what had happened. Joseph explained that the brother in whose sack the silver cup was found would have to remain with him as a prisoner in Egypt. All the others, he said, would be allowed to go back home. But this was just what they didn't want, because they had promised their father that they would surely bring Benjamin back to him.

They really were in trouble, weren't they? Then Judah, one of the older brothers, explained to Joseph very patiently how terribly hard it would be for their poor old father if Benjamin should be kept in Egypt. He told Joseph that he was quite sure if Benjamin was not with them when they arrived home their father would die of a broken heart. Wouldn't that have been terribly sad?

Judah was very much concerned about it, and he offered to remain in Egypt to take Benjamin's place. Now that was a loving thing to be willing to do, wasn't it? It really meant that Judah was offering to go to jail instead of his brother. This showed a great deal of love for his brother.

It pleased Joseph very much, so he sent all the Egyptians out of the room, and he and his brothers were left there alone. Then he broke right down and wept before them, and said: "I am Joseph, your brother!"

My, what a surprise that must have been to them! And I imagine they were afraid, too. But Joseph told them not to be afraid. He said they should not blame themselves for having sold him into Egypt because God had really wanted him to come to Egypt. Yes, God wanted Joseph to be in Egypt to take charge of the food supply so that all his brothers and their families might have food to eat during the seven years of famine. Now, wasn't that a wonderful and forgiving spirit?

Joseph's brothers had been jealous of him, but he was not jealous of them. He didn't want to punish them for what they had done, so he told them to go back to Canaan and bring their father, and their families, and all their flocks and herds down to Egypt. He promised that he would give them a large section of land in a part of the country called Goshen, where they could live.

That was a fine thing for Joseph to do for his brothers.

In this way Joseph's dreams finally came true. He was now ruler over his father and over his brothers, and not only ruler, but he was their savior. Because he loved God and because God helped him, he had been able to provide food for the whole family.

In some ways Joseph was just like Jesus. Jesus came here to earth, just as Joseph went into Egypt. Joseph was put in prison after he went into Egypt. And Jesus, after coming to earth, was also put in prison.

But it was much worse than the prison in which Joseph had been. Jesus was put into the grave, the great prison-house of death.

But just as Joseph was freed from prison and made a ruler, so Jesus was freed from the prison-house of the grave, and he will become a great Ruler, too. He is the great King who will rule over all the earth; and just as Joseph provided food to keep his people alive, so Jesus will provide food which will give life to everybody on the earth. Isn't that wonderful? And the food which Jesus will provide will be so nourishing that the people who eat it will live forever! The Bible calls it the Bread of Life.

So, are we not glad that God was so good to Joseph? And are we not even more glad that God loves everybody so much that he sent Jesus here to provide food that will give life, by and by, to all who want it? Really, this is what God meant when he told Abraham that he planned to give blessings to all the families of the earth!

#### WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE QUESTIONS

Why was it necessary for Joseph's brethren to come to Egypt for food, and did they know that the ruler of Egypt who sold them food was their brother?

Who was Benjamin, and why did his father not want him to go to Egypt?

Why did Jacob and all his family go to Egypt to live?

## **A Little Boy in an Ark**

DO YOU remember the story of Noah and the big boat on the dry land? Noah built that big boat because God asked him to build it. God knew that Noah would need such a boat, for the time was coming when it would rain and rain and rain until all the land would be covered with water, and all the people and animals would be drowned, except those in Noah's boat. That was really a big boat. It was large enough for Noah and his family, besides many, many animals-some of every kind. It was called an ark.

Well, this story is not about Noah's ark, but another ark. Not another large ark, but a very small one-just big enough to hold one little baby boy. But this little ark was used for the same reason that the big ark was used. The big ark saved Noah and all his family from being drowned, while this little ark saved one dear little baby boy from being drowned. And who do you suppose that baby was?

Really, the baby didn't have any name while he was in the ark. After he was taken out of the ark a very kind Egyptian princess named him Moses. The name Moses means "to draw out," because this Egyptian princess had drawn out, or taken the baby out of the water.

But Moses was not an Egyptian boy. Oh no! He was a little Jewish baby. They were called Hebrews then, which is still one of the names of the Jewish people.

The Hebrews were the children of Jacob, and all the children that have since been born from Jacob's children are called Jacob's descendants. Jacob was the grandson of Abraham.

To Abraham and his children God promised to give the land of Canaan, but at the time of this story all the Hebrew people were in Egypt. Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, had become a ruler in Egypt, and the rest of the family went there during the years of famine. I told you all about this in my last story, but I want you to be sure to remember it.

Everything went along fine with the Hebrew children as long as Joseph lived. But, like everybody else, Joseph grew old and died, and so did all his brothers. But of course there were a great many Hebrew children who became men and women, and they had children of their own. As years went by, there were thousands and thousands of Hebrews living in the land of Egypt.

The Egyptians grew old and died also. Everybody had to die then, just as everybody dies now, because in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve disobeyed God.

It won't always be that way though, for God loves everybody, and he gave his Son, Jesus, to die for everybody; and by and by Jesus will bring back all the dead people and give them health and strength, and they will then live forever. Won't that be wonderful? That's what the Bible means when it says that Jesus saves the people. He saves them

from death just as the big ark saved Noah and his family from the water, and just as the little ark saved Moses from the water.

Well, to get back to my story, that nice, kind Pharaoh, or king of Egypt, who had made Joseph such an important ruler over the people, died. Then there was a Pharaoh in Egypt who had not known Joseph and he was unfriendly to Joseph's relatives.

This king saw how the Hebrew children were increasing in number, and he was afraid that some day there would be more Hebrews than Egyptians. So what do you suppose he did? Why, he made slaves of all the Hebrews and put cruel masters over them to make them work very, very hard. Perhaps he thought this would cause them to die young, and that soon there wouldn't be nearly as many Hebrews.

But God was with the Hebrews.

He had made wonderful promises to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, and to all of Jacob's sons. These promises belonged to all the Hebrews. They were God's people, and God won't let anybody kill all of his people.

Besides, God will bring back to life all the Hebrews who have died, and everybody else, too, for that matter. You see, God always keeps his promises, and no one can really interfere with what God wants done. That's a very important thing to remember.

Making slaves of the Hebrews didn't stop them from increasing in number, so the king of Egypt ordered that all the boy babies of the Hebrews should be killed as soon as they were born. They were to be thrown into the river Nile and drowned. Wasn't that awful?

Now the mother of the baby boy who was later named Moses dearly loved that little child, just as all of us love babies today, and no matter what the king had said, she made up her mind that she would do all she could to keep him from being drowned.

She kept the baby out of sight in her home for three months, and when she realized that she couldn't keep him hidden much longer she built that little ark of bulrushes and painted it with tar so it wouldn't leak. Then she placed the baby in the ark and hid it among the leaves and grass that grew up at the edge of the water in the river.

After the mother put this small boat with its precious passenger by the edge of the river, she went away. But the baby's sister stood nearby to see what would happen. And what do you think did occur? Why, one of the daughters of the king-the very king who had ordered all the Hebrew baby boys killed-came down to the river to bathe. Several young ladies came with her to give her any help she needed. The king's daughter saw the little boat snuggled among the reeds and rushes by the water's edge, and she asked her servants to find out what was in it.

When they opened the basket, there was that darling baby! Of course the king's daughter knew that it was a Hebrew baby. She knew, too, that all Hebrew boy babies were

supposed to be drowned. But she was tenderhearted and couldn't bear to see such a precious little baby killed; so she decided that she would adopt the baby and call it her own. Wasn't that wonderful?

You see, God had planned that when this particular boy became , a man he would give him a great work to do, and this was God's way of saving the boy he wanted to use. God always knows how to do what he wants to do. That's why we should always trust him and believe that his promises will come true.

The king's daughter knew that she didn't understand very much about taking care of babies, so just at the right time the baby's own sister, who had stayed nearby to see what would happen, came to her and offered to get a nurse to take care of the baby. The king's daughter thought this was a very good idea, so the baby's sister went home and brought back their mother.

When she came, Pharaoh's daughter asked her to take the baby and nurse him for her. Now, didn't everything turn out well. That is the way the Lord does things. Then the king's daughter named the baby Moses, and Moses was cared for by his own mother until he grew to be a young man.

#### A LITTLE BOY IN AN ARK QUESTIONS

Explain how it come about that Moses was cared for and educated in the home of Egypt's ruler.

Who was Moses, and why was he put in a small ark at the edge of a river when he was a baby?

## God Speaks to Moses

PERHAPS you are wondering how the little boy Moses got along after the king's daughter found him in that tiny, basket-like boat floating around among the leaves at the edge of the river. He was well taken care of, you may be sure, because, as I told you, the king's daughter hired Moses' own mother to nurse him.

Really, you see, it was God who was taking care of Moses, because God had a great work for him to do, and nothing whatever can harm those whom God wishes to protect. Just because that wicked Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, decided that all the baby boys of the Hebrews should be killed, it didn't mean that God couldn't take care of Moses. That is something we should always remember.

And now probably you are wondering what great work God had for Moses to do.

Well, as you know, Egypt was not the country God promised to the Hebrew people, the children of Abraham. They were in Egypt because years and years before this, Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, was sold by his brothers as a slave and taken there, and later he became a great ruler over the people.

Then, when there was a famine in Canaan, the real home of the Hebrews, the rest of the family also went to Egypt, where they were cared for by Joseph. I am sure you remember that wonderful story. It's a true story, too, because it is in the Bible, and we know that the Bible is true.

But now the Hebrew people were having a very hard time in Egypt. They were all slaves, and God wanted to deliver them from their taskmasters and take them back into the land of Canaan which he had promised to their father, Abraham. God knew that when Moses became a man he would be just the right person to lead all the Israelites out of Egypt, so that is why God was taking care of him.

And God knew something else, too! God knows everything. He knows things even before they happen!

God knew that Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, would not want to let the Israelites leave the country. You see, they were doing a lot of hard work for the Egyptians, and if they left, the Egyptians would have to do this work themselves. So you can be sure that Pharaoh did all he could to keep them in Egypt.

God knew that whoever was to lead his people out of Egypt would need to know how to talk to the king, for he would have to appear before him to ask permission for the Hebrews to leave. Wasn't it wonderful how God arranged for Moses to learn all he needed to know so that he could do this? You see, he was being cared for and educated right in the royal palace.

But there was someone who spent more time with Moses than anyone else in the palace, and that was his own mother. That dear mother knew about God's promise to Abraham, and she knew that the Hebrews were merely visitors in Egypt. You may be sure that she would keep telling Moses about the many wonderful things God had done for their people, and what he had promised to do for them. She would tell him about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and about the promise God had made to them of a time coming when he would bless all the people of the world, and that the One to do this would come from the Hebrew people.

The Jewish people believed these wonderful promises of God. They believed God would raise up a man from among them to be this great Leader, and that through him all of God's promises would come true.

The Hebrew name for this great Leader was "Messiah."

But the other nations didn't believe God's promises, and they thought the Jewish people were foolish to believe in a coming Messiah. It is the same today. A great many people think we are foolish to believe the promises of the Bible, but such people are very much mistaken. Don't ever think it is foolish to believe that the promises of the Bible will come true.

Moses' mother believed the promises of God, and so did Moses. And Moses didn't care if the Egyptians did think he was foolish. He believed God's promises just the same. You can see that Moses must have had a hard time while he was growing up. He believed what his mother told him about God and the promises of God, and the Egyptians in the king's palace probably made fun of him. Maybe they told him he was crazy; but he did not care what the Egyptians thought of him, because he knew better.

One day when he was forty years old—a grown-up man—he was out walking and saw an Egyptian man beating one of the Hebrews. Moses loved God, and because he loved God he also loved God's people. He just couldn't stand seeing one of God's people beaten, so what do you suppose he did? Why, he killed that Egyptian! Now that wasn't the right thing to do. It is really better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. Moses buried the Egyptian in the sand, hoping no one would find out about it.

The second day after, however, he discovered that at least one of the Hebrews knew what he had done, and that made him wonder how many more might know about it. Now Moses was really in trouble. Even the king had heard what he had done, and decided that Moses would have to die.

But God still loved Moses, and helped him to escape from Egypt, but he did have some very trying experiences. It didn't seem now as though Moses would ever be able to lead God's people out of Egypt! But God knew how it could be done. He knew that this would be a good experience for Moses, and that he could learn some very valuable lessons from it.

This is a very good thing for us to remember, also. Pleasant things are not always best for us. Sometimes we might seem to be having a great deal of trouble, but later we learn that it was just what we needed.

And that's the way it turned out with Moses. When he fled out of Egypt to save his life, he went into the land of Midian. He was a stranger in Midian, and not having anything particular to do, and wondering probably just how God would guide him, he sat down by a large well and watched the shepherds as they brought their flocks to the well for water.

As he sat there, seven young maidens came to water their father's flock. The shepherds who were watering their own flocks didn't want these young ladies to get water, so they chased them away. Now, Moses didn't like that at all, so he argued with them until the young ladies got some water, and he helped them water their flock.

When the maidens returned to the home of their father and told him what this nice young man had done, their father sent for Moses. The father's name was Jethro, and Jethro liked Moses so much that he offered him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. Moses accepted the offer and married her. Thus he became one of the family.

Then Moses went to work for Jethro, taking care of his sheep. He worked there as a shepherd for forty years. Now, how old would that make Moses? You add it up! He was forty years old when he left Egypt, and he worked forty years for Jethro, his father-in-law, which altogether was eighty years, wasn't it? Moses was quite an old man by now, but he was still strong and healthy, and able to do the great work which God had for him to do.

And then a wonderful thing occurred. One day as Moses was watching the sheep, his attention was attracted to a bush which seemed to be on fire. He went closer to the bush, and noticed that while flames were leaping up from it, the bush itself was not being destroyed by the fire. Moses saw at once that this was no ordinary fire. Then he heard a voice speaking to him, telling him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. You see God was there with him, only he didn't know it then.

But soon he realized who was speaking to him. It was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. This was no stranger, then, who spoke to Moses from the burning bush. Moses' mother, as we have learned, had told him about this wonderful God who had made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was the God of the Hebrews, and therefore Moses' God, who was speaking to him.

God said to Moses that the time had come for the Israelites, Moses' people, who were also God's people, to be delivered from their slavery in Egypt. He also told Moses that he was the one to lead the people out of Egypt. Forty years before this Moses was very brave when he killed that Egyptian. But now it was different. He now told God that he didn't think he would be able to do such a great work.

Of course, Moses could not do it by himself. That is just what God wanted him to learn; so God told Moses that he would give him all the help he needed. He told him that he would arrange for his brother Aaron to go with him when he appeared before Pharaoh, and that Aaron, who was a good talker, would speak for Moses.

When Moses learned that God would help him, he agreed to do his very best. That's all anybody can do, isn't it? All of us should remember that we cannot do anything for God unless he helps us. We should remember, also, that because God does help us, we can do anything for him that he wants us to do. It is grand to do things for God, and to know that God is helping us to do them!

## GOD SPEAKS TO MOSES QUESTIONS

How did the Hebrew people get along in Egypt, and why was it that God did not want them to remain there?

Why did Moses find it necessary to leave Egypt when he grew to manhood, and where did he go?

Who became the wife of Moses, and how long did he live in the home of his father-in-law?

Who was it that spoke to Moses from a bush that was burning, and what did he ask Moses to do?

## God Delivers His People

IN THE very first story of this book we learned about God-how wise and powerful he is. We learned that God made the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars. We learned, too, that he made the birds, the fish, and the animals; also the beautiful rivers, trees, and flowers.

God is wonderful! He can do anything he wants to do.

We know that this is so because it is what the Bible tells us, and we know that the Bible is true! I am reminding you of all the wonderful things God can do, because this story is about some of the things God has done for his people. It is a true story.

When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, as we learned in our last story, Moses was afraid he wouldn't be able to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. He was right too; but God was planning to help Moses, and with God's help Moses could do anything God wanted him to do. God was good to Moses. He showed him how great and powerful he was. Moses had a rod in his hand. It was probably a rod he needed when taking care of his father-in-law's sheep. God told Moses to throw that rod down on the ground, and when he did so the rod became a serpent! Wasn't that wonderful?

But Moses was frightened. I think we would have been frightened, too! Moses ran away from the serpent, but God told him to take hold of the serpent's tail, and when he did, it became a rod again in his hand! It was the power of God that turned Moses' rod into a serpent and then back into a rod again, and this was a wonderful lesson to Moses. God told Moses that when he appeared before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to ask the release of the Israelites, the same thing was to be done with the rod and that he would get the same results. This gave Moses courage because it proved that God would help him.

God did some other wonderful things for Moses, also.

Then God spoke to Aaron, Moses' brother, who was living in Egypt with the other Israelites, and told him where he could find his brother Moses. Probably the family thought Moses was dead because they hadn't seen him for forty long years. Aaron was very happy to meet his brother, and Moses told him what God wanted them to do.

God arranged, you see, that Moses and Aaron would work together. Aaron was a very good talker. Even today some people can talk better than others. Sometimes very wise men and women are not able to make speeches. Well, that's the way it was with Moses. He was very wise and humble, and he loved God, and was willing to do anything God wanted him to do, but he wasn't very capable of making speeches. But Aaron was a grand speaker, so they worked together very well.

After Moses and Aaron discussed what the Lord wanted them to do, they decided that the first thing they should do was to meet with the elders of the Israelites. These were Israelites whom the others looked up to as their leaders. It was necessary to explain

everything to these elders, so they could let all the Israelites know that God was planning to deliver them from their slavery in Egypt. After they heard of the wonderful way in which God had spoken to Moses and Aaron, the elders of the Hebrews were very happy, and told all the others about it, And they too, were glad.

Then Moses and Aaron arranged to meet with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. They told him that God wanted the Hebrews to leave Egypt so that they could worship and serve God without the interference of the Egyptians. God knew that Pharaoh was very selfish and very wicked, and that he would not be at all willing to let the Hebrews go. God told Moses that Pharaoh would say, "No!" But there was more than that to it. Pharaoh wanted to know who God was that he should obey him.

Poor Pharaoh!

There are many people in the world who are not acquainted with God, and just like Pharaoh, they laugh at the idea that there can be a God who is so very powerful and able to do anything he wants to do. Don't you feel sorry for them? Well, some day their eyes will be opened just as Pharaoh's were.

When the king asked Moses and Aaron about God, Aaron threw his rod down on the floor and it became a serpent, just as it did before. In Egypt they had magicians and fortune tellers, the same as many of the gypsies are today, and they tried to imitate what God had done. They managed to cause some serpents to wiggle around on the floor. but the serpent God made out of Moses' rod swallowed all the other serpents! Wasn't that strange?

I can imagine that Pharaoh was quite impressed, but still he wasn't willing to let the Hebrews go. Instead of letting them go, he gave orders to the slave drivers that they should make the Hebrews work harder than ever before. This made the Hebrews feel very badly. It made them wish that nothing had been said about their leaving Egypt.

When Moses heard how badly the people felt, he was almost sorry himself. You see, Moses didn't know all that God knew. He didn't know of all the wonderful things God would do to make it hard for the Egyptians until Pharaoh would give his consent for the Hebrews to leave Egypt. Besides, God wanted the Hebrews to realize how much better it would be for them when they did finally get free from Egyptian bondage. Surely God is wise!

Well, as we would say today, things soon began to happen. Moses and Aaron again asked Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. Of course, as you know, Aaron did the talking, but Moses told him what to say. That was the way God had instructed Moses to do it, and Moses obeyed God and did it that way. But Pharaoh again said, "No!"

Then Moses held up his rod over the river, the same river from which the king's daughter had rescued him when he was a baby, and what do you suppose happened? Why, all the water in that great wide river turned into blood! Because of this, the fish in the river died.

Not only the water in the river, but the water in the basins and other dishes of the Egyptians turned into blood. Wasn't that awful?

Finally there just wasn't any water for the Egyptians to drink, and they dug wells near the river and managed to get a little water in that way. God can do things to make people think when he wants to.

This was certainly a great plague upon Egypt.

After a while it was lifted, yet Pharaoh was not even then willing to give the Hebrews their liberty. He was very bad hearted, and when the plague was lifted he probably thought there wouldn't be any more trouble, and then he became even more hardhearted.

But Pharaoh was mistaken, for there were other plagues to follow. Soon the river was filled with frogs! There were so many of them that they came right onto the land, and even into the houses of the people. The frogs became so thick that they crawled into the dough when the women were making bread! Who would want to eat bread with frogs baked in it?

Now, you can see that this made the Egyptians feel very badly. The Egyptians were heathen people, and they worshiped frogs, but they must have been very angry with them this time. Don't you think so?

Then Pharaoh began to think things over. He sent for Moses and Aaron, and agreed to let the Hebrews go if they would rid the country of the frogs. But when the frogs were gone, he changed his mind again.

Then followed the third plague from God. This was a terrible one. The ground in Egypt is very sandy, something like our American desert. Moses stretched out his rod over the ground, and the first thing the Egyptians knew the sand was filled with lice. It must have been almost as though all the sand turned into lice. Can you imagine that? Those nasty lice just crawled around everywhere and onto everything. Life for the Egyptians must have been almost unbearable while the plague of lice lasted.

But when this plague was removed, Pharaoh hardened his heart still more.

And then God brought another plague, which was a plague of flies. The wonderful thing about this plague was that the flies did not cover that part of the country where the Hebrews lived. This seemed to make Pharaoh realize that God was helping the Hebrews, so he sent for Moses and Aaron again, and told them to take the Israelites out of the country, but not to take them very far away. But when God caused the plague of flies to cease, Pharaoh changed his mind again, and would not let the people go.

Then a great plague came upon all the cattle of the Egyptians, causing them to die. This was the fifth plague.

Next the Egyptians broke out with boils.

Then there was a plague of hail.

After that came the eighth plague. The whole land was filled with locusts. What an experience that must have been! These were large insects, probably somewhat larger than our grasshoppers. To have them flying and crawling around everywhere and into everything must have been terrible. And they ate every green thing in sight, so that the land was made bare.

You would think that by this time Pharaoh would have been very glad to let the Hebrews go, but he wasn't. Each time he made Moses think he would let them go, but when the plague was removed he would change his mind, which shows how very wicked he was.

That is a very good way to tell a good man from a wicked man. A good man will always try to keep his promises, but a wicked man breaks his promises. Pharaoh kept breaking his promises, so each time another plague came upon Egypt from God.

The ninth was a plague of darkness. There was no light in Egypt, not even in the daytime. It was just as dark in the middle of the day as it was in the middle of the night. And it remained this way for three whole days, so that nobody could do anything. But it wasn't that way where the Hebrews lived. This was very easy for God to do, for he makes the darkness as well as the light! You see, it wasn't possible for Moses to bring all these plagues upon Egypt. It was God who helped him to do it.

Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, until finally it became necessary for God to send another plague. This was the tenth and last plague, and what do you suppose it was? Why, the firstborn or oldest child in every Egyptian family died! The firstborn of the cattle also died. Pharaoh's own firstborn son died. That made him think he had better change his mind about letting the Hebrews go, and he did.

He sent for Moses and Aaron again, and told them to lead the Israelites out of Egypt just as quickly as possible. Pharaoh had had enough trouble. He and the Egyptians became afraid that they would all die if they refused longer to let God's people go. So Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron that all the Hebrews could go, and could take their cattle and other belongings with them.

The Egyptians were so eager for them to leave that they gave them all the help possible. They even gave them gold and silver jewelry. That was a wonderful victory for God. It surely must have made Moses and Aaron believe more than ever that God was with them and was helping them. We, too, know that God will help us to do anything he wants us to do!

## GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE QUESTIONS

Who was Aaron, and how did he help Moses do what God asked him to do?

Did the ruler of Egypt consent to let the Israelites leave Egypt?

What were the ten plagues, and why were they brought upon the Egyptian people by God?

How many times did the ruler of Egypt give his consent for the Israelites to leave, and later change his mind?

## **The Last Night in Egypt**

IN OUR last story we learned that Pharaoh, the wicked king of Egypt, was finally glad to have the Hebrews leave his country. That was because his oldest son suddenly died, and because the oldest, or the first born, in every family of Egypt suddenly died. Pharaoh knew that this terrible calamity came upon the Egyptians because he was refusing to let the Hebrews leave the land. But now I want to tell you another part of the story of the firstborn.

Maybe you have been wondering whether the oldest children in the families of the Hebrews also suddenly died that last night they were in Egypt. No, they didn't! The reason they did not makes a very interesting story indeed. It is a true story, too, because it's in the Bible, and we know that the Bible is true.

It was in the springtime when all of Egypt's firstborn were destroyed. Quite a while before, God told Moses what he intended to do, and also told him what the Hebrews would need to do if they did not want their firstborn destroyed at the same time. God said that they were to consider a certain day as the beginning of the first month of their year. The first month of our year is January, but the first month of the Jewish year is called Nisan, and it is in the springtime.

On the tenth day of that first month every family of the Hebrews was to take a young sheep, or lamb, and keep it until the fourteenth day. Just as the sun was going down on the fourteenth day they were to kill these lambs, and the blood was to be sprinkled on the doorposts of their houses and over the tops of the doors. That night they were to roast the lambs and the families were to eat them during the night.

If a family was small and couldn't eat a whole lamb in one night, then the family next door could be their guests, and in that way one lamb would do for two families.

None of that lamb was to be left until the morning. If they couldn't eat it all, then what was left over was to be burned inside the house.

While they were eating the lamb, the Hebrews were to be dressed, all ready to leave Egypt, for God knew that the next morning Pharaoh, the king, would insist they must leave right away.

That night when the power of God destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt, wherever the blood of the lamb was found on the doorposts of the houses, the firstborn child in that house was not destroyed. In that way, you see, all the firstborn of the Hebrews were saved. And besides, those who did as God wanted them to do were ready to march out of Egypt the next morning. Isn't God wise? Yes, he certainly knows how to do everything in the right way! That is the reason we should always do everything just as he says it should be done.

But there was another reason God made these arrangements for the Hebrews. Do you remember how pleased God was that Abel brought a lamb to God for a sacrifice? I hope you have not forgotten that story. The reason God was pleased that Abel brought a lamb for a sacrifice was because the lamb was somewhat like a picture, or illustration, of Jesus.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. People die because there is sin in the world, and when Jesus takes all sin away, people won't die any more. Won't that be a grand time?

Well, God knew that he would send Jesus as his Lamb to do this great work; so at different times he asked his people to sacrifice lambs to illustrate what he planned to do. Do you remember the story of Isaac? God asked Abraham, the father of Isaac, to offer him as a sacrifice, and then God gave Abraham a lamb to sacrifice in the place of Isaac. That is another story you should read over again if you have forgotten it.

God had told Abraham that he planned to bless everybody; but before he can do that, the sins of the people must be taken away. This means that God's Lamb, which was Jesus, would have to die. We will find out a lot more about that when we get to the story of Jesus; but I want you to begin to think about it now.

So that is why God asked the Hebrews to sacrifice lambs and eat them on that night before they left Egypt. We call it the passover lamb, because God passed over all the homes where the blood of the lamb was sprinkled, and did not destroy the firstborn in those homes. You should try to remember that where the blood was sprinkled there was no death; so those who put their trust in Jesus, God's Lamb, will be made alive again and thus be saved from death. Isn't that the grandest thing you ever heard?

#### THE LAST NIGHT IN EGYPT QUESTIONS

What were the Israelites doing during the last night they spent in Egypt, and were their firstborn children destroyed?

What did the Israelites have to do in order for their firstborn not to be destroyed?

What was the passover lamb, and why does it remind us of Jesus?

## **Crossing the Red Sea**

IF YOU were going somewhere and there were two ways to go one a very easy way, and the other very difficult-which way would you choose? I think we would all choose the easy way, especially if the other way was so difficult that we would hardly be able to reach our destination at all. However, we should remember that the easier way is not always the better way. Sometimes God wants us to do things and go to places that may seem very difficult, but he knows what is best. So we should always do what he wants us to do!

That is how it was when the Israelites left the land of Egypt. It was Gods' mighty power that delivered them from being slaves in Egypt, and God continued to do wonderful things for them. God had promised to bring his people into the land of Canaan-the land he had given to their father, Abraham. When they left Egypt there were two ways they could have traveled in order to reach Canaan. One way seemed to be quite easy, but God did not want them to go that way. He led his people the difficult way, and he had a very good reason for it.

I suppose you are wondering how God led his people, and how they knew which way he wanted them to go. Moses was their leader; but besides, as they left Egypt God caused a large cloud to float in the air right in front of them, and they were to follow that cloud. Wherever that cloud went, that is where they were to go. At night that cloud was lighted up almost as though it were a large ball of fire. If it hadn't been for that they could not have seen the cloud at night. They traveled long distances by night, so it was necessary for them to see the cloud at night as well as in the day.

After the Israelites left their homes in Egypt, they traveled for some time until they reached the edge of a large body of water. They had to stop there because they had no boats in which to cross over to the other side. This body of water was called the Red Sea. Some day when you are studying your geography lesson in school, you will find out more about the Red Sea. This sea is at the edge of the land of Egypt.

Now, how do you suppose the Israelites got across the Red Sea?

There were no airplanes in those days, so they couldn't fly across. It was because the Red Sea was in their pathway that this route was the difficult one. Had God's cloud led them in another direction it would not have been necessary for them to cross the Red Sea. But God knew best.

The Israelites were also having other troubles. Pharaoh, the wicked king of Egypt, began to feel sorry that he had let them leave. He discovered the direction in which they marched, and he knew that they would have to stop when they reached the sea; or at least, so he thought. So what do you suppose he did? He got his army together and went out after the Israelites to bring them back into slavery.

The Bible says that Pharaoh had six hundred chariots. A chariot was a little wagon with two wheels, pulled by horses. Soldiers rode in those chariots. When an army in those days had a great many chariots and horses they were able to fight much better. It was something like having plenty of tanks in an army today. So, you see, Pharaoh had a very great army, and plenty of chariots. He was sure he would have no difficulty in capturing the Israelites, because they had no army and, of course, no chariots.

While they were wondering what they should now do to continue their journey into the wilderness, they suddenly discovered that Pharaoh and his army were coming after them, either to capture them or to kill them. My, but they were frightened! But even though the Egyptian chariots and soldiers were frightening, they should have remembered how powerful God is, and that he would take care of them.

But they were afraid just the same, and they complained to Moses. They told Moses that they wished they had stayed in Egypt. Poor Moses, how badly he must have felt! Of course when they complained to Moses, it was just like complaining to God, for it was he who had instructed Moses to lead them this way.

So what do you suppose Moses did? Well, he did two things which were very important. He told the Israelites that God would fight for them, and that they were not to worry. Then Moses prayed to God for help and for instructions.

That was very important.

Then God said to Moses that he should tell the people to go forward. That was strange, wasn't it? How could they go forward when the sea was right in front of them? It was dark by this time, and something very remarkable occurred. That wonderful cloud I told you about, which guided the Israelites while they were marching, now moved in between the Israelites and the Egyptian army. The Egyptian army by this time had almost reached the Israelites, and something had to be done. So God took care of his people.

On that particular night only one side of the cloud was bright like fire, and the other side, which was next to the Egyptians, was just as black as any thundercloud you have ever seen. It kept the moonlight and the starlight from helping the Egyptians. It must have been the darkest night they had ever experienced. Don't you think so?

Meanwhile, God was doing other things for the Israelites. He told Moses to hold his rod over the sea, which Moses did. That was the same rod which Moses had in the beginning. God certainly made very good use of it. Of course the rod couldn't (do anything by itself, but God wanted Moses to remember that he had promised to help him. So when God told Moses to hold the rod over the sea, Moses knew God would do something wonderful.

And what do you suppose God did?

God caused a strong wind to blow over the water, and it blew all night until the water was blown aside far enough to make a passageway of dry ground over which the Israelites

could march. Wasn't that unusual! God certainly knows how to do things, doesn't he? We can understand how this was, because if you put water in a saucer and blow hard on it from the side, you can keep the water all over on one side of the saucer. You just try it some time. Well, God knew what a strong wind would do with the water of the Red Sea, and that is how he made a pathway for the Israelites so they could march right through to the other shore. And the remarkable thing about it was that they didn't even get their feet wet!

The Egyptians soon found out what had occurred. They decided that if the Hebrews could cross over that way, they could, also; so they started to follow. But they were very badly mistaken. As soon as the Hebrews were safely on the other side, God caused the wind to stop blowing, and the water rushed back into its regular place.

But that wasn't all.

The Egyptians had started across, and when the water came back into place, all the men and horses in the entire Egyptian army were drowned. In this wonderful way God completely delivered his people from their former masters.

When the Israelites learned how God had saved them from the Egyptian army, and had brought them through the Red Sea to safety, they were very happy. The Bible tells us that then they believed God, and also believed Moses. Then Moses and all the children of Israel, or the Hebrews, whichever name you wish to call them, sang a wonderful song of praise to God. Part of the song was: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. He is my God."

Wouldn't it be nice for us all to learn at least this much of that wonderful song, sung by Moses and the children of Israel after they had passed safely through the Red Sea?

### CROSSING THE RED SEA QUESTIONS

Was there more than one route by which the Israelites could leave Egypt on their way to the Promised Land, and why did God direct them to go by way of the Red Sea?

What was it that went before the Israelites to lead them in the way they should go, and how did it protect them from the Egyptian soldiers?

How did God make it possible for the Israelites to cross over the Red Sea without boats, and why could not the Egyptians get across in the same way?

## God Gives Laws to His People

NOW that the Hebrews were out of the land of Egypt and separated from other people, it was necessary for them to know what was right and what was wrong for them to do. So God gave them his Law. That is, he told them just how they should behave themselves as proper servants of his. It was more than two months after they left Egypt, however, before God gave the Hebrews his Law. Before this they had some very hard experiences.

After they crossed the Red Sea they were in what the Bible calls a "wilderness." It was much like a desert. There were only certain places where they could find water, and there was no food. Yes, the Hebrews simply had to trust the Lord, didn't they? In one place they found water, but it was bitter, and oh, how they complained to Moses!

It seems that every time things didn't go exactly to suit the Hebrews they blamed Moses for it. They would forget that it was God who had brought them out of Egypt and that he was taking care of them. Well, God told Moses how to make the water sweet, which he did, and the Israelites were happy for awhile.

They had brought some food with them from Egypt, but soon that food was gone, and again they blamed Moses. But Moses was very patient and he would always find out from God what to do. And God always knew what to do.

And what do you suppose God did about the food shortage? He caused food to drop right down out of the sky! Wasn't that wonderful?

The Israelites called it manna. It came in little white lumps, like great big snowflakes. It was sweet, and very good to eat. The Hebrews had to gather the manna every day, as it wouldn't keep for two days, except at the end of the week. Then they could gather enough for two days, and it would last them over the Sabbath.

Yes, the Hebrews had many wonderful experiences, and they didn't have any reason to doubt that God loved them and that he would take care of them. But they did doubt, and ever so many times they blamed Moses for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. That should be a good lesson for us. Let us never, never doubt God!

As I started out to say, it was necessary that the Israelites be told what to do and what not to do. If one were alone in the world, it wouldn't make so much difference what he did, because if he did wrong, he would be the only one to suffer. Even then it would be best to do right, and it is always right to love God and do whatever will please him. It is never right to do wrong.

There were thousands and thousands of the Israelites out there on the desert together, and if they didn't do the right things, they would be in trouble all the time, wouldn't they? So God gave them a Law which told them just what to do, and how to get along with each other so they would be happy and he could bless them. God gave his people the Law at Mount Sinai, or Mount Horeb, as it is sometimes called. It was a wonderful Law. Moses

received it from God up in the mountain, and when he told the people about it, they said, "All these things will we do."

The most important thing in the Law was that they were never to serve other gods. That was very important, because from now on they would be meeting people who served other gods. Of course there is really only one true God, but the heathen nations have what they call gods. Some think the sun is a god, and others think the moon is a god. Some have a fish god, and some have gods of wood, and gods of stone. These are no gods at all, really!

The God who made the sun and moon and stars, the God who made us, is the only real God. He was the God who gave such wonderful promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the God who delivered the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt. Surely it was the very best thing for the Hebrews that they should love their God, and do all that he wanted them to do.

He is our God, too, and he wants us to obey him, because it will be good for us. Let us always remember that God wants us to obey him because it is good for us to do so. And besides, it makes God very happy when we do the things which please him.

It was also important that the Israelites should do the things that would be best for one another. You see, boys and girls, sometimes when we do just as we please it may injure someone else, and that would be wrong, wouldn't it? Oh, I know, sometimes we may think we have no liberty, that our fathers and mothers are too strict with us. But we will eventually learn that there is only one way to be really happy, and that is to be obedient, both to our parents and to God.

The Israelites had a very hard time out there in the wilderness; but it would have been much, much worse if they had all done just as they pleased. So God's Law told them just what they should do, and what they shouldn't do. When they were obedient to that Law they got along very well. They were to love one another, and were not to be jealous of the good things enjoyed by others.

They were told not to steal what belonged to others. That is something we should always remember. We must not think we have a right to take what belongs to someone else just because we want it very badly. That would be wrong, because it would be robbing someone else of what belonged to him. You see everything that God asks us to do is for the benefit of all, and if we obey his Law and try to make other people happy, we will be happy ourselves. You just try to make others happy, and see if it won't make you happy, too.

Yes, when God gave his Law to the Israelites he even told the children what they should do. And what do you suppose that was? Why, they were to honor and obey their parents. That is the right thing to do even now. No one likes a boy or girl who is disobedient to his father or mother. When fathers and mothers try to please God, and their children obey them, then, you see, the children are obeying God too, and God is very much pleased.

It was long ago when God gave his Law to the Israelites, then they had no governments such as we have. We think that the people who make laws for us are very wise. But, do you know, the Law which God gave to Moses, and which Moses gave to the Israelites, was better than any of our laws today? As a matter of fact, our very best laws are copied right from the Bible. Isn't that wonderful? That means, you see, that God was very wise, wiser than all the wise people who have ever lived. No matter how wise people may think they are, they cannot make laws as good as those God gave to Moses for the Israelites.

#### GOD GIVES LAWS TO HIS PEOPLE QUESTIONS

How did the Hebrews know what was right for them to do, and what was wrong?

Who made the laws which Moses gave to the Hebrew people, and what did one of these laws say about children?

## **Building a House For God**

THE Law which God wanted the Israelites to obey was written by him and given to Moses on two flat pieces of stone, called "tables of stone." In those days the people didn't have typewriters and printing presses. They didn't have paper, either. So every time it was necessary to write down something that was important to be remembered it had to be done on flat pieces of stone, or on pieces of dried clay.

They didn't write with ink, either. The writing was scratched or chiseled on the stone or clay. That's the way the Ten Commandments of the Law were written by God. These Tables of the Law were given to Moses by God while he was up on the mountain called Sinai.

After Moses brought these Ten Commandments down from the mountain, and the people agreed to do what God asked them to do, Moses went up into the mountain again, and God told him to build a tabernacle, and how to do it. Maybe you never heard that word "tabernacle" before. A tabernacle is the name the Bible sometimes gives to a building in which people worship God. It is God's house.

Of course God doesn't need a house to live in as we do. God doesn't sleep, so he doesn't need a bedroom. He doesn't need to eat as we do, so he doesn't need a dining room. God doesn't get tired, so he has no need for a sitting room. So you see when the Bible tells us about building a house for God we must remember that it was not like our houses.

God's house, or tabernacle, which Moses was asked to build, was not made of brick or stone. It didn't have any floor at all. The sides of the tabernacle were made of wide wooden boards which were placed on end. But you wouldn't think they were wooden boards when you looked at them, because they were entirely covered with gold. The gold was very thin, just like paper, but it covered the boards so completely that it made them look as if they were solid gold. These boards that looked like gold were used to form the walls of the tabernacle.

The tabernacle didn't have a roof of boards or shingles, or tar, or anything like that. I guess you are wondering how they kept out the rain. That was done by very large curtains which were thrown over the top of the tabernacle. There were four of these curtains. The first one they put on was like a large piece of fancy canvas. Then, over the top of this they spread three other curtains. Two were made by sewing together the skins of different animals-sheep and seals; the other one was made of goats' hair. These curtains were so large that they not only covered the top of the tabernacle, but also hung down over the sides, covering the gold boards. That meant, you see, that when the tabernacle was finished the only way to see the gold boards that formed the walls was to look at them from the inside.

God's tabernacle didn't have a door, either. It had an opening at one end, and this opening was covered with a very pretty curtain of blue, scarlet, and purple. This curtain was called the veil. One had almost to crawl under it in order to enter the tabernacle.

Now I suppose you wonder how big the tabernacle was! It was forty-five feet long, and fifteen feet wide, and fifteen feet high. Inside, it was divided into two rooms by a large curtain which was called the second veil. The curtain covering the entrance from the outside was called the first veil or door. The second veil was fifteen feet from the far end or rear of the tabernacle.

So there were two rooms in the tabernacle. They were not both the same size, though, for the second veil was hung only, fifteen feet from the rear end. Now, if you figure that out you will see that the rear room was only half as large as the front room. The front room was called the "holy," and the rear room was called the "most holy."

Most people today like to have their houses surrounded by shade trees, and green grass, and flowers; but God told Moses to stretch a long white curtain all around the tabernacle and in that way to form a big yard, or open space, in which the tabernacle was to stand. This large open space enclosed with white curtains was called the "court."

The court was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. The tabernacle was placed toward the back part of the court with the opening, or first veil, facing the entrance. The entrance into the court was called the "gate." This "gate" was also a beautiful linen curtain of blue, purple, red, and white.

I suppose you are wondering if there was any furniture in God's house. There was, but not the kind of furniture we have in our homes, because God did not live in his house as we live in ours. But it did have what we may call furniture. Even outside of the tabernacle, in the court, there were two very important articles of furniture. Near the gate in the court was the "brazen altar."

You remember that we first learned about altars in the story of Cain and Abel. Abel, you will recall, made an altar on which he offered a sacrifice to God. That is what altars were for; they were places to offer sacrifice. This large altar in the court was made of wooden boards covered with sheets of copper.

After passing the altar in the court, one came to what looked like a large water basin. That is really what it was, but it wasn't called a basin. It was called a "laver." There was water in the laver, and those who served in the tabernacle used it when they washed themselves.

In the front room of the tabernacle, which was called the "holy," there were three pieces of furniture. On the right, just as one entered, was a small table. On this table there were two plates of bread, called "shewbread."

On the opposite side of the room there was a large and beautiful candlestick, or lamp stand. It had seven lamps which were kept burning all the time. If these lamps were not burning, it was very dark in this front room of the tabernacle, because there were no windows.

And then, at the far end of the holy, or front room, directly opposite the entrance, was the golden altar. This altar was much smaller than the one outside in the court, and it was covered with gold instead of copper. The table and the candlestick were also gold.

So you see, all the furniture in the front room of the tabernacle was of gold. With the gold furniture the gold boards of the walls, it must have been a very beautiful room, don't you think?

In the most holy of the tabernacle, that is, in the far room, which was entered by crawling under the second veil, there was just one piece of furniture. It was called the "ark of the covenant." It was about the shape of a large trunk. It also was entirely covered with gold. The cover of this large box was made of solid gold.

Extending out of that cover, and made of the same piece of gold, there were two beautiful statues like angels. They were called cherubim. They faced each other, and at the same time were looking down toward the cover of the ark. This cover was called the mercy seat.

There were no windows in the most holy, either, and no lamps such as there were in the holy. So how do you suppose the most holy was lighted? Oh, that was a wonderful thing! Between the cherubim, right over the mercy seat, a bright shining light was put by God. It must have been something like lightning, only instead of being just a short flash of light, it remained there all the time. No one had to keep it burning. It was God's light!

This tabernacle was God's house. Of course, God did not actually live in the tabernacle, but the Hebrews knew that they enjoyed God's blessings because the tabernacle was in their midst. So they thought of God as being in the tabernacle. To them it was the house of God, the place where they could find God. They knew that they could always find God in the tabernacle. Sometimes we can't find our friends because they are away from home, but God was always at home in the tabernacle.

Of course they couldn't see God. Nobody on this earth has ever seen God. And when I say that God was always at home in the tabernacle and that the people could find him there, I mean that it was in the tabernacle that they could find God's blessings. But there was only a certain way in which the people could obtain God's blessing in the tabernacle. The Israelites could not walk right into the tabernacle and talk with God. Oh, no! There were only certain ones whom God selected to do this, and even these had to come to God in a very special way.

They were called the "priests." The first priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses. He was called the high, or chief priest. Aaron's sons were also priests, but less important ones. They were called "under priests." When the people wanted blessings from God they had to receive them through Aaron, or whoever the priest was. And, even then, there was only one way to receive blessings, and that was by bringing a sacrifice to God. That was the purpose of the large altar in the court surrounding the tabernacle. The sacrifices were burned on this altar.

Now why were these sacrifices necessary? It was because the Israelites were sinful. Like everyone else in the world, they could not do things as God wanted them to be done.

As you read all these stories of the Bible I want you to remember this lesson, that in order for any of us to receive blessings from God there must first be a sacrifice. Will you try to remember that? Because God loves us all he gave his own Son, Jesus, who sacrificed himself for the whole world. Wasn't that wonderful? Whenever you hear anyone say that Jesus died for us, you will know what it means.

The sheep and calves which the Israelites brought to Aaron at the tabernacle to be sacrificed were not actually valuable enough to take away their sins. The reason God wanted them to bring the sacrifices was to teach a lesson. The lesson God wants us all to learn is that we can have his blessings only if we come to him through Jesus, and that this is because Jesus sacrificed his life for us. Let us try to remember that, shall we?

It would take too long to tell you about all the sacrifices of the tabernacle, so I will just tell you about the most important one. This main sacrifice was offered once every year. This is the way it was done: First, Aaron took a young calf, which the Bible calls a bullock. He killed it, and certain parts of it, like the heart and the liver and the fat, were burned on the altar in the court. The main carcass of the animal was burned outside of the court. The blood of this bullock was taken by Aaron all the way into the most holy and sprinkled on the mercy seat which covered the ark of the covenant.

On his way to the most holy, the priest stopped long enough at the small golden altar to make an offering of incense. This incense was a sort of powdered perfume which the priest sprinkled upon coals of fire brought from the altar out in the court. The burning of the incense caused a sweet-smelling smoke to drift into the most holy ahead of the priest.

After the bullock was offered in this way, Aaron killed a young goat and did the same thing with it as he did with the bullock, finally sprinkling its blood upon the mercy seat in the most holy.

Now, as I was telling you, all this is a lesson to teach us about something much more wonderful than the offering of bullocks and goats. The Bible tells us that the most holy of the tabernacle represents heaven itself, which is God's real home. When Jesus died upon the cross and was raised from the dead, he entered into heaven, and God was so pleased with the sacrifice he had made, that now if we pray to God in the name of Jesus we will be heard, and God will bless us.

That is why the cover of the ark of the covenant in the most holy was called the mercy seat. It teaches us that because Jesus shed his blood for us, God in his mercy will bless us, and give us everlasting life. God has always loved the people, but he wants us to know that there is only this one way that we can be blessed with his love.

I wonder if you still remember that grand promise God made to Abraham that he intended to bless all the people of the world? Well, the lesson of the tabernacle and its

sacrifices is to remind us that these blessings which God has promised will come through Jesus. They will come true because Jesus died for us.

## BUILDING A HOUSE FOR GOD QUESTIONS

What was the tabernacle? Who built it, and for what was it used?

What were the sizes of the rooms in God's house, and did they have furniture in them?

What is an altar, and for what purpose is it used?

Who did the work of God in the tabernacle?

## **Spying Out the Land**

THE children of Israel remained in the vicinity of the mountain called Sinai for some time while the tabernacle was being built. Then God indicated that he wanted them to continue their journey toward the Promised Land of Canaan. God caused a cloud to float in the air over the tabernacle, which was his way of telling the Israelites that he would protect them. When it was time for them to continue their journey he made this cloud move away from the tabernacle, and in the direction he wanted the people to go. The tabernacle was built in many sections and could be taken apart and moved.

Well, that cloud kept moving day by day, until it led the children of Israel very near to the border of Canaan, to a place called Kadesh-barnea. There the cloud stopped moving, and the people knew that God wanted them to stay there for awhile.

Then God told Moses to choose twelve chief men, or rulers, from among the people, and send them over into the land of Canaan to find out what kind of country it was, and to see what the people were like. You remember, don't you, that Jacob had twelve sons. Now the Israelites were divided into twelve large families, or tribes, each tribe being descendants of one of Jacob's sons. So Moses selected a ruler from each of the twelve tribes and sent them into Canaan to spy out the land.

Even now, in times of war, nations send spies into other countries to find out all they can, don't they? The land of Canaan really belonged to the Israelites, but during the long time they had been slaves in Egypt other people had lived in it. Now it was necessary for the Israelites to conquer these other people in order to get the land that belonged to them, and it seemed very wise to send these spies into the country to obtain all the information possible.

So the twelve spies crossed over the border of Canaan into the Promised Land. They traveled up and down the country. They found it to be a very wonderful country. Food of all kinds was growing there in great abundance. The spies remained in Canaan for forty days, so you see they had plenty of time to find out all they needed to know.

Just as the spies were ready to return to the Israelites with their report, they picked a cluster of grapes in Canaan, and it was so large that it required two of them to carry it. Wouldn't you like to have had some of those grapes to eat? When they showed this large cluster of grapes to the Israelites you can imagine how surprised they must have been!

The spies all agreed that Canaan was a wonderful country, and that it would be a great place for the Israelites to live, but all except two of them were afraid of the Canaanites. They told Moses and the Israelites that the people who lived in the land were very powerful; that they were mighty warriors. Why, they said, some of them were great giants! The spies said they felt as small as grasshoppers when they stood beside those giants. The spies surely were frightened.

What do you suppose happened then? Why, ten of the spies advised Moses and the Israelites not even to try entering the land, because if they did they would surely be defeated. They were sure that all the men of Israel would be killed and that the women and children would again become slaves.

There were only two of the twelve spies who didn't agree with this advice. These were Joshua and Caleb. They had great faith in God, and believed that God would help them conquer the people of Canaan. So they advised the Israelites not to be afraid, but to go in and possess the land.

But most of the Israelites didn't have very much faith in God. They knew that God had done wonderful things for them. They knew how he had saved them from the plagues in Egypt. They remembered the wonderful way he had brought them through the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian army which tried to capture them. They knew that he was sending them bread from heaven which they called manna. Yet they didn't believe God would be able to help them conquer the people of Canaan, so they decided not to follow the advice of the two spies who believed in God.

The Bible tells us that the Israelites were a "stiff-necked" people, which means that they were stubborn and disobedient to God. Well, we can see why God called them stiff-necked, can't we? He had done all those wonderful things for them-he had delivered them from Egyptian bondage and brought them safely to the border of the Promised Land, and now they were afraid to move into the land.

And not only that, but the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt. Yes, some of them talked things over and decided that they would select a new leader who would show them the way back to the land of bondage.

Surely the Israelites were very disobedient to God, but God loved them, so he wouldn't let them select a new leader and go back to Egypt. That night God spoke to Moses from the tabernacle, saying that the Israelites would have to remain in the wilderness for forty years! Just as the spies had spent forty days spying out the land of Canaan, so now God's people would have to remain in the wilderness forty years. God told Moses that during these forty years all the Israelites would die who were then twenty years old or more. You see, it was these grown-up folks who had rebelled against God, so God didn't want them to enter the Promised Land at all.

God told Moses that there were only two men of all the Israelites who were then twenty years old or more who would still be living at the close of the forty years in the wilderness, and they would be Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who advised the people to trust God. They believed that God would help them to conquer the people of Canaan and take possession of the land. God was pleased that these two men believed in him. God is always pleased with us when we believe him.

When Moses told the Israelites that God had decided they would have to remain in the wilderness, they changed their minds and wanted to go right into Canaan. Weren't they

stubborn! And they tried to do it, but because God did not help the Israelites the Canaanites were able to defeat them and drive them back. This really did frighten the Israelites, so they settled down for their long stay in the wilderness.

We should always remember that if we try to do what God wants us to do he will help us, but if we try to do something he does not want us to do, we are sure to fail. We may think we are getting along very well doing what he does not want us to do, but sooner or later we will learn that we would have been much better off had we obeyed God. Let us try to remember that!

## SPYING OUT THE LAND QUESTIONS

Whom did Moses send into the land of Canaan as spies, and what did they learn while there?

What did these spies report to Moses, and did they all agree?

How long did the Israelites remain in the wilderness before God allowed them to go into the Promised Land?

## **Crossing the River Jordan**

MOSES had a wonderful life. Do you remember how God saved him from the river Nile when he was a baby? God knew how well Moses would be able to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and that is the reason he saved him from being drowned in the river. Then Moses, you remember, lived in the king's palace for forty years. There he received a very good education which helped him when the time came to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Then he went to the land of Midian where he lived the life of a shepherd, taking care of sheep for his wife's father. At the close of that forty years God spoke to Moses from a burning bush, and asked him to lead the Hebrews out of Egyptian bondage. At that time he was eighty years old. Next there were the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Forty added to eighty makes a hundred and twenty, so now Moses was a hundred and twenty years old!

The time had come when God wanted the Israelites to cross over the river Jordan into the Promised Land, the land that he had promised to Abraham hundreds of years before. But Moses could not enter the Promised Land. He was a faithful servant of God, and God requested him to tell the Israelites that the time had come for them to enter the land, but that a long time afterward they would be driven out of the land again, and scattered all over the earth.

All this has come true, and that's why there are Israelites all over the earth today. That's why Palestine, which is the Promised Land, has not, until now, been owned by the Jewish people, and is the reason they have not lived there. Isn't it wonderful that the Bible has told us all about this so many hundreds and hundreds of years ago? That is one reason we know that the Bible is the Word of God, and that whatever the Bible says is true. The Bible tells us that the Israelites were to live again in the Promised Land, and we know they will have it for their very own forever.

Before Moses died God permitted him to climb up on a very high mountain called Nebo, and up to one of its highest peaks, called Pisgah. From this height he looked across the river Jordan and saw the wonderful Land of Promise on the other side. Have you ever been up on a high mountain? If you have, you know that you can see very far, and Moses' eyesight was so keen that he could see a very great deal of the good land which God had died.

Before Moses went up on the high mountain where he died, he appointed a new leader to take his place. This new leader was Joshua. Joshua, you remember, was one of the spies who told Moses and the people forty years before that he believed God would help them conquer the people in the Promised Land if they would only enter and do the best they could.

Yes, Joshua believed God, and that is why God chose him to be Israel's new leader.

But the Israelites could not possibly enter the Promised Land unless the Lord helped them, and I'll tell you why. Between the place where they were camping and the land which God had promised was the river Jordan. This was quite a large river. So far as we know, there were no bridges over it, and no boats or rafts to use in getting across. So you see, the Israelites really needed help! And God helped them cross over this river just as he helped them cross the Red Sea forty years before this when they left Egypt.

God told Joshua to have the priests carry the ark of the covenant down to the edge of the river. The ark of the covenant, you remember, was the only piece of furniture in the most holy room of the tabernacle. Now that the Israelites were about to move, the tabernacle was taken apart and made ready to be carried with them. The priests were to lead the way, and were to carry the ark.

When they reached the very edge of the river and put their feet in the water the priests must have wondered just how they would all cross over. God told Joshua that he would make a path through the river. They would need a lot of faith to really believe that a deep wide river would open up and let them cross through on dry ground, wouldn't they? Yes, indeed! But God is very pleased when we do what he asks us to do, even though it may seem to be very difficult. We know that God will always help us to do whatever he asks.

When the feet of the priests who were carrying the ark touched the water, it stopped flowing from up the river. Below where they stood, the water kept on flowing, so it wasn't long before the river bed was drained dry directly in front of them and they were able to cross over. Wasn't that wonderful! It is true, too, because the Bible says so.

But the priests who were carrying the ark didn't cross all the way over-not right away. When they reached the center of the river bed, they stopped and stood there while all the other Israelites crossed over into the Promised Land.

God told Joshua something else to do. He was to select a strong man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel and these were to take a large stone from the middle of the river bed and carry it over to the Promised Land as a memorial of the wonderful miracle God performed for them that day. We would call them souvenirs. Long years after this, when anyone would ask where these stones came from, and what they meant, they were told the wonderful story of how God brought his people safely across the river Jordan into the land of Canaan. Twelve stones were also placed in the center of the river bed where the priests stood "while the Israelites were crossing over.

And now, after forty long years of wandering in the wilderness and living in tents, the Israelites were finally in the Promised Land. It was a very fertile land. They found plenty of grain and other things to eat. They didn't need the manna from heaven any more, so it ceased to fall. Now, God was caring for them in other ways.

However, everything was not to be easy for them just because they were in the Promised Land, for there were many strong people living there who did not belong in the land, and they were the enemies of the Israelites. These had to be conquered.

Directly in front of the Israelites as they crossed over the Jordan River was one of the largest cities in the land. It was called Jericho. It was a walled city, being protected by very high walls all around. As soon as the people of Jericho learned how wonderfully the God of the Israelites had helped them to cross over the river Jordan, they were much afraid. They were so afraid that their soldiers did not come out of the city to fight the Israelites at all. All the people of the city, soldiers and civilians, hurried inside the walls and closed all the gates. They thought that in this way they could save themselves from being captured by the Israelites.

Just about this time, while Joshua was taking a walk and trying to decide how he could capture the city, he looked up, and in front of him stood a man who was dressed like a soldier. Joshua challenged him, asking whether he was a friend or an enemy. And the man answered that he was a friend, that he was the captain of the Lord's army, and that under his leadership the city of Jericho would fall into the hands of the Israelites. As it turned out, this wasn't a man at all, but an angel whom God had sent to tell Joshua how he should capture the city!

God had sent angels to his servants before. You remember that he had sent angels to Abraham and to Moses. And now he had sent an angel to Joshua. Of course we can't really see angels, so when God sends them to speak to his servants they appear as men, and talk as men. This angel-the captain of the Lord's army-gave Joshua a wonderful plan for capturing Jericho.

Again the priests were to carry the ark, and the people were to follow them. They were to march completely around the city once each day for six days. Trumpets were to be blown by those of the priestly tribe, but otherwise they were to do nothing except to walk around the city and return to their places in the camp. It must have seemed very odd to the people of Jericho who were trying to keep away from the Israelites by staying within the walls of the city. They didn't know, of course, just what the Israelites were to do next.

The Israelites marched once around the city each day for six days, and then, as the angel instructed Joshua, on the seventh day they marched around the city seven times. After they had marched around the city seven times on the seventh day, they not only blew their trumpets, but all the Israelites shouted as loudly as they could. And what do you suppose happened? Why, the walls of that city fell down in front of them, and they marched right into the city and captured it! Certainly God knows how to help his people conquer their enemies!

## CROSSING THE RIVER JORDAN QUESTIONS

Who was the leader of the Hebrew people when they entered the Promised Land?

What body of water did the Hebrews cross in order to enter the Promised Land, and how were they able to cross it?

What was the name of the first city the Israelites come to in the Promised Land, and how did they conquer it?

## **An Army That Was Too Large**

DID you ever hear of the Commander in Chief of an army who told one of his generals to send thousands and thousands of his soldiers home because his army was too large? That sounds very strange, doesn't it? But that is what occurred one time when the Israelites raised a large army to fight their enemies.

God was the Commander in Chief of Israel's army, and his general at this time was a man named Gideon. Gideon raised an army of thirty-two thousand men, and before God would let him go into battle all of these men were sent home except three hundred. But Gideon won the battle because God was with him.

This was many long years after the death of Joshua, that wonderful leader of the Israelites who took the place of Moses and led the Hebrew people across the river Jordan. Joshua was a brave and faithful servant of God and of God's people. Under his leadership the children of Israel, by much hard fighting, finally conquered most of their enemies in the land of Canaan. There were still some enemies in the land, but not in sufficient number to cause the Israelites a great deal of trouble. After a while Joshua died, and the Bible tells us that for forty years afterwards the Israelites had rest from their enemies.

God's people could have had rest much longer than that. Indeed, they could have had rest and peace all the time if they had been faithful to God, but they were not. They began to forget God who had done so many wonderful things for them. Forgetting him, they served other gods. Among them was one called Baal. Because of their unfaithfulness, Israel's true God allowed them to be oppressed by enemy nations, who subdued them with their armies and took much of their food away from them. But when God saw that his people had been punished enough for their wrongdoing he selected General Gideon to deliver them from the oppression of their enemies.

Gideon's father was one of the leaders in the worship of Baal, a false god. He had built an altar right on his own land where sacrifice was offered to Baal. Wasn't that wicked? Altars on which sacrifices were offered were usually built under the protection of groves of trees. God called Gideon into his service, and the very first thing he asked him to do was to cut down the grove of trees on his father's land, and destroy the altar of Baal. Gideon had to be very brave to do this, but he trusted God. So one night he got ten of his servants to help him, and in the morning the neighbors discovered that the grove had been cut down and the altar destroyed.

These neighbors had been worshipping Baal and they were very angry when they discovered what Gideon had done. So they asked Gideon's father to kill his son and those who had helped him. But Gideon's father was a very wise man. He told the neighbors that if Baal was a real god, with much power, he could take care of himself. Wasn't that a wise thing to say?

Baal wasn't a real god, only a make-believe god, so he didn't do anything about it, because he couldn't. When all the Israelites learned about this, they were very anxious to serve the true God who had delivered them from Egyptian bondage and brought them through the Red Sea and over the river Jordan.

But now the people of Israel were threatened with worse trouble from their enemies. A very large army of Midianites was encamped nearby ready to destroy and conquer them. This army was well armed, too. They didn't have tanks and airplanes in those days, but they had horses and camels, and various implements of warfare. Now that Gideon had shown his courage in destroying the grove and altar of Baal, God asked him to lead an army against this mighty host of the Midianites.

Gideon was brave, all right, but he wanted to be sure that God really wanted him to do this, and that God would help him. So he did something very unusual. One night he put a piece of sheep's wool out on the ground and told God that if the dew fell upon this wool and didn't fall upon the ground around the wool, then he would know that he was to fight against the Midianites. The next morning he went out to get the wool and found it soaking wet. So much dew had fallen upon it that he could wring the water out of it, just as you would squeeze water out of a sponge. Wasn't that remarkable? And besides, the ground all around the wool was absolutely dry!

You might think this would have convinced General Gideon that God really wanted him to fight the Midianites, but it didn't. He asked God to be patient with him, and explained that he would like to make another test. It was a very hard task that Gideon was asked to perform, so perhaps we shouldn't blame him for making sure before he started that God was with him.

He put a piece of sheep's wool on the ground another night, and told God that if the dew fell upon the ground and didn't fall upon the wool, he would know without question what he was to do. And it happened just that way. When Gideon went out the next morning, the ground all around the wool was wet with dew, but the wool was perfectly dry! Well, Gideon was now certain that God really wanted him to raise an army to fight the Midianites.

He sent out a call for men, and thirty-two thousand Israelites responded. When God saw this large army, although it was much smaller than the army of the Midianites, he told Gideon that it was far too large. God explained that if this large army went out to fight against the Midianites and defeated them, they would take the glory to themselves. You see, the Israelites had just returned to the worship of God, and God wanted to demonstrate that he could help them out of their troubles if they put their trust in him. If the Midianites were defeated by a very small army, the Israelites would know that it was God who did it.

General Gideon obeyed the orders of his Commander in Chief and told all in the army who had any fears, and those who would like to go home, to do so. And what do you

think? Twenty-two thousand withdrew from Gideon's army. But God told the general that there were still too many. Can you imagine that?

God instructed Gideon to have the remaining ten thousand go down to the water to drink, and to notice how they drank. All those who put their lips right down to the water were to be sent home, but those who scooped the water up in their hands and drank it out of their hands were to remain in the army. Only three hundred drank this way, so General Gideon's army was thus reduced to three hundred. If these three hundred defeated the Midianites, then all Israel would certainly know that it was by the wisdom and power of God!

Now I suppose you are wondering what kind of arms were supplied to these three hundred brave soldiers. They were very unusual arms. The men were given a torch, a clay pitcher to hold over the torch, and a ram's horn which was to be used as a trumpet.

That night, after dark, following the orders of General Gideon, they separated themselves into several small groups and spread out over the sides of the hills surrounding the valley where the Midianites were encamped. Gideon told them all to do just as he did.

They all knew where Gideon was standing on the side of a hill, and they watched. Suddenly Gideon broke the clay pitcher that was hiding the lighted torch. Then he blew his trumpet and cried, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Those in his company did the same, and then all those in the other companies who were scattered over the sides of the hills also broke their pitchers and blew their rams' horns.

The Midianites were aroused out of their sleep, and seeing torches flickering all over the sides of the hills, and hearing the blowing of trumpets and the shouting from so many different directions, they imagined that they were surrounded by a mighty army, much larger than their own. They were filled with fear, became excited, and instead of fighting that small army of three hundred Israelites, they started to fight each other! Many of them were killed in this way, and the remainder fled in terror.

Gideon, knowing now that the Midianites were on the run, pursued them until they were driven completely away and were no longer a menace to Israel's peace and happiness. Wasn't that a wonderful victory for such a small army? And it was all because God told Gideon how to do it, and because Gideon was faithful in doing what God asked him to do.

## AN ARMY THAT WAS TOO LARGE QUESTIONS

Who was Gideon?

Why did he raise an army, and why was it too large?

What kind of weapons were used by Gideon's army, and how many people did they kill?

## **A Boy Who Was Given to God**

THERE was a very good Hebrew woman who loved God and wanted to serve him, but she was sorrowful because she had no children. Her name was Hannah. Her husband's name was Elkanah. They lived in a town called Ramathaim-zophim. That is a big name for a small town, and you will probably have quite a hard time learning to pronounce it properly. Every year Elkanah and his wife Hannah journeyed to a place called Shiloh to offer a sacrifice to God. That is where the tabernacle and the priests of Israel were then located, and the sacrifices were brought to , the priests.

While in Shiloh one year, Hannah felt so very badly because she had no children that she prayed specially to God about it. The high priest's name was Eli. He saw Hannah praying, and when he learned what she was praying for, he told her that God would answer her prayer and that she would be given a son. Hannah was so thankful and so happy that she promised when God gave her a son she would give the child back to God to be used in his service.

After a while God gave Hannah the son Eli had promised, and she named him Samuel. While Samuel was still a little boy his mother took him to Shiloh and gave him to Eli the priest to be used in the service of God, as she had promised. God was well pleased with this.

When Hannah went back to her home she left Samuel with Eli. Eli was now an old man, and there were many ways in which the boy Samuel could help him to do God's work. When the priests of Israel were serving God in the tabernacle they wore white linen garments, so Samuel was provided with white clothes. In that way, you see, he didn't look out of place. His mother came to see him every year, and each year she brought him a new white coat. Samuel was growing, and each year he needed a larger coat, and his good mother kept him supplied. Samuel was very faithful in working for Eli, the priest. He even slept near the priest's bedroom so he would be able to give him any help he might need during the night.

Samuel was really a very good boy! One night, while Samuel was still a very young man, after he and Eli had retired, he heard a voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel." The boy answered, "Here am I." He thought, of course, that Eli needed help and was calling him. So he ran to Eli's bedside to find out what he could do for the priest, but Eli told him that he had not called.

Samuel was rather puzzled, but went back to bed. He had been in bed only a little while and again he heard the call, "Samuel, Samuel." Samuel jumped up again and hurried to Eli's bedside saying, "Here am I." But the priest had not called. Samuel must have been more perplexed than ever. He may have said to himself, "What is this? Am I dreaming?" He went back to bed, but only to have the same experience the third time.

When Samuel came to Eli the third time, the priest decided it must be that God was speaking to the boy, so he told him to go back to bed and if he heard his name called

again, to answer, saying, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Samuel went back to bed as Eli suggested, and sure enough he heard the voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel." This time, instead of hurrying to the bedside of Eli, Samuel replied, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." And sure enough, God did have a message for his young servant.

Eli loved God and wanted to serve him faithfully, but he had two sons who were wicked. Their father told them that they were doing wrong and causing others to do wrong when they came to the tabernacle, but they kept on doing sinful things. Eli should have punished them and kept them from doing so much wrong, but he failed to do so. Perhaps he didn't like to punish his own boys. But the time came when God decided that he would have to put a stop to the wrongdoing. He told Samuel that Eli and his two wicked sons would die, and that he would raise up a new priest, one who would serve him faithfully.

That was a very important message for God to give to such a young servant, but Samuel told Eli about it the next morning, and Eli received it very kindly, saying that he was willing that God should do whatever was best. Matters turned out just as God had told Samuel, and when the people learned about it they, too, were sure that there was a prophet of God among them. From that very time Samuel was loved and obeyed by the people of Israel, for they knew that God was with him.

Samuel served the children of Israel very faithfully for many years. After awhile he had two sons of his own, and strangely enough, when they grew up to be men they sinned against God just as Eli's sons had done. Wouldn't you think that boys having such a good father would grow up to love God and to serve him faithfully? But Samuel's boys did not. The people loved Samuel so much that they trusted his boys. But when they found out about their wickedness in leading the Israelites into doing wrong they felt very badly about it and complained to Samuel.

By this time more than four hundred years had passed since Joshua, the successor of Moses, died. During all that time there had been no one who really ruled and guided the people, as Moses and Joshua had done. They had what were called "judges." These judges advised the Israelites how to get along, and sometimes they served as leaders of Israel's army in defeating their enemies. Gideon, who defeated the Midianites with only three hundred soldiers, was one of Israel's judges. Samuel was also a judge in Israel, in addition to being a prophet. Samuel was the last of Israel's judges.

Now this is why Samuel was the last judge. When his sons became so very wicked, the people not only complained to Samuel, but they demanded that they be given a king to rule over them to take the place of Samuel. They knew that God loved Samuel, and that unless Samuel appointed a king, the king wouldn't get along very well; so they asked Samuel to select someone to rule over them as king. They intimated to the prophet that they were tired of being ruled by judges; and besides, they said they wanted to be like other nations. They wanted to be ruled by a king.

Poor Samuel! He felt very badly about this. But God comforted him and told him that, after all, the Israelites were not rejecting him. "They are rejecting me," God said to Samuel. You see, under the judges, God was the real Ruler of the people because the judges merely represented God.

However, God told Samuel to appoint a king to rule over the Israelites. "But before you do it," God said to Samuel, "make it plain to the people that they will have a great deal of trouble." "Tell them," he said, "that their kings will probably oppress them and get them into much more trouble than they had under the judges."

Samuel gave this message to the people, but they still insisted that they wanted a king to rule over them. Of course, kings are all right if they are good kings. The Bible tells us about one very good King. I wonder if any of you can think of his name before I tell you.

Well, that very good King the Bible tells us about is King Jesus. King Jesus will rule over this whole earth for a thousand years. During all that time there will be no war. No one will be hungry or without clothes. Everybody will learn to love God and serve him. And best of all, the people who have died will be brought back to life during the time when Jesus is King. Isn't that wonderful?

Yes, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel-all people will be brought back to life when Jesus is King. It will be wonderful to see Samuel, won't it? Aren't there a lot of questions you would like to ask him?

Well, I am getting off the subject, but I did want to tell you about the wonderful King Jesus, and all the things he will do for the people. However, when Samuel found out that the children of Israel were determined to have a king to rule over them, he asked God to help him select a man who would be a good king. God did help Samuel, and an Israelite by the name of Saul was chosen to be the first king. Saul was a very large man, and the people were greatly pleased to have him as their king, and they shouted, "God save the king."

## A BOY WHO WAS GIVEN TO GOD QUESTIONS

Who was Samuel, and why did his mother give him to the priest when he was a child?

Who was Eli, and what did God reveal to Samuel concerning him?

Who was the first king of Israel, and what were Israel's rulers called before that time?

## **A SHEPHERD BOY IS MADE KING**

YOU probably remember my story of the young man Joseph who was sold into slavery in Egypt and later became a ruler. Well, this story is about a young man who took care of sheep for his father and later became a great king to rule over the children of Israel. His name was David. He became the successor to King Saul. The Prophet Samuel, who appointed Saul to be the first king of the Hebrews, also appointed David, who was their second king.

King Saul was a good king in the beginning of his reign, but he didn't remain faithful to God. He became proud and did many things which were displeasing to God. After awhile, when King Saul continued doing wrong, God spoke to the Prophet Samuel and told him to appoint a new king to rule over the Israelites. Samuel felt very badly about this, for he loved Saul, and was very sorry indeed that Saul did not continue to do what God wanted him to do.

God told Samuel that he had selected a new king from among the sons of a man named Jesse who lived in Bethlehem. He asked the prophet to go up to Bethlehem and get acquainted with Jesse and his sons, and assured the prophet that it would then be made known to him which of the sons was to be the new king. Samuel was always willing to do what God wanted him to do, so he went to Bethlehem and there found Jesse and his sons. It was a fine family of boys. They were all healthy and good looking, and the very first one that Samuel saw was such an ideal young man that the prophet was sure he must be the one God had chosen to be the king. But God told Samuel that lie was not the one.

Then Samuel asked to see the other sons, and Jesse, the father, had them all appear before the prophet, one after the other. But as Samuel looked at each of these fine boys God told him that none of them was the right one. Samuel began to wonder what God wanted him to do, and when Jesse did not bring another of his sons before him Samuel asked if he had seen them all. Then Jesse said, "No, there really is another son, but he is out in the field taking care of the sheep." The father said this as though his youngest son was not important, and that it didn't make much difference whether or not Samuel saw him.

But Samuel was very wise because he always did as God wanted him to do, so he asked Jesse to send for the boy who was caring for the sheep. He explained that God looks at us differently than we look at each other. A person may be all dressed up and look very fine to us, yet he might not be doing the things that are pleasing to God. God can read our thoughts, you know, and we should always remember that. We might think things that are wrong, and even say and do things that are wrong, and keep our parents or our playmates from knowing about them, but God knows.

God knew why he didn't want any of the sons of Jesse whom Samuel had already seen to be Israel's new king, so Jesse sent for the voting shepherd boy whose name was David. As soon as Samuel saw him God told the prophet that this was the one to be appointed king. So Samuel anointed David to be the king of the Israelites.

Do you know what the word "anointed" means? It means that Samuel poured a very special, sweet-smelling oil on David's head. That was called anointing. When Samuel poured the oil on David's head it meant that David was the one whom God had chosen for king. People in those days knew what that meant, so there was no question in their minds about it.

But King Saul was still living, and it wouldn't be well to have two kings at the same time, so David did not attempt to become king right away. He conducted himself very wisely while he was waiting for the time to come when he would begin his duties as king.

Meanwhile King Saul continued to disobey God. He had a very bad temper, and sometimes he would become so angry that he would lose control of himself. That was very bad, wasn't it? His friends learned that one of the best things to help Saul when he became so terribly upset was to let him hear beautiful music.

Now the shepherd boy David was a wonderful musician. He could play the harp very melodiously. King Saul was told about David and he consented to have him bring his harp and play a few selections. Right away it did Saul a great deal of good, and he was so pleased that he gave David a very important position in his army—he made him his armor bearer.

At that time the army of the Philistines was causing the Israelites a great deal of trouble. When Saul first began his reign as king in Israel God helped him to defeat the Philistines and to drive them back into their own country. But now that God was no longer helping the king, he had not been so successful in battle and the Philistines had again become a real menace.

Saul's army was out in the field preparing for a battle with the Philistines and three of David's brothers were in the army. David's father sent him to his brothers with supplies of food and to find out how they were getting along with the battle. Just as he arrived on the battlefield one of the Philistine soldiers ran out where he could be seen and defied the entire army of the Israelites.

And they were really frightened, for this Philistine soldier was a giant named Goliath. Probably some of you have seen giants at the circus. Well, this giant was probably larger than any giant you have ever seen. He was well protected with a heavy metal armor, and he carried a huge sword. He really did look fierce and dangerous! But David was not afraid!

Of course David had not been sent into the battlefield to fight. He didn't want to disobey any of the rules of King Saul, but he kept thinking that if he was only given a chance he could deal with that giant, and he told some of them what he thought about this defiant enemy.

Saul learned about this, so he sent for David. Having played the harp so expertly for Saul, he knew that David was no ordinary person, but one who knew what he was talking

about. David told Saul that he felt sure he could destroy this giant, and asked permission to go back onto the battlefield and do so.

King Saul was very much surprised at David's courage and assurance, but advised him against trying it. He told David that he was too young and too small to fight against that mighty giant. But David pleaded with the king. He told Saul that on one occasion while caring for his father's sheep a mighty lion had attacked the sheep, and that he had killed the lion. He told Saul, also, that one time he had killed a big bear which had tried to steal one of his father's sheep.

Of course David wasn't bragging. It is not nice to brag about what we can do. But, you see, David loved God, and he knew that God would help him to kill the giant because he knew that God loved the Israelites and wanted them to be delivered from the Philistines.

Well, Saul was impressed with David's courage and earnestness, and told him he could go and try. I suppose Saul thought it wouldn't make much difference if David was killed. So David started back to the battlefield.

First, though, Saul wanted David to put on his armor for protection. David tried it on, but it didn't fit very well, and he wasn't used to wearing armor, so he told Saul he thought he would be better off without it. What he did do was to get himself a slingshot, and several nice smooth stones. He knew how to use a slingshot. Lots of country boys do, even now.

So David, upon reaching the battlefield, challenged the giant to show himself. The giant did, and when he saw that young lad, who was small and didn't look very strong, he was terribly angry. He was insulted that such a youth, without sword or armor, should even think of fighting against him. Yes, that giant just fumed away against David and the Israelites. He told David that he would tear him apart and give his flesh to the dogs.

But David was calm. He told the giant he was not afraid of his threats, because he knew that God would help him. He said that Israel had a God who could really fight for them, and that he would now help him fight this mighty giant. Then David watched his chance, and with that little slingshot hurled a small stone at the giant.

The very first stone hit the giant in the forehead. Well, that was the end of the giant. This mighty giant was the champion fighter of the whole Philistine army and when the Philistines learned that he had been killed by David they all became afraid and ran away. Thus God helped David to deliver the Israelites from the oppressions of their enemies.

Although David had been chosen by God to be the king of Israel in the place of Saul, yet he was patiently waiting for God's time to make him king. Meanwhile he remained loyal to Saul; and after having killed the giant he reported the matter to him. At first Saul was very much pleased and he took David into his palace and made him a member of the family.

King Saul had a son whose name was Jonathan, and he and David became close friends. They were very good friends, and loved each other dearly. This was a good thing for David because later King Saul turned against him and would have killed him if Jonathan had not interfered.

The reason King Saul turned against David was that he became jealous of him. Yes, Saul became jealous of David just as Cain became jealous of Abel, and as the eleven brothers of Joseph became jealous of him. Jealousy is a terrible thing. Jealousy takes away your own happiness and leads you to do injury to others. In the case of King Saul, his jealousy became so terrible that he would have killed David if he had been able to do so. But God helped David. He helped him by giving him Jonathan to be a very good and trusted friend; and he helped and protected him in other ways.

You probably wonder why King Saul should have been jealous of David. The reason was that the people loved David so much because he had slain the giant, and had delivered them from the army of the Philistines. Saul's jealousy started when he was leading his army on a victory march from the place where the Philistines had been defeated. David was evidently in the parade with Saul, and as they marched through the streets the women came out of the houses and shouted praises to Saul and to David.

But they praised David more than they praised Saul. They said that Saul had killed thousands, but that David had killed tens of thousands. It really meant that they thought David was a much better soldier and leader than Saul. King Saul heard this and became jealous. He probably thought that sooner or later the people would want to make David king over Israel instead of himself. But even so, he should not have been jealous.

Neither should we be jealous when some friends of ours get along better than we do. Saul should have been happy and joined with the people in praising David; but jealous people don't do things like that. Instead of being happy about David's victory over the giant, Saul became an enemy of David, and he remained an enemy of David for the rest of his life.

The Bible tells us that David behaved wisely, which means that he obeyed King Saul and did everything he could to please him. David knew that God had chosen him to be king, but he was willing to wait for God's time to come in this matter. He remained in Saul's palace and served him as long as he could. Once while David was playing the harp for Saul, the king suddenly became angry and threw a big knife at him. David jumped out of the way of the knife and thus escaped being killed.

Finally Saul became so determined to kill David that he found it necessary to leave the palace altogether. Jonathan advised David that this would be the wisest thing to do, and he helped David make plans to escape.

This was very hard for both Jonathan and David because they had become such bosom friends. True friends, however, will always give advice that is best for those whom they

love, even though it may not be the best for themselves. It was best for David to leave the service of King Saul, but it was hard for Jonathan to see him go.

Their parting, however, was very sweet. They asked God to watch between them and to guide and protect them. That was really wonderful; for, after all, God is the very best Friend any of us can have! And God will be our Friend if we love him and try to do the things which please him.

After David and Jonathan had parted and Saul learned that David had escaped, Saul was very angry, and for the remainder of his life he did all he could to find David and to kill him. But God was with David, and protected him. David tried to be like God, so he was very kind toward Saul. He didn't hate Saul and try to kill him. Once while Saul and his soldiers were hunting for David they spent the night sleeping at the entrance of a cave in the side of a mountain.

David and his friends were hiding in this cave, and while Saul was sleeping David could have had his friends go out and kill him, but he refused to do it. He allowed Saul to finish his sleep and move on unharmed. That is one reason God loved David so much.

Finally Saul died, and then it was time for David to be made 'king of Israel. Not all the people knew David, and some of them wanted another king, so again David waited patiently for God to show the people who their real king was to be. David, the shepherd boy, thought of himself as being one of God's sheep, and he put his trust in God, just as sheep put their trust in their shepherd. He knew that God wanted him to be the king, and that God would make him king when the right time came. So he waited for God, and finally he became the beloved king of all the Hebrew people.

#### A SHEPHERD BOY IS MADE KING QUESTIONS

Who was David, and why did Samuel anoint him to be king of Israel before King Saul died?

How did David kill the Philistine giant, and why did this cause King Saul to be jealous of David?

For how long prior to his own death did King Saul seek to destroy David?

## A KING IS FOOLED

IN TELLING you the story of the shepherd boy David who became king of Israel, I mentioned that King Saul died. Now I want to tell you a very strange experience that Saul had just before his death. Because King Saul was no longer doing what was right, God allowed the army of the Philistines to attack the children of Israel again. This was some time after David had killed Goliath the giant. Saul raised as large an army of Israelites as he could to fight back, but he was afraid. Even a very small army could have driven away the Philistines if God had helped the Israelites, but he didn't help them, and Saul was worried. Now, what do you suppose he did?

Well, Saul did about the worst thing of all the wicked things which caused God to be displeased with him—he tried to get advice from the Prophet Samuel who had died. Yes, the good prophet had passed away. While he lived he had done the best he could to help Saul by warning him not to continue doing things which were displeasing to God. But Saul did not pay attention to his warnings.

You may wonder why Saul did wrong in trying to speak to Samuel after the good prophet had died. The reason is that when a person dies he can't talk with anyone, because he is asleep in death and can be awakened only by the power of God. But Satan tries to make people believe that dead people are not really dead.

If you have read the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden you will remember that Satan told them a lie about death. He said that they would not die if they disobeyed God. Of course Adam and Eve did die, and all their children died; so that proves Satan didn't tell the truth.

But when a person tells a lie he usually thinks he has to tell another lie to cover up the first one. So he keeps right on telling lies, which is a very bad thing to do. In order to cover up his first lie that people wouldn't die because of sin, Satan has said that those who die are not really dead. Isn't that awful? We know that dead people are really dead, don't we? But Satan says, "No, they are not dead," and he has tried to prove that he is telling the truth by making believe that people can talk with those who are dead.

Satan and other wicked angels who work with him are able to deceive the people by making them think they can talk with their dead friends. God knew this, and when he gave his Law to the Israelites this was one thing which he forbade them to do.

In those days Satan was able to get women to work for him in his wicked schemes of deceiving people, and these were called witches. And Saul, while he was trying to please God, had ordered that all witches be driven out of the land of Israel so they wouldn't be able to deceive the Israelites.

But when Saul became fearful of the Philistines and couldn't get any help from God, he thought of his old friend Samuel who had died. He wondered if, after all, it might not be possible to talk with him. So what do you suppose he did? He gave orders to some of his

trusted men to find one of the condemned witches so he could visit her and see if she could get Samuel to talk with him. They found a witch who was hiding in a cave near a place called Endor. She was known as the Witch of Endor.

When the witch was visited by these Israelites she was very much afraid, because she knew that Saul had ordered all witches destroyed. She was more afraid than ever when she discovered that it was Saul who was now visiting her. But the wicked king told her not to be afraid, because he would protect her. Satan is very powerful and very deceptive, and he made the witch believe that she saw gods coming right up out of the earth. And then she described a person she saw coming out of the earth whom Saul said must be Samuel.

Saul was very nervous and excited, and so was the witch, and Satan was able to make them both believe that Samuel was actually talking with them. When Samuel was alive he was very faithful to God. He knew that God would not communicate with the wicked king, and neither would he if God didn't want him to do so. Even if the dead Samuel could have talked with Saul he would not have done so. It was all a trick of Satan, and the wicked King Saul was certainly deceived by it. He thought he had actually talked with Samuel, but Samuel was dead and could not talk with anyone.

Satan likes to frighten people. Pretending that it was Samuel speaking, he had the witch tell Saul that the army of the Israelites would be defeated by the Philistines, and that Saul would be with Samuel the next day. Saul understood this to mean that he would die the next day, and it made him very nervous indeed.

A few days later, when the Philistines attacked the Israelites, Saul was wounded, and he killed himself rather than fall into their hands. That was the end of a man who started out to be a good king but who did not continue to obey God. It's a sad story, isn't it? Let us try not to be like King Saul.

#### A KING IS FOOLED QUESTIONS

Who was the Witch of Endor, and why was it wrong for King Saul to visit her?

Why was it not possible for Samuel, who had died, to talk to King Saul?

How did King Saul die?

## THE WISEST MAN AND A KING

NOW I want to tell you about another king who ruled over the children of Israel-a king who was made very wise by God.

After he became king he had a dream. In this dream God asked him to make a request for something which he would very much like to have. What would you ask for if you had such an opportunity?

This king could have decided that plenty of money would be the best thing for him, or that he needed a very large army to protect the Israelites against their enemies. He may have thought of these things, but he decided that what he needed most of all was wisdom, so he asked God to make him wise. He wanted to be wise in order to rule over God's people in the right way. God was pleased with this request, so he made this king the wisest of all the kings who ever ruled over the Israelites.

I haven't told you the name of this king who was made so wise, have I? Well, his name was Solomon. He was the son of David, the shepherd boy who became king of Israel. David ruled over Israel for forty years, and during all that time he had plenty of trouble. Enemies were fighting against Israel during nearly all his reign, so David had a very stormy time. But Solomon didn't have nearly the amount of trouble during the time he was king.

When David grew very old and knew that he would not live much longer, he gave orders that his son Solomon should be the king. David wasn't a bit jealous, you see. He knew he was too old to be king any longer, and he wanted the Israelites to have a king who could look after them. So he said that Solomon was to be their ruler. That was an easy way for Solomon to become king, wasn't it? All the time that Solomon was king the enemies of Israel didn't fight against them. Thus Solomon was a king of peace, while David had been a king of war.

God was so pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom instead of asking for gold to make him rich that he gave the king both wisdom and riches. Of course God does not make everybody wise, even if they ask him to do so. That was a very special favor to Solomon, to help him rule wisely over the children of Israel. It was David's dying wish that God would give his son Solomon his blessing-that he would be upright and just in all his dealings. And when Solomon showed that his first thought was to honor God by offering sacrifices to him, God told him he would grant his request for that which he desired.

Yes, God made Solomon rich as well as wise. God also helped him to build a temple. The temple was to take the place of the tabernacle which I told you about in a previous story. Now, the tabernacle was God's house! The tabernacle was God's house because it was there that he gave his blessings to the priests, that the priests might give them to the people. You will remember that the tabernacle was built in a very special way so that it could be taken apart and moved from place to place. When it was built the Israelites were

wandering around in the desert, and every time they moved, God's house was moved with them. So that is why it had to be made easy to move.

But now the Israelites were no longer wandering in the wilderness. They were in the Promised Land, and had been there for a long time, but they were still using the tabernacle. King David decided that the Lord should have a more permanent house than that movable tabernacle, and God was very much pleased that David felt this way about it. But God didn't let David build the new house for him. David prepared some of the lumber and stones for it, but God told him that the building of the new house would have to wait until his son Solomon was king.

Now it was this new house that was called the temple. It was built to be very sturdy, and put together so firmly that it wouldn't be possible to move it from place to place in the way the tabernacle had been moved. But it was God's house, and it was used in the same way as the tabernacle. The tabernacle was like a tent, but the temple was like a house.

When you go out hiking or fishing for a few days you sometimes live in a tent, and you take the tent right along with you. In that way you have a place to sleep every night. That is very good. But when you arrive home you don't sleep in the tent any more. Then you have a real house in which to live.

Well, it was something like that with the house of God. The tabernacle was fine while they were moving so often, but now they were in their own land, so and Solomon thought a real house should be built for God. And my, what a wonderful house, or temple, it was! When you read about it in the Bible, you will wonder where Solomon found all the gold that lie used in building it.

First, there were the stone walls. Next, the inside walls, ceiling beams, the floor joists, all of which were covered over with cedar boards. Then these cedar boards were covered with gold; and the floor boards were covered with gold, too. It was really a very beautiful house. You can imagine how wonderful it was when I tell you that it took more than seven years to build.

This was God's house, and Solomon loved God and wanted him to have the very best of everything. That's the way we should all feel about God. Let us remember this, so that whatever we do for God we will do the very best we possibly can.

When the temple was completed and the priests first entered it to serve the Lord as they had done in the tabernacle, suddenly it was filled with smoke. I suppose you think it caught on fire, but that was not so. No, God caused that smoke to fill the temple. It was God's way of saying to the priests, and to Solomon, and to all the Israelites, that he was pleased with what had been done for him. The Bible tells us that this smoke was the glory of God. When God shows his glory we know he is pleased.

Then King Solomon offered a very long prayer to God, and in this prayer he said many very wonderful things. One thing he said was that God did not really, need this new

house at all. He said that all the heavens which are above us are not large enough for God to use as a house, and that we could not expect God to live in a house we might build for him, even though we did use millions and millions and millions of dollars worth of gold to build it.

Solomon was right!

God didn't need that temple at all, but the Israelites needed it. They needed God's blessings. The tabernacle and the temple were the places where God give his blessings to the people. God had asked Moses to build the tabernacle, and now he was pleased with the temple, because it showed how by and by he will give his blessings to the whole world through a temple made of people, instead of stones and boards and gold.

I'll tell you more about that in another story. Just remember this now-the temple Solomon built for God was just like a beautiful picture of a still more wonderful temple, a temple from which good things will go out to everyone all over the whole wide world.

Solomon was certainly very wise and very rich. The whole nation of Israel became prosperous during the time he was king. He built a navy that sailed on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. He had merchant vessels also, and these brought gold from Ophir, and they also brought spices and horses and mules, and even monkeys and peacocks from distant places.

A very famous queen of another country, known as the Queen of Sheba, heard of the great wisdom and riches of Solomon, but thought it couldn't possibly be true. So she decided to visit Solomon to find out for herself. You know, that's the way some people are about the Bible. They just can't believe that all the wonderful things in it are really true. But, we know that whatever the Bible says is true!

The Bible tells us about a king who is much more wonderful than Solomon. He is King Jesus. King Jesus is wiser than Solomon, richer than Solomon, more powerful than Solomon. And just like Solomon, but in a much better way, King Jesus will be a King of peace.

It's interesting to read about King Solomon, but how much better it will be to enjoy all the good things that King Jesus will do for the people! The Bible tells us this, and we know that the Bible is true.

## THE WISEST MAN AND A KING QUESTIONS

Who was the king of Israel after David died, and why was he so wise?

What was Solomon's Temple, and why is it called the house of the Lord?

Do you know of a King who is wiser and richer than King Solomon?

## **A PROPHET'S PRAYERS ANSWERED**

THIS story is about a wonderful man whose name was Elijah. Elijah was a man who served God as a prophet in Israel. All of God's prophets were his faithful servants. Elijah lived very close to God, and God heard his prayers and answered them. One reason God answered Elijah's prayers was that he prayed for the things which were pleasing to God.

Elijah lived at a time when there was a very wicked king ruling over the children of Israel. This made it a very hard time for a prophet of God. It meant that he had to tell the king he was wrong and try to make him do right, and it was very seldom that a king liked to be told he was wrong.

When Elijah first became a prophet God asked him to tell the king that there wouldn't be any rain for a long, long time. Now the reason for this was that Ahab, who was then king, was wicked. Because he followed the advice of his wife, who was a wicked woman, he had allowed the priests of the false god, Baal, to establish idol worship among the children of Israel. That was contrary to the law of God! There was only the one true God whom they were to worship, so it was very wrong for their king to allow them to worship any other god.

So God sent Elijah to warn the king, and to tell him that there would be no more rain until the prophet said so. Now you can imagine that Ahab was very angry with Elijah. The good prophet had to run away and hide, or else he would have been killed. But God took care of him.

God always takes care of those who do what he wants them to do!

And how did God take care of Elijah? Why, he told Elijah of a nice quiet place by the side of a brook. The name of the brook was Cherith. Probably it was in a cool sheltered place in the woods where Elijah could hide. While he remained there God took care of him in a most unusual way. He sent ravens to Elijah night and morning with a supply of food. Yes, these ravens brought bread and meat to the prophet twice every day. Of course he had all the water he needed from the brook. Ravens, you know, are large black birds. They are very much like our black crows. We don't think crows are so nice, but if we were very hungry and they brought us food we would think differently, wouldn't we?

Of course ravens, or crows, or any other kind of bird, wouldn't bring food to boys and girls or to men and women unless God caused them to do so. We don't know how God directed those ravens to take food to Elijah. God does many things which we do not understand. We don't understand how he makes beautiful flowers grow. We just know that he does. The Bible tells us that God caused the ravens to bring food to Elijah, So we

know he did, because we know that the Bible is true. And the ravens kept right on bringing food to the prophet as long as he stayed by the side of that brook.

But what do you suppose happened after awhile? You may think those ravens flew away and didn't come back. No, that wasn't it. Why, that brook dried up so there was no water in it! That was very serious, for no one can live without water, and eating bread and meat every day must have made the prophet very thirsty, so he just had to have water.

The brook dried up because of the weather. Just as Elijah had told the wicked king Ahab, there was to be no more rain for a long time. It is the rain that keeps brooks and rivers flowing, and when there is no rain for a long, long time, the water begins to get low in brooks and rivers; and if the weather continues without rain, finally they dry up entirely. Well, that is what happened to the brook Cherith that supplied water for Elijah.

And now what was Elijah to do?

Again God took care of him. God told the prophet to move to another place. The name of the place is very hard to pronounce, but you can try to pronounce it if you wish. It was Zarephath. God told the prophet that there he would find a widow woman who would take care of him. Elijah went where God asked him to go and there he found the widow. The dry weather had also caused a famine where this widow lived, and she was nearly out of food. All she had was enough flour to make one small cake, and a little olive oil to mix with the flour.

But God was taking care of Elijah and as long as he obeyed God, everything was all right. It didn't seem like a very nice thing for a man to do, but just the same Elijah asked this poor woman for that very last bit of food that she had. He did not do this because he was selfish. No, he did it because he was putting his trust in God. God told him that this widow would take care of him, and Elijah was sure that God was able to fulfill his promise.

The widow did as Elijah asked her to do, and then what do you suppose occurred? Why, that little supply of oil never ran out! The widow kept the oil in a pitcher called a cruse, and every time she used oil from the cruse, she found more oil there to take its place. Wasn't that wonderful! And it was the same way with the flour. So day after day both the widow and the prophet were supplied with food.

Now it really wasn't difficult for God to supply flour and oil in that way. You see, he supplies all the flour and oil and all the other food that the whole world eats. Only he does it in a different way. He makes the grain grow, and he makes the olives grow from which we get the oil. We don't know how he makes the grain and the olives grow. We just know that he does. We don't know how God kept the widow's cruse supplied with oil, and why she never ran out of flour during that long dry spell.

This widow had a very dear son. He was just a young boy. One day that dear boy became very ill, and he died. His mother was heartbroken. At first she blamed it on Elijah, but of

course Elijah had nothing to do with the boy's becoming ill and dying. But Elijah did something about it after the boy died. He carried that youngster upstairs in the widow's house, laid him down on the bed, exercised his arms, forced air into his lungs, and the boy came to life again. Wasn't that grand? Of course, it was really God who restored the boy to life. Elijah couldn't do that all by himself.

But we can imagine how happy that mother was to have her boy alive again. I like to think about that wonderful experience, for you know the Bible tells us that the time is coining when all who have died will be brought back to life again. All the boys and girls, and the grown-up folks as well, who have died are to be given life and they will be back home again with their families. That is something really worth knowing, isn't it? The power of God will do this. We know that God has power to do anything and everything he has promised to do. Yes, we know that his promises will come true! That is what the Bible tells us, and we know that the Bible is true.

It had now been three years since it had rained in the land of Israel, and the people were becoming quite worried. It was then that God told Elijah to go and show himself to King Ahab. He did this, and Ahab, of course, was very angry with the prophet, because he blamed him for the lack of rain. But Elijah made it plain to the king that the cause of all the dry weather was his own wickedness in allowing his wife to introduce the worship of the false god, Baal.

Then the prophet told the king what should be done. By this time the king was so worried that he was willing to do anything that Elijah suggested. You see, God did not keep it from raining just to make the people suffer, but to cause them to stop worshiping false gods.

So this is what Elijah told them to do: all the people were to be invited to assemble on a mountain called Carmel. The priests of the false god Baal were invited to come up onto the mountain also. There were four hundred and fifty of these priests, but Elijah was the only prophet of the true God. Thousands and thousands of the people traveled up Mount Carmel as Elijah had suggested. If you were ever up on a high mountain you know what a sight that must have been to look down over the Mountainside into the valley below and watch that great multitude of people slowly making their way over the rocky, dusty trails as they moved as near to Elijah as they could get.

All day long they kept coining. What a sight!

Meanwhile, Elijah was preparing the people for a great demonstration to prove who was the true God. First he told the priests of Baal to prepare a sacrifice to their god, and then call upon him to send fire from heaven to burn the sacrifice. So they tried it, but there was no answer to their prayer. They kept shouting to Baal as loudly as they could all day long. Elijah mocked them. He said, "Cry a little louder!" suggesting that "perhaps Baal is asleep, or maybe he has gone on a journey." I suppose Elijah enjoyed that quite a bit, don't you?

Finally, as the evening drew near and the people were nearly all gathered where they could see and hear, Elijah's turn came to show what the true God could and would do. He had an altar built, and a sacrifice placed upon it. He gave orders to dig a ditch all around the altar and to fill the ditch with water. Then he told his helpers to pour water over the sacrifice and the altar. You see, he wanted the people to be convinced that the God of Israel was really the true God, the only living God with power to take care of his people.

When everything was prepared to the prophet's satisfaction, he prayed to God and asked him to accept the sacrifice of the young bullock that was being offered to him, and to show that he was accepting it by causing fire to come down and burn it up.

Then followed a marvelous display of God's power. Flames of fire appeared, burning, not only the bullock, but also licking up the water that was in the ditch around the altar. When the people saw this there arose a great shout of rejoicing, proclaiming that Israel's God was the true God.

From then on things changed. To complete the work of restoring the worship of the true God in Israel, all the priests of Baal were killed. A short time after that Elijah prayed that it might rain in the land of Israel, and the rain came.

Elijah had many more wonderful experiences, and he continued to be a faithful prophet of God. He came to the end of his life in a very unusual way. When his work was finished he was standing one day by the side of the Jordan River, when suddenly there arose a mighty whirlwind. Then Elijah saw a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and the whirlwind lifted him up from the earth, and he was seen no more.

Of course Elijah died. We know that, but no one could find his body.

I am telling you how Elijah died because some people think that he was taken up into heaven to live with the angels, but that is not so. We know this, because Jesus, years and years afterward, said that no one had gone up into heaven. We know that everything Jesus said is true. So let us remember that Elijah died, only that he died in a different way than most people die.

Everybody has to die now, but it won't be that way by and by. There is a time coming when no one will need to die. That is what the Bible says, and we know that the Bible is true.

## A PROPHET'S PRAYERS ANSWERED QUESTIONS

Who was the king of Israel at the time the Prophet Elijah's prayers were answered?

Why was there no rain in the land of Israel for a long time?

How did God feed Elijah while he lived alone by the side of a brook?

How did God answer Elijah's prayer on a high mountain called Carmel?

How did Elijah die?

## **A CHILD BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE**

ONE of the small cities in the land of Israel was called Shunem. There lived in this city a dear woman who was very kind to one of God's servants. The Bible doesn't tell us the name of this good woman, except that she was a Shunammite. The servant of God to whom she was so kind was Elisha. Elisha had been the servant of the Prophet Elijah, and when Elijah died, God made Elisha a prophet to take his place.

In going from place to place to do the work God give him to do, Elisha and his servant often walked past the house where the Shunammite woman lived. This good woman decided that it would be a very kind thing to ask Elisha to stop and have dinner with them. Elisha must have been very glad, for it is always nice to eat a good meal when one is traveling. The Shunammite woman enjoyed it too, and several times she asked him to stop in to have something to eat.

Elisha loved God, and usually people talk about those whom they love. Well, Elisha must have talked about God while he was eating dinner in this home, for the Shunammite woman found out that he was one of God's prophets. She mentioned this to her husband and said that she thought it would be a good idea if they furnished a comfortable bedroom for Elisha where he could rest any time he came to visit. You see, she loved God too, and wanted to serve him by doing something for Elisha.

Elisha appreciated this very much, and one day while he was resting in his room in the Shunammite's home it occurred to him that perhaps there was something he could do for her to show how thankful he was for her kindness. He talked it over with his servant, and the servant told him that this good woman didn't have any children, but would like very much to be the mother of a child.

Elisha knew that God is able to give children to mothers, and he knew that if he asked God to give this good woman a child God would do so. Then Elisha told the woman that God would give her a child. She could hardly believe it, but God gave her the child just the same. How happy she must have been! God had certainly rewarded her for being so kind to his prophet.

The child was a boy, and when he was old enough he did what he could to help his father. One very hot day he went out in the field where reaping was being done and suddenly he felt a terrible pain in his head. He said, "Oh, my head, my head. Father, my head hurts." His father ran over to him, but by that time the boy had fallen down and was unconscious. The sun was too hot for his little head and it caused what we call a sunstroke.

The father had one of the strong young men pick up the boy and carry him back to the house, and his mother held him in her lap for quite a long time hoping he would get better, but he didn't. He remained unconscious, and after several hours he died. Yes, that dear boy died right in his mother's arms. Wasn't that sad? Of course, the poor mother

was heartbroken. It seemed so strange that God would give her a boy and then allow him to die.

But the Shunammite woman did just the right thing. She thought of Elisha, the man of God. If God would give her a son because Elisha asked him to, perhaps God would make her boy alive again if Elisha prayed to him about it. Perhaps you think that she sent someone to get Elisha, don't you?

But she didn't.

It was too important to trust anyone else to take such a message to God's prophet, so she went herself. She had to travel all the way to Mount Carmel to find Elisha, but she finally found him, and she insisted that he return with her to her home and to the dead child.

Elisha told his servant to hurry back to the mother's home and asked him to lay his staff across the face of the dead child. A staff is a very long cane, which the people used in those days as walking sticks. The servant came back and met the prophet and the Shunammite woman before they arrived at her home and reported that the child was still dead. My, how badly that poor mother must have felt!

But Elisha had great faith in God!

Arriving at the mother's home, he went upstairs to his room where the mother had laid the child on his bed. He worked over the child, and prayed to God for help. After awhile the child's body became warm. Then the boy sneezed seven times and sat up on the bed and was just as much alive as ever. Elisha sent for the mother to come upstairs and see her boy. My, how happy she must have been!

Now this is a wonderful story of how God's power brought a little boy back to life. But it should mean more to us than a story. It is a true story, of course. But the best story of all is that God will, by and by, use his power to make all the dead people alive. Elisha wasn't able to make that dear boy alive again unless God helped him, but when God helps people, wonderful things can be done.

The next time you learn that someone has died, just remember this story of the Shunammite boy who died. Remember that God's power made that boy alive again. And the most important thing of all to remember is that God has promised to make everybody alive. Yes, all who have ever died are to live again.

#### A CHILD BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE QUESTIONS

Who was Elisha, and how did he become the friend of a family in the city of Shunem?

What caused the Shunammite's son to die, and how was he made alive again?

What is the best story of all that God has told us in the Bible?

## **A KING WHO ATE GRASS**

KING SAUL was the first king to rule over the children of Israel. Then, as you know, they had other kings. There was David, who was a very good king. Then there was Solomon. Another one was called Ahab. He was not a good king, because he allowed the people to worship false gods. There were many other kings about whom we haven't told you at all. The very last king that the Israelites had was a man by the name of Zedekiah-Zed-e-ki-ah.

Zedekiah was a very wicked king, and many of the children of Israel were also wicked. So God allowed the enemies of the Israelites to capture their king, and all the people became captives and were carried away into a strange country called Babylon. It will be well if you can remember that Saul was the first king of the Israelites, and that Zedekiah was their last king.

Many grown-up folks do not know this!

The people of Babylon were all heathen, which means that they did not serve the true God, who was the God of the Israelites. The Bible also calls such people Gentiles. The Gentile nations had kings also, and at this time a man by the name of Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Gentile nation, Babylon.

Isn't that a long name!

Here's the way to pronounce it: first you say Neb, then u, then kad, then nez, and the last part is zar. So when you put it together it is Neb-u-kad-nez-zar. Now, that's not so hard after all, is it? I want you to learn that name because most of this story will be about Nebuchadnezzar, and you ought to be acquainted with him.

About the time Nebuchadnezzar captured Zedekiah he had a very wonderful dream, but the strange part of it was that when he awoke from his sleep he couldn't remember the dream. Did you ever have a dream, and in the morning couldn't remember it? Well, that was Nebuchadnezzar's experience. It was truly a wonderful dream. He knew that, but he tried and tried to remember it and just couldn't.

Well, what did he do?

First he sent for some of his wise men. These were men who were specially trained so they would be able to tell the king what he wanted to know. Of course they were not really wise men; they were just called wise men. Nebuchadnezzar asked them to tell him what it was that he dreamed, and then to explain the meaning of the dream.

My, but that was a hard job for those wise men, wasn't it? Yes, it was really too hard, for they told the king that they couldn't possibly know what it was that he had dreamed.

They told the king that if he could remember the dream and tell them what it was, they could certainly explain its meaning. But this the king could not do, so they didn't help him very much. The king was very angry, and ordered that all the wise men should be killed.

Among the wise men who were specially appointed to advise the king and explain secrets to him, were four young Israelites. The name of one of these was Daniel. When he heard that the king was angry and wanted them all killed, he asked if he might try to tell the king his dream. Nebuchadnezzar agreed to let Daniel try.

Daniel couldn't possibly do this all by himself, but God helped him, and because God helped him he was able to tell the king just what it was that he dreamed. He told Nebuchadnezzar that in his dream he saw a statue which was the shape of a man. The Bible calls it an image. The image was like a man, with shoulders, arms, body, legs, and feet. The head appeared to be made of gold, the arms and chest of silver, the stomach and hips of brass, and the legs of iron. The feet were very odd, for they were made of a mixture of iron and clay.

Then Nebuchadnezzar saw a big stone separate itself from the side of a mountain, and the stone fell on the feet of the statue, causing it to fall and break in pieces. The wind blew the pieces away. Then the most peculiar thing occurred. That stone which fell on the feet of the statue began to grow, and it grew until it was so large that it filled the whole earth. Now wasn't that a most remarkable dream!

Of course you want to know what it means. Nebuchadnezzar did too, so Daniel explained it to him. He explained that the golden head of the statue stood for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that each of the other parts of the statue represented very strong nations which would rule over the Israelites and the whole world after the nation of Babylon became weak and was defeated by its enemies.

This dream meant that the Israelites would be ruled by the Gentiles for hundreds of years. And they were, too. It is wonderful that God knew this and could tell about it before it took place! We can't do that, can we? But God can, and he helped Daniel explain the history of the world hundreds and hundreds of years ahead of time.

Daniel explained that the Gentile nations would rule until God sent his King.

God's kingdom was shown by the stone that broke the statue to pieces and then became a great mountain which filled the whole earth. Jesus will be the King in God's kingdom, and this means that the children of Israel will never have another king until King Jesus rules over them and over the whole world.

Aren't we glad that wicked Gentile kings won't rule over the earth forever and ever? Surely we are, for God has promised that Jesus will be the King, and we know that all his promises will come true.

Of course Nebuchadnezzar couldn't rule over the Israelites and over the whole world unless God allowed him to do so. He forgot that, and became very proud. He tried to make the people think that he was very wonderful, and that they should worship him. He didn't trust God as some of the kings of the Israelites did, but had the very foolish idea that he could be a wise and wonderful king without any help from God.

So what do you suppose occurred?

Why, the king had another dream, and when he found out what it meant it was really terrible. In this dream God told him that he would lose his mind and would go out in the field and eat grass just like the cattle for seven years. And Nebuchadnezzar actually did this, too. Can you imagine a mighty king, as he thought himself to be, crawling around on the ground eating grass? The Bible tells us that his hair grew long and coarse and looked like bird feathers, and his fingernails became like the claws of animals.

Finally, though, Nebuchadnezzar's reason returned to him, and when he found out what he had done he was very much ashamed of himself. However, he learned by this experience that he was not as wise and powerful as he had thought. Learning this, he gave praise to God for allowing him to be the ruler.

#### A KING WHO ATE GRASS QUESTIONS

Who was Israel's lost king, and by whom was he made a prisoner?

Who was Daniel, and what was Nebuchadnezzar's dream which Daniel explained to him?

Why was it necessary for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to eat nothing but grass for seven years?

## IN A FIERY FURNACE

WHEN the king of Babylon captured the king of Israel and made the Israelites captives in Babylon, there were four young men who were specially favored by the king. One of these was Daniel. They were brought into the king's palace that they might be trained to serve among his advisers. These advisers were called "wise men."

The training of the wise men was begun when they were young and lasted for three years. It was something like three years in college. In order that they might be very healthy they were fed with the same choice food that was prepared for the king, and they also drank of the king's wine. When these young Hebrews were brought into this special school Daniel explained to the man who had charge over them that they would rather not eat the king's meat or drink the king's wine.

The man was afraid that the king would be very angry with him if he let these young Hebrew boys eat or drink anything else. But Daniel asked him if they might try eating other food for a short period of ten days and see how good their health was at the end of that time. The man who had charge over them agreed to this. Well, at the close of the ten days the boys looked and felt better than any of the others who were in training with them, so the man who took care of them was well satisfied. Later the king was also pleased.

As we learned in our last story, it was Daniel, one of these four Hebrews, who explained the king's dream for him—that dream in which he saw a statue like a man, which was made of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay. The king was very, very much pleased with what Daniel did for him, and he exalted him to be chief ruler over the province of Babylon.

One of the very good things about Daniel was his loyalty to his friends. When the king gave him such a wonderful position in the nation as a reward for telling him the dream and what it meant, Daniel thought of the other three Hebrews who had also been trained to be wise men. So he told the king about them, and the king said that the three Hebrew boys could represent Daniel, and be rulers over the province of Babylon. Wasn't that a wonderful arrangement!

But they did not know how much trouble they were to have later on.

When Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he was such a mighty ruler in the world, the king became proud and thought he was very wise. He also forgot the God of the Hebrews who had helped Daniel to interpret his dream. The king commanded that a very large golden idol, or image, should be made, and then ordered all those whom he had appointed to be rulers over the various provinces to worship this idol.

When these rulers learned about the king's command, all of them except the three Hebrews gathered together where the idol was built, and when they heard the sound of

music being played on the many kinds of instruments which the people used at that time, they bowed down before this huge golden idol and worshipped it.

The province of Babylon was only a small part of the country. In this province the city of Babylon was built. You can understand that, can't you? It is like the state of New York, the county of New York, and the city of New York. In Babylon the states were called provinces, and the three Hebrew children who were made rulers over the province, or state of Babylon, refused to bow down and worship that great idol of gold which Nebuchadnezzar had set, up in the place of God.

My, but it took a lot of courage for those young men to defy the king of Babylon! When he heard about it he was very angry. In those days kings were very cruel to those who did not obey them. Nebuchadnezzar gave orders that any of the rulers who refused to bow down and worship the image should be cast into a furnace of fire and burned to death.

Wasn't that awful!

Of course the three Hebrew children knew that this is what the king had ordered, but they decided that no matter how much they suffered they would not worship the image. They trusted in God, and knew that it would be very wrong for them to worship an idol.

Yes, when Nebuchadnezzar learned that these young Hebrews had refused to obey him he was indeed very angry, but he was willing to give them another chance, and again the three Hebrews refused. Well, you can just imagine how the king felt by this time! He told his servants to heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual, and then to bind these three rebellious Hebrews and throw them into that dreadfully hot fire.

But these godly young men were not afraid! They had told Nebuchadnezzar that they believed God would help them, but even if he did not, they would not worship the king's image. Yes, the fire was hot-it was so hot and fierce that the men who carried the Hebrews to the furnace were burned to death by the flames which leaped out from it.

I suppose the king thought he was very clever and powerful. I can imagine him saying to himself, "I'll teach those young Hebrews a lesson. Who is their God, anyway, that I should pay any attention to him?" After he had a little while to think it over, and to feel glad that he was so very wise and powerful, he decided he would go to the edge of the fiery furnace and make sure that the Hebrews were dead. But what a surprise! Instead of being burned to death, they were alive and walking around in the fire. And not only that, instead of three, Nebuchadnezzar saw four people in the fire! He said that the fourth one looked like the Son of God.

I'll tell you, if Nebuchadnezzar was ever frightened he was now! He was wise enough to know that a power much greater than he could understand was protecting those three Hebrews. He knew, too, that it was the power of their God. He called to the three Hebrews to step out of the fire, and they did. When they were examined it was found that not even their clothing was singed with the fire. Wasn't that wonderful?

Oh yes, I forgot to tell you the names of these three Hebrew boys that were given to them by one of the king's servants. They were Sha-drach, Me-shach, and A-bed-ne-go.

King Nebuchadnezzar gave orders throughout the country over which he ruled that no one should say anything against the God of these three Hebrews. Not only that, but he gave the young men better positions than they had before.

Isn't it wonderful to know that God is so powerful, and that he takes such good care of those who love and serve him? We don't understand how he kept the three Hebrews from being burned in that intensely hot fire, but we know that he did. We don't know all there is to know about fire, anyway. We know it is hot, and we know that it burns wood, and paper, and coal. We know that it won't burn rocks; and we know, too, that water won't burn. And we know also that God knows everything about fire and that he knew how to keep the fire from burning the three Hebrew children.

We know this because the Bible says so, and we know that the Bible is true.

#### IN A FIERY FURNACE QUESTIONS

Who were Daniel's three friends who were brought to Babylon as prisoners with him?

How did these three Hebrews become important rulers in Babylon?

Explain how the enemies of the three Hebrews tried to have them killed by the order of the king.

What did the king of Babylon do when he found that the Hebrews were not burned to death in the fiery furnace?

## IN A DEN OF LIONS

HAVE you ever heard anyone say, "Dare to be a Daniel"? Daniel always did the things which were pleasing to God. He decided that he would please God even though he was killed for it. Because of this, people have come to say, "Dare to be a Daniel," which means, always do what is right no matter how much it may cost. Sometimes, you know, it may seem easier to do wrong than to do right. But if it ever seems that way to you, just remember Daniel, and say to yourself, "I'll be like Daniel, I'll do what is right."

God helped Daniel to be wise, and enabled him to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as we learned in another story. The king was pleased with Daniel, and not only made him a very powerful ruler in Babylon, as I have already told you, but he also decided that Daniel should be ruler over all the other wise men. So you see this fine young Jewish man was certainly getting along very well indeed, considering that he was a captive in Babylon. God was helping him, that's the reason.

Daniel ruled in Babylon for a long, long time, and God blessed him. He ruled until Nebuchadnezzar died and another man became the king of Babylon. His name was Belshazzar. This new king of Babylon also liked Daniel. But the new king didn't reign very long. The king of a nation called the Medes captured Babylon and killed Belshazzar. But Daniel was such a good ruler over the people that the king of the Medes, whose name was Darius, liked him, and he also made Daniel his chief ruler.

Daniel loved God and served him. He was honest and treated the people kindly. Because of this, the people liked him and obeyed him. That is one reason Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar liked to have him rule over their people.

But there were less important rulers in the country who had to take orders from Daniel, and they did not like to do, this. They were jealous, and wanted the high position which the king had given to Daniel. We have learned in other stories that when people are jealous they often do very wicked things. Let us try never to be jealous!

These men who had to take orders from Daniel were clever as well as wicked. They tried to discover some way in which Daniel was doing wrong and report it to the king. But they learned that Daniel always did what was right. Then they said among themselves that they might find fault with Daniel in the way he served God. They knew that Daniel was faithful to God, and that he prayed to God every day. Daniel had a special place where he prayed. It was directly in front of a window in his home, and these wicked men knew about this.

So what do you suppose they did?

They went to the king and suggested to him that it would be a good idea if he made a law that no one was to ask any favor of any god or of any man, except the king, for thirty days. This pleased the king. He thought it would make all the people remember him and that he could then rule over them better. Then the men who were plotting against Daniel

told the king that he should make a law that anyone who disobeyed this command should be cast into a den of lions. The king thought this was also a good idea.

So he made the law, and it was put down in writing and the king signed it. Now you can see what that meant, can't you? Daniel prayed to God every day, and the king had made a law that no one could ask favors of God or man, but only of him, for thirty days. If Daniel continued to pray every day as he had been doing he would break the king's command and would be thrown into a den of lions.

Well, what would you have done?

Would you dare to be a Daniel? Would you keep right on praying to God and trust him to take care of you? Daniel did! Daniel wanted to please the king whenever he could, but he was determined to please God even if the king was not pleased, so he continued to pray.

The evil men who formed this plot against Daniel spied on him and when they found him praying they reported it to the king. Then the king realized what a clever and wicked trick these men had played on him. The king was not angry with Daniel, and he did not want him to be put into a den of lions to be eaten up, but he could not change the law he had made.

I suppose you wonder why the king couldn't change the law which he had made. It was because of a rule of the Medes that any command issued by the king was unchangeable, so there just wasn't anything he could do about it. But Daniel was not afraid.

He trusted God.

God had taken care of him all his life, and he knew that whatever God wanted to do now, he was well able to do it. When the king found that there was no possible way to save Daniel, he gave permission to have him thrown to the lions. They put him in with those fierce, hungry lions, and then rolled a large stone over the den to keep him from escaping.

My, but the king was certainly very unhappy that night! He couldn't sleep, and tossed about on his bed the whole night long. He knew that Daniel had a wonderful God, and, no doubt, he hoped that Daniel's God would deliver him. But the king wasn't sure that he would. He didn't know as much about God as Daniel knew, and that was the reason he was so worried.

Early in the morning the king dressed himself and went straight to that lions' den and called to Daniel, half hoping that the good man of God would be alive and would answer him. The king called out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" How pleased the king must have been when he heard Daniel answer, "O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."

Daniel had done no wrong. And he was not angry with the king, either. He knew that the king had been deceived into making a law that had caused this trouble, so he made the king very happy by not blaming him for being cast into the den of lions. Do you know what the king then did? He ordered all those men who wanted Daniel out of the way to be thrown into the den of lions. But God's angels did not prevent the lions from eating those wicked men.

The king then sent out a command to all the earth that the people should worship the God of Daniel. He explained that Daniel's God was the only living God who was able to care for his people and rule over the nations. Yes, that is true of our God, for we have the same God that Daniel had. God is so powerful that he is able to make all his promises come true. And when all his promises come true, the people of every nation will worship and serve him. This will truly be a wonderful world, then, won't it?

### IN A DEN OF LIONS QUESTIONS

What do people mean when they say, "Dare to be a Daniel"?

In what way did the enemies of Daniel try to have King Darius put Daniel to death?

Why was it that Daniel was not destroyed by the lions when he was compelled to be in their den with them all night?

## IN A STOMACH OF A FISH

JONAH was a servant of God who was a good man and loved God, but not well enough to obey him as he should. If you love your parents more than you love anybody else, you will always do the very best you can to please them. Isn't that right Well, Jonah didn't love God as much as he should have, so when God asked him to do something that was not pleasant to Jonah, he tried to run away from God so he wouldn't have to do it.

Jonah was one of God's prophets.

A prophet is one who tells people about God, and what God wants done. A prophet also tells people when they are doing wrong, and that they will have trouble if they keep on doing wrong. A prophet also tells about things that will occur long before they take place. Jonah, being one of God's prophets, was asked by him to go to a very wicked city called Nin-e-veh and tell the people of that city that they were all to be destroyed because of their wickedness.

Jonah didn't want to do this, so he decided that he would run away to avoid doing what God wanted him to do. He went to a seaport called Joppa, and found that a boat was sailing to Tarshish, so he paid his fare to sail from Joppa to Tarshish. Jonah was sure that by sailing on a ship that was going to Tarshish he would land far from Nineveh.

Well, Jonah was wrong. The ship didn't go to Nineveh, Jonah did!

A short time after the ship left Joppa, God caused a fierce storm to arise, and the wind whipped the sea so terribly that the waves were breaking right over the ship, and all the sailors were sure it would be wrecked. These sailors were heathens, who did not believe in the true God. But being afraid, they prayed to their own gods. Their gods were not really gods at all, and of course could not do anything for them.

Meanwhile Jonah had crawled under the deck of the ship and was sound asleep. Probably the air wasn't very fresh down there in the hold of the ship, and that is why he had gone to sleep. The captain of the ship missed Jonah and started to hunt for him. When they found the prophet, the captain asked him to pray to his God to save the ship. Before Jonah had a chance to say very much the sailors cast lots to see if they could find out who had brought this terrible storm upon them. They decided, you see, that someone on the ship had done wrong and was being punished.

They didn't know that the ship was in God's hands because his prophet was aboard. Yes, God was taking care of everything, so when they cast lots they found out that it was because Jonah was on the ship that the fierce storm had arisen. Then they went to Jonah and asked, "Who are you, and where did you come from? Why has this trouble come upon us?" Jonah knew he was doing wrong in running away from God and from what God wanted him to do, so he confessed his wrongdoing to them.

Jonah was a good man, though, and he did not want all the sailors to be drowned just because he was running away. The sailors asked Jonah, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm?" And Jonah said, "Throw me into the sea, and the sea will be calm, for I know that it is on my account that the great storm has come upon you."

Jonah was willing to be drowned in order to save the lives of those heathen sailors. That was very noble of him, wasn't it? The sailors did what Jonah asked, and as soon as he was out of the ship and in the water, the storm died down and the sea became Calm, and the ship was safe!

But poor Jonah! You probably think he couldn't live long in the water, and you are right. But God helped him, and that made a big difference.

The Bible tells us that God had "prepared a great fish, to swallow up Jonah." We know there are fish large enough to swallow a man. Whales are very large, aren't they? But it wasn't a whale, because whales have very small throats, although the stomach of a whale is big enough to hold a man.

God knew what Jonah would do, so he had this large fish ready to swallow the prophet as soon as he was thrown overboard from the ship. You may think that wasn't a very good way to take care of Jonah, but it worked out all right. Jonah was in the stomach of the fish for three days. Of course God took care of him there, or else he would have been digested by the fish. And while Jonah was in the stomach of the fish, he prayed very earnestly to God, and God heard him.

Yes, God heard Jonah's prayer, and delivered him, and he found himself on the beach, safe and sound. My, but wasn't that an experience!

Did he go back home then? Oh no! Where he landed on the beach was not very far from Nineveh, the city God had asked him to visit.

Jonah knew then that there was no use in trying to run away from God and from what God asked him to do, so he walked to the city of Nineveh and told the people what God had asked him to tell them. He told them that they were very wicked, and that God would destroy their city in forty days.

What did the people of Nineveh do?

Did they try to kill Jonah because he brought them such bad news? No, they were very sorry. The King of Nineveh who lived in the city sent word to the people that they should repent and do what God wanted them to do. Because of this God did not destroy the city.

And now you probably think that Jonah was very happy that the city was not destroyed, but he was not. Jonah thought God was unfair because he didn't do what he had told the people he would do. Jonah was too proud, and did not want the people to think that he

had made a mistake; so instead of being happy that the people were sorry, and that God loved them and didn't destroy them, he became sulky and cross.

But Jonah was a good man, just the same, and he got over being sulky, and God loved him. My, wasn't it wonderful how God made him go to Nineveh and tell the people what he asked him to tell them?

#### IN THE STOMACH OF A FISH QUESTIONS

Who was Jonah, and why did he try to run away, and not do what God asked him to do?

Why was Jonah not drowned when he was thrown overboard from a ship?

Where was Jonah when he was delivered from the stomach of the fish, and what was the work that God wanted him to do?

## THE STORY OF GOD'S BOOK PART I

ONE of the most wonderful stories of all is the story of God's Book. I want to tell you this story so you will understand more about the Bible and know how wonderful it is. All the stories I have told you are in the Bible, but maybe you would not be able to find them, so I want to tell you how to find the stories and other wonderful things in the Bible. The whole Bible is a book, but it is made up of many parts and each of these parts of the Bible is also called a "book."

The very first "book" of the Bible is called Genesis.

Each one of these books of the Bible is divided into what are called chapters; and the chapters are divided into verses. To understand this you will have to look at a Bible and see for yourself. I do hope you have a Bible. The Bibles we have now are much nicer than Bibles used to be. At one time they were written on long sheets of paper and rolled up into what are called scrolls.

Of course, I have not yet told you all the stories of the Bible. Those I have told you are all found in the first half of the Bible, which is called the Old Testament. One of the stories I told you was about Abraham. You remember God made a wonderful promise to Abraham, telling him that through his family all the people of the world would be made happy.

Now I'll tell you how to find that promise in the Bible. It is in Ge 22:18. This means the 22nd chapter of Genesis and the 18th verse. Now look in the first "book" of your Bible, called Genesis. Then look for chapter 22. Look through the chapter until you come to 18, and that will be the 18th verse. When you find it, this is the way it will read: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice."

Now isn't that wonderful? The word "seed" just means children, or grandchildren. After awhile we will learn that Jesus was the "seed" of Abraham. Jesus will bless all the world when he is King over all the nations. I'll tell you about that later on, but now I want you to get acquainted with the Bible and learn how to find in it all the interesting stories which God has put there, and the wonderful promises he has made. I think the best way to do this is to tell you something about all the books in the first half of the Bible. Isn't that a good idea? All right, here they are: GENESIS The name Genesis means "in the beginning." It tells of the creation of the earth and the sun and the moon, and all the other things that God made. It also tells the story about Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, and explains that because they didn't do what God wanted them to do they died, and that all their children died. That is why people die now. You can find the first twelve stories I have told you in the Book of Genesis. If you remember those stories you will have a very good knowledge of this first book of the Bible.

EXODUS This is the second book of the Bible. The name Exodus means "going out." It was given this name because it tells about the children of Israel "going out" of Egypt. I hope you have read the stories of the wonderful way in which God used Moses to lead

the children of Israel out of Egypt. All these are in the Book of Exodus. It begins by telling of the birth of Moses, and that his mother hid him in a basket in the waters of the river Nile. You had better read these stories over again sometime. Exodus also tells about the laws that God gave to the Hebrews and how God's house, which was called the tabernacle, was built.

**LEVITICUS** The third book of the Bible tells about the family of Levi. There were twelve families or tribes of the Israelites, and the family of Levi was the one which God selected to do his work for him. The priests who served God in the tabernacle were of the family of Levi. So this third book of the Bible is called Leviticus because it tells about the way the family of Levi and the priests were to serve God. It also relates how they taught all the other Israelites to serve God.

**NUMBERS** The fourth book of the Bible is called Numbers because it tells of the numbering, or counting, of the people of Israel. This is a history book. It acquaints us with the experiences of the children of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they were ready to cross over the river Jordan into the Promised Land. This was a period of forty years.

**DEUTERONOMY** This is the fifth book of the Bible. Its name means "giving the Law the second time." In this book there are three wonderful sermons by Moses. These sermons were preached just a little while before Moses died. In them Moses reminds the children of Israel about the Law which God had given to them, and how important it was for them to obey that Law. The closing chapter of this book tells about the death of Moses.

**JOSHUA** This is a history of what Joshua did when he was the leader of the children of Israel. I hope you remember the stories I told you about Joshua-how he led the children of Israel across the river Jordan, and conquered the Promised Land.

**JUDGES** This book is a history of the children of Israel during a period of four hundred and fifty years, when they were ruled by what the Bible calls judges. That was before the Israelites had a king.

**RUTH** The Book of Ruth is the story of a very good woman whose home was in the land of Moab, but later she went to the land of Israel and married an Israelite by the name of Boaz. It is a very beautiful story.

An Israelitish woman whose name was Naomi, together with her husband, left the land of Israel and moved to the land of Moab. They thought they would be more prosperous there. They had two sons, and after awhile, these two sons married women of the land of Moab. One of these women was Ruth. Soon after that, Naomi's husband and both her sons died. She was very sad and lonely, and decided to return to the land of Israel. Ruth went with her. When they arrived in Israel, Ruth went to work in a harvest field belonging to Boaz, a relative of Naomi. After awhile Ruth married Boaz. They had a son, who was the forefather, or ancestor, of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

**SAMUEL 1 and 2** There are two books in the Bible named after Samuel the prophet. These books tell about the birth and life of Samuel. If you have read the stories about Samuel, you will know that he was the prophet of God who chose Saul to be Israel's first king. He later appointed David king to take the place of Saul. These two books also tell the story of both Saul and David up to the time Saul died and David became the king in Israel.

**KINGS 1 and 2** These two books give the history of Israel during the time that kings reigned over them, beginning with King David, and ending with Zedekiah, their last king. It was Zedekiah who was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and taken to the city of Babylon as a prisoner. The Bible says that he would not see Babylon, and he didn't, because he was blinded by the soldiers who captured him. These books also tell the experiences of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, some of which I have related to you.

**CHRONICLES 1 and 2** These two books contain stories of the Israelites that were not written in the first and second Books of Kings. They also are Israel's history books down to the time when King Cyrus of Persia overthrew Babylon and let the captive Israelites return to Palestine, their homeland.

**EZRA** This book is named after a priest who served the Israelites during the time they were captives in Babylon, and tells more of the history of the Israelites following the capture of their last king, Zedekiah. After the Israelites had been in Babylon for seventy years they were allowed to go back to the land of Palestine, which was their home, and Ezra was a very important leader among them at that time. Ezra was asked to build the house of God, the temple at Jerusalem.

**NEHEMIAH** This book is named after a servant of God who wrote nearly all of it. It is about Israel during and after the time they returned to Palestine following their captivity in Babylon, and tells how Nehemiah rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem after the Israelites returned to Palestine.

**ESTHER** This book records the experiences of Esther, a Jewess, who became the wife of Ahasuerus, a king of the Medes and Persians during the time the Israelites were captives in Babylon. One of the king's chief servants, Haman, was jealous of Esther's cousin and foster father, Mordecai, and was a bitter enemy of all the Jewish people. He coaxed the king to issue a permit for all the Jews to be slain. Esther, the queen, used her influence with the king. He changed his mind, and the Jews were saved. Later Haman was put to death as an enemy of the king.

**JOB** The Book of Job is the life story of a very faithful servant of God, who was one of his prophets. Satan, God's enemy, said that Job did what God asked him to do because he was always rewarded for it. Satan also claimed that if God allowed Job to suffer, Job would no longer do what God asked him to do.

The story explains that God allowed Satan to bring trouble upon Job. Because of this, Job really did have a great deal of trouble. His children were all killed in a storm. All his

cattle died. Then he became ill, and boils broke out all over him. Then Job's wife turned against him.

What a lot of trouble!

But the story says that Job still trusted God, and did what God wanted him to do. Then Job's health returned. Other children were given to him. His wife loved him again, and the Lord gave him all the cattle he needed so that he was richer than ever before.

When we read the story of Job it makes us think of the story of Adam and Eve, and the trouble which came upon them and upon their children. Just as it was with Job, so it will be with Adam and Eve and all their children. They will receive back again all that they lost.

**PSALMS** The Book of Psalms contains the beautiful writings of King David and other servants of God. Psalms mean "hymns." David was a musician who played the harp, and he was also a poet. In the poetic Psalms which David wrote, he expresses his love for God, and thanks God for all the wonderful things he had done for him.

Chapter 23 of the Book of Psalms, which we call the 23rd Psalm, is one of the most beautiful of all the Psalms. If you have read the story of David, you know that at one time he was a shepherd boy who cared for his father's sheep. When writing the 23rd Psalm, he was thinking of God as his shepherd, and of how tenderly God cared for him.

As a prophet, God caused him to write of many wonderful things that would be done for the people when Jesus becomes King. In the 46th Psalm, David records God's promise that the time is coming when there will be no more wars.

In the 72nd Psalm and the 8th verse, David writes about King Jesus, and says, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." In the 12th verse of this Psalm, David says that Jesus "shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

**PROVERBS** This is a book of wise sayings nearly all of which were written by King Solomon. If you have read the story of King Solomon, you will have learned that he was a very wise man, because God gave him wisdom. Some of Solomon's wisdom is shown in the Book of Proverbs. In chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, the king very wisely wrote, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

**ECCLESIASTES** The name of this book means "the preacher." It is believed to have been written by Solomon.

Like the Book of Proverbs, it contains many things which are good for all of us to follow. One of the wisest things that Solomon says in this book is this: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."- Ec 12:1 This is indeed a very wise thing to do.

I hope that the more you read the Bible, the more you will remember God, and that he is the Creator. The word creator means "one who makes things," and God made everything—the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the earth; and he made us, and we should remember him and love him all of our days.

**THE SONG OF SOLOMON** This is another book of the Bible which was written by King Solomon. It is also called "The Song of Songs," or "Canticles" by some people. It is a story of love, as the love of a husband for his wife. It is a very good lesson to show God's love for us, or the love of Jesus for those who serve him.

**ISAIAH** The name of this book is that of its writer, the Prophet Isaiah. It contains the wonderful things God inspired him to write. The Prophet Isaiah warned the people of Israel that God would punish them for their wrongdoing. Isaiah also recorded many wonderful promises of God which describe the good things he plans to do for the people of the whole world.

Isa 11:6, 7 (which means the 11th chapter of the Book of Isaiah, verses 6 and 7) reads like this: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

Isn't that a beautiful promise?

Do you remember the Bible story I told you about Adam naming all the animals, and that they obeyed him because he was made king over them? Well, Isaiah explains that the time will come when all the animals will be tame again, and that they will obey man just as they did in the Garden of Eden when Adam gave names to all of them. That will be a grand time!

Isa 35:5, 6 states another blessed promise of God. It reads: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall writers break out, and streams in the desert." God will make this promise come true when King Jesus rules the world.

**JEREMIAH** This book bears the name of another of God's prophets. God asked Jeremiah to write a great deal about the sins of the people of Israel, and also to warn them that they would be punished for their sins.

I hope you have read the story, "God Gives Laws to His People." Moses was the leader of the Israelites at the time of this story. God gave them his laws, but they didn't obey them very well. Because they did not do what God wanted them to do, they finally did not have a king of their own to rule over them.

Besides, for hundreds of years they were kept out of the land which God gave to them. But God revealed to the Prophet Jeremiah that the time is coming when he will give them a new Law and that then he will forgive their sins. That new Law which God will give the Israelites is called a "new covenant." Jer 31:31-34 tells all about it.

**LAMENTATIONS** The word "Lamentations" means "mourning," or feeling very sad. This book was also written by the Prophet Jeremiah, and he tells of all the trouble that had come upon the people of Israel because they had not done what God wanted them to do. But the prophet trusted God and knew that after awhile God would bless the Israelites and also all other people in the world.

**EZEKIEL** Ezekiel is the name of another of God's prophets, and he wrote down many wonderful things that God asked him to write. He told the people of Israel that the time would come when they would be driven out of the land which God gave them, and that they would have to find homes in different places all over the earth. God also told Ezekiel to write that the Israelites, after a long, long time, would be brought back into the Promised Land, and now this is coming true.

**DANIEL** This book was written by the Prophet Daniel. It tells about Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which he saw a big statue like a man. This book also contains the story of the three Hebrews who were put into a fiery furnace, but who were not burned to death because God protected them. The story of Daniel in the lions' den is also in this book.

God inspired Daniel to write that in these days in which we are now living, knowledge would be increased. Because what Daniel then wrote is now coming true, you have schools to attend and other ways of learning many things. Years and years ago there were no public schools such as there are now.

**HOSEA** This book of the Bible is named after the Prophet Hosea. This prophet wrote that the time is coming when God will destroy death. When this promise comes true, no one will get sick and die. We know this is right because it is in the Bible.

**JOEL** Joel was the name of a man who loved God, and did what God asked him to do. In the book which is named after him he tells the people about terrible wars which were coming, and that the nations would fight each other. What God told Joel to say has all been coming true, hasn't it? Joel also wrote that God will make the nations stop fighting after awhile, and that then the people will have everything they need, and will be happy.

**AMOS** Amos was also one of God's prophets, and God told him to write that a time would come when the Jewish people would be brought back to the Promised Land. Amos wrote that if we seek to do good God will be with us and will bless us.

**OBADIAH** The Book of Obadiah is different from the other books of the Old Testament because it has only one chapter. It was written by God's prophet Obadiah, who explains that a time is coming when the holy people of God, called "saviors," with Jesus as the leading One, will be rulers over all.

**JONAH** I hope you have read the story of Jonah, who was cast overboard from a ship and swallowed by a "great fish." This Book of Jonah tells about his experiences.

**MICAH** Micah was a prophet through whom God promised the people that a time will come when the nations of the earth will not fight each other any more, and that then they will not even learn how to fight, and that every man will have his own fruit orchard, and will never again need to be afraid of anything.- Mic 4:1-4 **NAHUM** God had many prophets, one of whom was Nahum. God helped Nahum, so he was able to write about automobiles hundreds of years before they were invented. The first really good automobiles were made less than fifty years ago. Wasn't it wonderful that God knew about automobiles so long ago, and told Nahum to write about them? Nahum calls them chariots, and because of their bright headlights at night, Nahum said they would look like torches.

**HABAKKUK** Habakkuk is a hard name to pronounce. He loved God, and wrote many wonderful things in this book. Hab 2:14 (which means the 2nd chapter of the book, and the 14th verse) says: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." **ZEPHANIAH** In this book the Prophet Zephaniah explains that a time is coming when everybody in the whole world will worship God and serve him just the way he wants him to do. At that time there will be just one religion for everybody, and they will then know how good God really is, because he will make all his wonderful promises come true. God said, "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent."-Zephaniab 3:9 **HAGGAI** This is another book which is named after the prophet of God who wrote it. As is true of all God's prophets, he helped Haggai to write about things long before they came to pass. Haggai told that a time of distress and trouble was to come upon all the nations of the earth. He writes that God would "shake all nations." Already we have seen much of this trouble upon the nations.

The prophet wrote, however, that after the trouble is over, "the desire of all nations shall come." ( Hag 2:7) This means that a time is coming when there will be no more wars, and that the people will really have what they want, which is peace and life and happiness.

**ZECHARIAH** This book, named after the prophet who wrote it, tells a great deal about trouble that would come upon the Israelites, and also about a happy time coming when the Israelites and all other nations which then obey God will be blessed.

**MALACHI** This is the last book in the first part of the Bible, the part which is called the Old Testament. Like many of the other books of the Bible, it is named after the one who wrote it. But God directed Malachi in what he wrote. I want you to remember this about all the books of the Bible. No matter who wrote what is in these books, it was God who told them what to write. This means that the whole Bible is God's Book. Because it is God's Book we know it is true.

God caused Malachi to write that unless the people would change from their wicked ways and serve him, a terrible time of trouble would come upon the nations. We are in a part of

that trouble now. But Malachi also wrote that following the trouble a wonderful time of blessing would come to the people.

When you grow older I want you to read all the books of the Bible yourself. Then you will learn the many wonderful things which God has said, and what he wants us to know and to do.

In the Old Testament part of the Bible God promised to send a person to the earth who would become a great King and make everybody happy. This One was to come from the family of Abraham, which means that he was to be an Israelite. He is the One who will make all God's promises come true.

God told the Prophet Isaiah to promise that this great One would be born as a child, and that he would become the Prince of Peace. The next story will be about him. His name is Jesus.

It was after Jesus was born that God's servants began to write the second part of the Bible, which is called the New Testament. In the Old Testament God makes many promises, and in the New Testament some of these promises begin to come true, and we know that all the others will come true by and by.

## **THE MOST IMPORTANT BABY**

SOME people think that when George Washington was born he was the world's most important baby, but anyone who thinks that would be wrong, because when Jesus was born he was the most important baby. No baby ever born before Jesus was nearly so important, and no baby born since has been as important as Jesus. When Jesus was born it meant that many, many of the wonderful promises of God had come true, and that all the rest of his promises were sure to come true later. That is what made him important.

Jesus was born in a manger where cattle are fed. I'll tell you why that was so. His mother and foster father lived in a town called Nazareth. The people of Israel no longer had a king of their own, but were being ruled by the Romans. The Roman government was getting ready to tax all the people, so Jesus' parents had to go to Bethlehem to sign their names on the Roman tax books.

A great many other people were visiting in Bethlehem at that time, and when Jesus' parents arrived, there just wasn't any room for them. All the hotels were filled, and a barn was the only place they could find in which to stay overnight.

And there it was that Jesus was born.

But that didn't really make any difference. It is what people are and not where they are born that really counts, isn't it? And the most important thing of all is what God thinks about us. Jesus was God's own Son, and God loved him and had a wonderful work for him to do-the work of making everybody in the world happy by giving them health so they will live without dying.

A very wonderful thing occurred on the night Jesus was born.

There was a group of shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem, caring for their sheep. Suddenly they heard the most beautiful music, and it seemed to be in the sky above them. They looked up and saw that the sky was very bright. No doubt they were frightened, because this was unusual. Then they heard an angel telling them not to be afraid. The angel told the shepherds that he had good news for them and then joyfully told them that Christ was born that night, and that he would save the people of Israel from their sins. Wasn't that wonderful?

Christ is another name for Jesus. It means that Jesus is the One whom God promised to send to make everybody happy. For hundreds and hundreds of years God had been promising to send Christ, and now the angel told the shepherds that he would be born as a little baby that night, and that they would find him in a manger in Bethlehem. My, but those shepherds must have been excited, and glad, too!

After the angel told the shepherds this good news a great many angels began to sing, and their song told the shepherds that there was to be peace on earth, and that God had sent his Son because of his good will toward all the people of the earth. Yes, God loved all the

people, and now he was getting ready to make his many promises to bless them come true.

What a wonderful night that was!

The shepherds went to Bethlehem, and there found the baby, the wonderful baby whom God had sent. They worshipped the child and gave thanks to God because he was making his promises come true. God's promise was that Jesus would be a great king to rule over the whole earth. This is the King Jesus I have told you about in other stories.

In a faraway country east of Palestine there were wise men. They were probably somewhat like the holy men of India are today. They studied the stars to see if they could find out what God was doing. Well, they learned that Jesus was born, and that he was to be a great king, so they decided that they also would travel to Bethlehem to visit the newborn king.

But when these wise men arrived in the land of the Israelites, they decided that first they would visit King Herod, who was then the ruler. He was a ruler appointed by the supreme ruler of the whole Roman world. This supreme ruler was called the Caesar, after the first one, Julius Caesar, and Herod was a king under the Caesar.

Herod could do only what Caesar wanted him to do.

Well, the wise men visited Herod, and told him that Jesus, a little Jewish boy, had been born and that he would grow up to be a great king. Herod didn't like this at all, and he decided he would have that baby killed.

But Herod did not tell the wise men what he planned to do. No, he deceived them. He told them to go and find the child and come back to him and let him know where Jesus lived, as he also wanted to go and worship the new king. That was a clever lie, but God was taking care of Jesus. The wise men found the young child and the mother, who were now living in a house in Bethlehem, and they gave him the presents they had brought, and worshipped him just as they had planned.

The day had ended, so they remained overnight before starting back. That night they dreamed that it would be wrong to visit Herod on the way back to tell him where he could find Jesus as he had asked them to do. You see God gave them this dream, and from it they learned that they were to return to the East by another road so Herod wouldn't find out anything at all about Jesus. The wise men obeyed what God told them in the dream, so Herod's plan to find the child and destroy him, failed.

When Herod learned that the wise men had returned to the East by another way, he was very angry. You see, he didn't know where to find Jesus. All he knew was that a future king had been born and he wanted to kill this baby before he grew up to be a king.

Herod did a dreadful thing.

He gave orders that all the little baby boys of the Jews in Bethlehem and in the surrounding country should be killed. He thought that if all these babies were killed the baby Jesus would certainly be among them and would be killed also. Wasn't that terrible?

Of course all those babies will be brought back to life again. The Bible tells us that they shall come back from "the land of the enemy." The land of the enemy is the land of death; so we know that they are coming back from death. God told the Prophet Jeremiah to write down that promise. It is found in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 16 and 17.

But Jesus wasn't killed when all the other Jewish babies were killed, because God was taking care of him. If God had allowed anything to happen to the baby Jesus, then all of his wonderful promises could not have come true.

So what did God do?

Well, that same night he caused Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, to have a dream also, and Joseph dreamed that it was necessary for him and his wife, Mary, the mother of Jesus, to flee into Egypt and take Jesus with them. So they went to Egypt right away. Thus Jesus escaped being killed.

The Bible doesn't tell us any more about Jesus until he was twelve years old. By that time Herod, who tried to kill Jesus, was dead; so it was safe for Joseph and his family to return to their home in Nazareth. After they had returned to Nazareth, they visited the temple in Jerusalem and there Jesus talked with the teachers in the temple.

He was so interested that he didn't know his parents had started home without him. They thought he was with others in the company returning home with them. But when they could not find him among any of their friends and relatives, they returned to Jerusalem where they found him in the temple. His mother reproved him for causing them so much trouble and anxiety. He asked them if they didn't know it was necessary for him to be doing what his Father wanted him to do.

I don't know whether or not they understood what he meant, but you see, God was the Father of Jesus, and Jesus knew, even when he was only twelve years old, that his Father had a great work for him to do.

When God gave his Law to Moses, and Moses gave it to the people of Israel, there was one part of it which said that anyone who would go to work for God as one of his priests or prophets must be at least thirty years of age. Jesus was only twelve years old when he was in the temple asking questions, and there he learned that he would have to wait until he was thirty years old before he could start doing the work that his Father wanted him to do.

Jesus' foster father was a carpenter, so he went back home with him and worked as a carpenter for eighteen years. I think he must have been a wonderful carpenter, don't you?

## THE MOST IMPORTANT BABY QUESTIONS

Who was the world's most important baby, and what did it mean when he was born?

Where was Jesus born, and to whom did God announce his birth?

Who were the wise men, and why were they warned not to return to Herod after they had seen Jesus?

How did King Herod try to kill Jesus?

Who was the Logos?

## PREPARING THE WAY FOR JESUS

THE time had come when the people of Israel were to have a more wonderful experience than ever before. As I have already told you, the Israelites were the family of Abraham. God promised Abraham that one of his family was to be a great king who would rule over all the earth. Jesus was this great One whom God had promised to Abraham, and the time had come when Jesus was to make himself known to the people of Israel.

How grand that was! Hundreds and hundreds of years had gone by, and now one of God's wonderful promises was coming true!

God knew, though, that the people of Israel would not be ready for this promise to come. Many of them had almost forgotten about God, and they no longer did what God wanted them to do. Well, they needed help, didn't they? They needed to be told about God, and the things that God wanted them to do. So there had to be someone to do this. And who do you suppose it was? Why, it was a man by the name of John.

That's a good name, and easy to pronounce, too.

John was six months older than Jesus. The Bible tells us that God's Spirit was upon John. That means that God's power was upon him. When the Bible tells about God's Spirit, it means God's power. Do you think you can remember that? Because God's power was upon John he was able to be a wonderful worker for God; and the work God gave him to do was to tell the people of Israel that they were not doing right, and that they should remember God and do what God wanted them to do.

Those who believed John and were sorry for all the wrong things they had done, and who said that they wanted to love God again and do what he wanted them to do, were baptized in the river Jordan. I suppose you want to know what it means to be baptized. Why that means to be lowered down into the water until you are entirely covered, and then to be raised up out of it again. John thus baptized all the Israelites who said they were sorry for their wrongdoing. It was as if he washed away their sins.

Wrongdoing is sin.

Of course, the water did not really wash away their sins, because sins are not something on the outside of us that can be washed away with water. To be baptized in water was like a picture, or sign, of washing away sin. That is what John was doing for all the Israelites who asked to be baptized. Because of this work he was called John the Baptist.

John didn't do this work in the cities, but went out into the country. The Bible says it was a wilderness. John went out into the wilderness, and a great many people followed him because they wanted to hear what God told him to say.

I hope you have read my story, "Crossing the River Jordan." If you did, you know something about the river Jordan. Well, the river Jordan went right through the

wilderness near the place where John the Baptist was preaching, and it was in this river that he baptized all those who were sorry they had done wrong.

After John had been telling the people for several months what God wanted him to tell them, Jesus came out from the city to the wilderness one day, and met John by the edge of the river. Jesus asked John to baptize him, but John didn't want to do it. John knew very well that Jesus had always done what God wanted him to do. The only ones John was baptizing were those who had not done what God wanted them to do. So you can see why John didn't want to baptize Jesus, can't you?

But Jesus told John that it would be all right to baptize him. Jesus knew more about it than John did, and he knew that there was another reason some should be baptized in water other than showing that they were sorry for their sins. Sometime I'll tell you about that other reason.

And then something wonderful occurred.

As Jesus came up out of the water, John saw a beautiful dove come down from the sky and it perched right on Jesus' head. John understood this to mean that God's Spirit had come upon Jesus. Then, as they were both standing there, they heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was the voice of God!

One of God's angels had told about the birth of Jesus. God had protected him from being killed by the wicked King Herod. Now it was time for him to start doing the work God wanted him to do, and God's power came upon him so he would be able to do that work in the way God wanted him to do it.

## PREPARING THE WAY FOR JESUS QUESTIONS

What was the name of Jesus' cousin, and what work did God give him to do?

Where did Jesus' cousin do his work, and why did Jesus go to him?

How did John know that God's Spirit, or power, had come upon Jesus?

## **JESUS WOULDN'T DO WRONG**

JESUS always did what God wanted him to do! Satan the devil tried to make Jesus do things that God did not want him to do, but Jesus always did what was right. I hope you remember the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. If you do, you know that Adam and Eve took the devil's advice and did what God did not want them to do. It was because of this that they lost their beautiful home in the garden and grew old and died.

Now Jesus had come into the world to help everybody get perfect life back again, and the devil tried very hard to make Jesus do wrong so he couldn't bring this great blessing to the people and thus make God's promises come true.

When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, and the power of God came upon him, he knew that he could do many wonderful things he could not have done before. Jesus could now perform miracles. Maybe you don't know what a miracle is. Well, a miracle is doing that which boys and girls and grown-up folks cannot perform. After God's power came upon Jesus he could do many wonderful things.

We can't make a beautiful flower, can we? But God makes them.

Did I hear someone say that flowers grow? Of course they do, but who makes them grow? It is God. We can watch flowers grow, but we don't understand what causes them to grow, nor do we know why one flower is red and another pink. Well, God who created everything, knows.

And so, boys and girls, I want you to remember that because the power of God came upon Jesus, he could do things we can't understand. It is very important to remember this, because I will be telling you of many wonderful things Jesus did, and I want you to believe that he really did them. The Bible says so, and we know that the Bible is true.

After the power of God came upon Jesus he was very happy and so interested in what God wanted him to do that he went into the wilderness to pray and to think about all God's wonderful works, and didn't eat anything for forty days. My, that was a long time to go without food, wasn't it? Then of course, Jesus was very hungry, and the devil told him that he should use the power of God to make bread out of stones so he would have something to eat.

The Bible tells us that the devil tempted Jesus.

Do you know what it means to be tempted? It is wanting or being asked to do that which we know is wrong. Jesus knew that it was wrong for him to use the power of God to make bread out of stones in order to satisfy his hunger.

Why did Jesus know that this was wrong?

Boys and girls, I want to tell you something now which I hope you will always remember. It is this: try always to think of what you can do for other people before you think of what you would like to do for yourself. That is the way God wants us to be. That's what we call being unselfish.

Well, the power of God was upon Jesus to enable him to do wonderful things for other people. It would have been wrong for him to use that power for himself. Jesus knew that he would find food after awhile, and preferred to go hungry for a short time longer rather than to use God's power to make bread for himself out of stones.

This is a lesson which all boys and girls, and men and women too, will have to learn. If you remember this story, and try always to think of others before you think of yourselves, you will be really and truly happy. It is God's way to be happy.

God is always doing things for others.

And just think of all the wonderful things he has promised to do for us! We want to be like God, don't we? Yes, that's the way God wants us to be, for he knows that is the very best thing for us.

#### JESUS WOULDN'T DO WRONG QUESTIONS

Did Jesus ever do wrong?

Why would it have been wrong for Jesus to make bread out of stones?

## THE MIGHTY WORKS OF JESUS

WONDER if you have ever seen a blind man? If you see a blind man trying to walk across the street it would be a great kindness to take hold of his arm and guide him across. But wouldn't it be grand if you could fix that blind man's eyes so he himself could see where to go! That certainly would be much better, wouldn't it?

Well, that is what Jesus was able to do, because the power of God came upon him, and God's power can do wonderful things. Yes, Jesus opened eyes which were blind; he made people hear who were deaf; he healed the lame so they could walk.

God had promised that Jesus would do all these wonderful things, and God's promises always come true.

Of course Jesus didn't open all the blind eyes, and he didn't make all the sick people well, but that is what he will do by and by when he is King over the whole world. Then all of God's promises will come true. And we know that Jesus will be able to make them come true.

But Jesus did something which was even more wonderful than healing the sick. There was a town in the land of Israel called Bethany. In this town there lived a very lovely family of three people. There were two sisters whose names were Martha and Mary, and these two sisters had a brother whose name was Lazarus. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were all friends of Jesus, and he sometimes visited their home. It is nice to have our friends visit us, isn't it?

Once when Jesus was far away from Bethany and from this home where he liked to visit, Lazarus became ill. Yes, he was really quite sick indeed. His sisters, Martha and Mary, knew that Jesus was able to heal the sick, so they sent a message to him that Lazarus was ill. Jesus received the message, but the strange thing is that he didn't go to Bethany to see his friends. If we could make sick people well, and we heard that one of our dear friends was sick, we would hurry there as soon as we could to make him well, wouldn't we? Indeed we would!

But Jesus didn't do that.

After three days, Jesus said that Lazarus was sleeping, and that he was now going to awaken him out of his sleep. That, too, was very strange. We wouldn't want to wake up a sick man, would we? Well, this was different. Jesus meant that Lazarus had died. When people die it is something like being asleep. When you sleep soundly all night long you don't really know anything, do you? That's the way it is when people die—they don't know anything.

But no one would want to sleep and sleep and sleep all the time! Isn't it grand when we go to bed at night to know that we will wake up in the morning rested and ready to enjoy another day? When Jesus said that Lazarus was sleeping, and that he would awaken him,

he meant that he was going to awaken him from the sleep of death, and that he would feel well and rested.

It is very important to remember that the Bible calls dead people sleeping people, and the reason for this is that all the dead people will be awakened from the sleep of death when Jesus is King.

Jesus went to Bethany, and when he approached the home of Martha and Mary, Martha ran out to meet him. She was very sad, and felt almost like scolding Jesus for not coming right away. She was sure, you see, that if Jesus had been there he could have made her brother well. But now he was dead.

But Jesus assured her that Lazarus would live again. Then Martha began to wonder, what can he mean? She knew of God's wonderful promises that some day all who had died would be made alive again, and she thought perhaps this was what Jesus meant.

Jesus also knew that by and by, when he is King over the whole earth, he will make ill the dead people alive, but this was not what he meant when he said to Martha that her brother would live again. No, he meant that he would make Lazarus alive right then, through the power of God. They took Jesus to the grave of Lazarus, and after he had prayed to God, his Heavenly Father, he called to Lazarus, "Come forth!" And Lazarus came forth from the grave because the power of God had made him alive again. Isn't that a wonderful story?

And the best part of it is that it's a true story. Besides, it illustrates how by and by all people who have died will be made alive. Jesus will make all the dead people live again because that is what God wants him to do.

When Jesus first began to do the work God wanted him to do, he chose twelve Jewish men to work with him. These were called his apostles, and sometimes his disciples. One day they were all in a boat together sailing across the Sea of Galilee when suddenly a very terrible storm came up. When this storm began Jesus was asleep in the boat, and his disciples became very much frightened. They awakened Jesus and found that he wasn't a bit afraid. He spoke to the storm saying, "Peace, be still," and in a few moments the storm was over, the sea became calm.

When we read a story like this in the Bible we just know that there is nothing too hard for Jesus to do. Well, that's why God wanted these stories put in the Bible. He wants us to know and believe that he will make all his promises come true. He wants us to believe that his Son Jesus is able to do all things.

## THE MIGHTY WORKS OF JESUS QUESTIONS

How was it possible for Jesus to do things which other people could not do?

Will the time ever come when all the blind people will be able to see?

Who was Lazarus, and what were the names of his sisters?

When Lazarus died, why did Jesus say that he was asleep?

How was it possible for Jesus to make Lazarus alive again?

## THE LAMB OF GOD

THE Bible tells us that the Prophet John, who baptized Jesus in the river Jordan, was the forerunner of Jesus. This means that John was the one to tell the people of Israel that the great King whom God had promised was now with them. John did what God wanted him to do, and so he told the people that Jesus was a "lamb." Isn't that strange? Yes, he said that Jesus was the "Lamb of God," and that he would take away "the sin of the world."

Sin means doing what God does not want us to do. It was because Adam and Eve did not do what God wanted them to do that they lost their beautiful home in the Garden of Eden, and later died. Yes, and that is why everybody else dies, too. So you see, if Jesus takes away the sin of the world it will be very wonderful, for it means that after awhile people won't die any more.

But why did John say that Jesus was a lamb? I just hope you have read my stories about Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Abraham and Isaac; the death of the firstborn of Egypt; and the one which tells about the priests of Israel and how they served God in the tabernacle. If you have, you will remember that lambs were sacrificed.

Well, Jesus was sacrificed just like all those lambs. Jesus always wanted to do what pleased God, so he was very willing to be sacrificed in order that some day everybody in the whole world could please God, and not have to die any more.

Jesus was a most wonderful man!

He was kind to everybody. He loved children very much. One day his friends thought some children were annoying him and tried to make them stay away. But Jesus told his friends to let the children alone, that he loved them, and that grown-up folks would all have to become humble and sweet like little children before they could enjoy themselves in his kingdom. Yes, Jesus was kind! He made sick people well. Those who were sad, he made happy by telling them about the good time which is coming for everybody in the world when he will be King over all nations.

Now, you would think that all the people of Israel should have loved Jesus just as he loved them, but they didn't. The Bible tells us that the religious rulers of the Jews—they were called scribes and Pharisees didn't like Jesus at all. They were jealous of him. They were afraid that Jesus would be loved more than they so they decided to kill him. Jealousy is a terrible thing!

The city of Jerusalem was the chief city of the land of Israel, just as Washington is the capital of the United States. The rulers who were most jealous of Jesus were in Jerusalem. Jesus knew that they wanted to kill him but he made plans to go to Jerusalem just the same.

Isn't that strange? Among the twelve special friends Jesus selected to be his helpers was one called Peter. Peter was a very dear friend of Jesus and did not want his Master to be killed, so he told Jesus it would be very unwise to visit the city of Jerusalem.

But Jesus did not take Peter's advice, because he wanted to do what God wanted him to do. He knew that God would take care of him. We know how powerful God is, don't we? And Jesus knew that God would use all his strength to take care of him. No, Jesus was not afraid, so he went to Jerusalem.

And then one night he and his apostles had a very special supper together. It was called the "passover supper." Do you know what the word passover means? If you have read the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt you will remember that it means the passing over of those houses where the blood of the lamb was sprinkled.

God told the Israelites to remember this wonderful event every year by eating the passover supper. Well, that's what Jesus and his apostles were doing.

While they were eating together Jesus told the apostles that one of them would betray him into the hands of his enemies. Jesus' enemies were looking for an opportunity to seize him but they wanted to do it when there were not many people around.

Besides, they didn't know very well what Jesus looked like. There were no photographs in those days, and there were a great many people who had heard about Jesus, but had never seen him. So one of Jesus' apostles had agreed to show his enemies where they could find the Master. He was to let them know which one was Jesus by going up to him and kissing him.

The name of this apostle was Judas Iscariot.

Have you ever heard anybody say, "Don't be a Judas"? Well, if you ever do, you will know what it means, won't you? It means not to be a traitor by turning against your friends and trying to do them harm. God doesn't want any of us to do that.

Hundreds and hundreds of years before this, one of God's prophets had said that when King Jesus came to the people one of his friends would betray him. Of course it was God who told the prophet to say this. God knows everything. The worst thing was that Judas took money for betraying Jesus. He loved money more than he loved Jesus. Let us never love money more than we love our friends.

After they had finished eating the passover supper, Jesus and eleven of his disciples left the city of Jerusalem and walked outside to a beautiful garden, called the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas left the room before the others, and had gone to meet the enemies of Jesus to tell them where they could find him. It was late in the evening, but a nice clear night, and it would have been grand to visit with Jesus in the moonlight of that garden had it not been that such terrible things were about to occur.

Jesus knew that his enemies wanted to kill him, and the eleven apostles were very much worried. After they arrived in the garden, Jesus prayed to God. He knew that the time had come for him to die as a lamb, to do just what God wanted him to do. He said to God, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

As they were leaving the garden, Jesus and the apostles saw that a crowd of people had come out from the city to find them. These were Jesus' enemies, and Judas was with them. He had shown them where to find Jesus, and now they had come to capture him and put him to death. Jesus asked them, "Whom seek ye?" and they answered, "Jesus." Then Jesus replied, "I am he."

You see, Jesus wasn't afraid. But perhaps his enemies thought he was not telling the truth, and that someone else was Jesus; so Judas stepped out from the crowd, walked up to Jesus and kissed him. That was Judas' way of saying, "Here he is-this is the man you are looking for!" Wasn't that awful?

Then Jesus' enemies took hold of him, but Peter, who loved Jesus very much and was not afraid, struck one of the men with a sword and cut off his ear. So you see, Jesus had friends who were willing to fight for him and to save him from being captured and killed.

But then a very strange thing occurred!

Jesus told Peter to put down the sword, and not to use it any more. And besides, Jesus, using the power of God which was upon him, healed the man's ear-in fact, he put it right back on again! It was just as easy for Jesus to do that as it was for him to give sight to the blind and to bring the dead back to life.

I suppose Peter thought that Jesus did not appreciate what he had tried to do for him, but of course Jesus really did appreciate it. Jesus wanted Peter and the other apostles, and his enemies and us, to know that there is a better way of doing things than to fight our enemies in the way they fight us.

Jesus loved his enemies, and you don't fight and kill those you love, do you?

Besides, Jesus was doing everything that God wanted him to do, and God wanted him to leave himself in the hands of his enemies, even though they should kill him. Jesus was God's Lamb, we must remember, and one of God's prophets had said that God's Lamb would be slain, or killed, just like the passover lamb was killed, and just like the lamb that Abel offered to God in sacrifice.

After capturing Jesus, they took him back into Jerusalem and brought him before the Jewish high priest. This high priest asked Jesus if he was the Son of God. The Jews thought it was a most terrible thing for anyone to claim to be the Son of God. They called it "blasphemy," which means to be disrespectful toward God. We would never want to be disrespectful to God, would we? But the Jews didn't know that Jesus was truly the Son of God, and that it really wasn't blasphemy for him to say so.

When Jesus told the high priest that he was the Son of God, it was decided he was so very wicked that he should be put to death. But the Israelites didn't have any right to put Jesus to death. Only the Romans could do that.

The people of Israel did not have a government of their own. They lost their government hundreds of years before, when their wicked king Zedekiah was captured by King Nebuchadnezzar.

So they took Jesus to a Roman governor named Pilate. He had the right to decide whether or not people had done wrong, and to punish wrongdoers. Pilate worked for Caesar, who was king of the whole Roman Empire, and one of the things he had to watch was that no one else should become king. If anyone else was really trying to be king, then it was Pilate's duty to make sure that he was put to death.

The people of Israel knew this, so they told Pilate that Jesus wanted to be a great king. Pilate didn't believe this just because the people of Israel said it was so. Instead, he asked Jesus if it were really true.

"Art thou a king?" he asked Jesus.

To Pilate's great surprise Jesus explained to him that this was the very reason for which he had come into the world. But Pilate seemed to understand that even though Jesus might say that he expected to be a king, he wasn't really doing anything wrong, so he didn't see any reason for putting Jesus to death. Pilate evidently thought there was no danger that Jesus would ever take the place of Caesar.

Jesus, of course, will be a king, the most wonderful king who has ever lived! King Jesus is to be the Ruler over this whole wide world. He won't have armies with swords and tanks and guns, but everybody will do what he wants done just the same. And because the people will do what King Jesus asks them to do, there will be no more wars, and everybody will be happy.

Then the people will all learn to love and to help one another. If everybody in the whole wide world wanted to help others instead of fighting against them, there just couldn't be any wars, could there? Well, that's the way it will be when Jesus is King.

But the people of Israel insisted that Pilate should condemn Jesus to death. Jesus had admitted that he expected to be a king, so according to the Roman law, Pilate was not allowed to set him free.

They were very cruel to Jesus.

They took the clothes from his back and beat him.

A crown of thorns was placed upon his head.

Then he was taken outside the city to a hill called Golgotha, nailed to a cross, and allowed to hang there until he died.

Yes, Jesus, who was born in a manger, was now dead. The angels told about his birth, but now he had died, and the angels did nothing about it. Jesus, who had made blind people see and deaf people hear and dead people alive, was now dead! He had done many wonderful things for other people, and hadn't harmed anybody, but his enemies put him to death by hanging him upon a cross.

Peter was willing to help Jesus, but Jesus wouldn't let him help. Jesus said that God would send angels to help him if he asked God to do so, but he did not ask, so the angels didn't come to his aid. Yes, Jesus, that great One whom God had promised would be King of the whole earth, was dead!

### THE LAMB OF GOD QUESTIONS

Why did John the Baptist say that Jesus was the Lamb of God?

Why did God allow Jesus to be put to death by his enemies?

When will Jesus be King over all the earth, and will he have armies with swords, and tanks, and guns?

## THE GREAT VICTORY

IT WAS early morning on the first day of the week, which would be like our Sunday. Mary and other dear friends of Jesus went to visit the tomb where their Master had been laid away to rest three days before. They went there to sprinkle sweet smelling perfume upon his body.

Jesus had not been buried in the ground as we usually bury de, -id people. The tomb in which they laid him was like a cave in the side of a huge rock. A stone had been placed in front of the doorway, and when this stone was rolled away one could walk directly into the tomb. As these early morning visitors neared the tomb, they said among themselves: "Who shall roll us away the stone?"

When they reached the tomb the stone had already been rolled away! They probably thought that someone else had arrived there before them. They entered the tomb and went to the place where Jesus had been laid, but saw that their Master was not there.

First they thought that some of Jesus' enemies had stolen his body, and they were very sad indeed. Then they saw a young man at the other end of the tomb, who spoke to them and said that Jesus was not there because he had been made alive.

This young man was really not a man at all, but an angel! The women were a little afraid and very much excited, but the angel told them to hurry away and tell the apostles that their Master was no longer dead. Wasn't that a wonderful message to take to the friends of Jesus?

God, the wonderful Heavenly Father of Jesus, had used his mighty power and made Jesus alive again. God could do this because it was his power which had made everything. God's power gave us life, and keeps us alive, so God was able to make Jesus alive again. God did this because Jesus had done what God wanted him to do.

Jesus had allowed his enemies to kill him because he loved them. and that's what God wanted his dear Son to do. God also loves his enemies. Everyone who doesn't do what God wants him to do is God's enemy, but he loves them so much that he will make them all alive again by and by. When he makes them, alive again, if they do what he wants them to do, he will keep them alive forever.

This is what God has promised to do, and we know his promises will come true!

Jesus died because he loved the people just as God loved them. And because he died for them they will have an opportunity to live again. If a boy does something wrong at school and the teacher tells him he must stay in after school, that is punishment, isn't it? Well, if another boy who hadn't done wrong, dearly loved the one who was to be punished, and offered to stay after school in his place, that would be taking the punishment for him, wouldn't it?

Now that's why Jesus died. Adam disobeyed God, and his punishment was death, but Jesus took his place. so Adam will be made alive again. All people die on account of Adam's sin, so they will all be made alive again because Jesus took the punishment.

As soon as Peter, and another apostle named John, heard that Jesus had been made alive, they ran to the tomb as fast as they could. Maybe they thought they would still find him there, only he would be alive. Or perhaps they could not believe what they had heard, and wanted to prove it for themselves. But they also found the tomb empty. Jesus was not there, for he was no longer dead. God had given him a great victory-a victory over death.

God's power had made him alive again.

But no one had seen Jesus since he had been made alive. Wasn't it strange! The tomb where Jesus' body had been placed was in a beautiful garden. Mary was standing by the tomb, weeping, when she saw a man who seemed to be a caretaker. of the garden, and said to him: "Sir, tell me where thou hast laid Jesus?"

Then the man spoke her name, "Mary!" He said "Mary" in such a way that she knew it was Jesus speaking to her. Yes, this was Jesus, she was sure, but he was so different from what he had been before. Still, she knew it was Jesus.

Later in the day two of Jesus' friends, who were called his disciples, were walking along the road, talking about him. They had not heard that Jesus was made alive again, so they were very sad. A stranger came up to them and asked: "Why are you so sad?"

They told this stranger about Jesus, and that they had thought he would be a great king to rule over the people of Israel and the whole world, but that now he was dead.

The stranger reminded the two disciples that God had told his prophets to write about Jesus, telling how he would be like a lamb that would be killed. He told them it was necessary for Jesus to die before he could be the great king they expected him to be. This stranger walked with them all the way to the place they were going, and there they ate supper together.

Then, suddenly they discovered that their new friend was Jesus. As soon as they learned this, Jesus disappeared and they couldn't see him. How happy and excited they must have been!

But one of Jesus' apostles would not believe that he had been made alive again. His name was Thomas. Has anyone ever called you a "doubting Thomas"? If you ever do hear anyone use that expression you will know that he is thinking of Thomas, the apostle of Jesus, who doubted that his Master had been raised from the dead.

One day the eleven apostles were all gathered together in an upstairs room eating, when suddenly they looked up, and Jesus was right there with them. They were very much

surprised because all the doors of the room were locked, and at first they were afraid. But Jesus said to them: "Peace be unto you."

Jesus spoke to doubting Thomas, and said, "Reach out thy hand, and touch my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Then Thomas was convinced. Jesus talked with his disciples for a few moments and then, without the door being opened at all, he suddenly went away just as he had come, and they couldn't see him any more.

Wasn't that strange?

Of course it wasn't really strange at all-when you understand it. You see Jesus was entirely different now. God had made him alive again, but he was not just a man any more. He was so different that his apostles couldn't see him at all unless he made himself look like a man.

After Jesus was made alive again he was just like God, and we can't see God! We don't have the right kind of eyes to see God, that's why; and the apostles didn't have the right kind of eyes to see Jesus, either. But Jesus is very real, and he is now very powerful. When he is King over the whole earth, everybody will know what a powerful King he is.

The disciples saw Jesus a few other times; once, on the beach of the Sea of Galilee, where he had cooked breakfast for them. They had all been out in a boat fishing. They had fished all night, but had caught no fish. They were fishing with a big net which they held over the edge of the boat. Jesus shouted from the beach: "Cast your net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find fish."

They did this, and the net was soon filled with fish. Then the apostles knew that it was Jesus who had spoken to them, and they hurried ashore as fast as they could. They enjoyed a lovely visit with Jesus that morning. Peter told Jesus that he loved him very much, and Jesus said to Peter: "Feed my sheep."

Jesus' sheep are people who love him and who do what he wants them to do.

The last time the apostles saw Jesus he told them that they were to go all over the world and tell the people of all nations about God and about the good news that a time is coming when everybody will be made happy. In the Bible, good news is called the Gospel, and Jesus said to his apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel."

The apostles were given a big task, weren't they? And then, after Jesus had told his apostles to preach the Gospel to everybody they possibly could, he left them and returned to his home with God.

**THE GREAT VICTORY QUESTIONS**

What did the angel say to the women who visited Jesus' tomb and found it empty?

What did Peter and John do when they learned that Jesus had been made alive again?

After Jesus was made alive again, what did he tell his disciples to do?

## **GOD'S POWER COMES**

JUST before Jesus left his apostles and returned to his heavenly home, he told them to wait at Jerusalem until they were given power from God. The Bible calls God's power the Holy Spirit. You will remember I told you that God's power came upon Jesus when he was baptized by the Prophet John in the river Jordan. Now, Jesus' disciples were to work for him and they would need God's power too!

So they waited at Jerusalem for some time. One day while they were together talking about Jesus and about God, and praying, they heard something that sounded like a very strong wind. Then, what seemed just like streaks of fire appeared right over the heads of each of the disciples. I don't know how long this lasted, but the apostles discovered that they could speak different languages! Wasn't that strange? What had occurred?

Why, the power of God had come upon them.

God had caused these things just to show the disciples how mighty and how powerful he is. They were to work for him and for Jesus, and he wanted them to know that his great power could help them whenever they needed his help. They knew, too, that God's power was upon them because they could speak in different languages. This was necessary so that all to whom they told the story of Jesus could understand, no matter what language they spoke.

The day that the power of God came upon the disciples of Jesus was called Pentecost, which means fiftieth. It was the fiftieth day after Jesus was made alive. It was a time when the Israelites from all over the country came to Jerusalem to visit God's temple and to have the priest offer sacrifice for them.

Many of these Israelites had learned to talk other languages, because they had lived in other lands, and not in the land that God gave them. They could no longer talk the language of the Israelites. So you see, the disciples needed to know how, to speak various languages if they were to tell these people about Jesus. The Bible calls this "speaking with tongues," and it was the Holy Spirit, or holy power of God, which helped the disciples to speak languages which they had not learned.

The disciples were very happy that day. Probably they sang some hymns, too. The power of God was upon them, and they were beginning to do the things Jesus asked them to do.

Then Peter preached a wonderful sermon.

He told the people that Jesus was the One whom the prophets of God had said would come, and that the prophets also foretold that he would die for the people in order that they might be made alive again. Peter also told the people that Jesus already had been made alive again and had returned to heaven, and that was why the Holy Spirit had come from heaven upon them. We would all like to have heard Peter preach that sermon, wouldn't we?

Many of the Israelites felt sorry that they had helped to kill Jesus, and they asked Peter what they should do. He told them that they should "repent"-which means that they were to be especially sorry-and that then they should be baptized. If they did this it would mean that they wanted to be pleasing to God. It also would mean that they wanted to be followers of Jesus.

The Bible calls it following in his steps. -I Peter 2:21 This means that we try to do things as Jesus would have us do them. On this day when the Holy Spirit came upon the friends of Jesus there were many who decided they would walk in Jesus' steps.

## GOD'S POWER COMES QUESTIONS

What name does the Bible give to the power of God?

What were the disciples of Jesus able to do after the power of God come upon them?

What did the disciples' enemies say about them, and what did Peter say in reply?

## **A LAME MAN MADE WELL**

PETER was a good man! He was always ready to do what God wanted him to do. A short time after the Holy Spirit had come upon Peter and the others, he went to God's temple one day, and saw a man who was not able to walk, sitting at the gate of the temple which was called "Beautiful."

This man was begging. Peter didn't have any money to give this poor cripple, but he did something for him which was much better. He used the power of God to make the man's legs well so he could walk! Wasn't that a wonderfully kind thing to do?

Now that the Holy Spirit was upon Peter he could make sick people well, and dead people alive, just as Jesus did. Many people saw what Peter had done, and it made them very curious. Then Peter told them about Jesus-that he was the One whom the prophets of God had said would come. He said that Jesus' enemies had put him to death, but that God had made him alive again. Then Peter explained that the power which God had given to Jesus and now had given to the apostles had made this lame man well.

The man certainly must have been very happy when he found out he could walk just like other people! The Bible says that he leaped, or jumped up and down. You couldn't blame him for that, could you?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the lame people in the world were made well? I suppose you are thinking that it would also be quite wonderful if all the blind people could see, and if all the deaf people could hear. Well, God has promised that this is just what he will do for all such people when the right time comes.

In the 35th chapter of the Book of Isaiah, God tells us about this. There God says that those who are lame "shall leap like an hart." A hart, you know, is another name for a deer. Have you ever seen deer in a zoo, or running wild in the country? If you have, you will know how well they can leap and jump.

Of course, when all the lame people are made well they won't keep on leaping and jumping all the time. Deer jump and run because they are happy-that's what God means. When all the lame people are made well, and the blind people are able to see, and the deaf people are able to hear, they will all be very, very happy.

You must be wondering when God will do these wonderful things for the people, so that is what I want to tell you.

After Peter had healed the lame man who sat at the gate of the temple, and explained to him about Jesus, Peter said that when Jesus came back to earth again it would then be the time for all the people to be made well. Won't that be a grand time? Peter called it "times of restitution."

I hope you will remember that word "restitution."

It's a wonderful word. It means to restore, or to bring back again. All the sick people will be restored to health. All the dead people will be made alive. How do we know? We know because Peter says that this is what God has promised. He tells us that God caused all his prophets to write down his promises, so that we might know what he plans to do for everybody in the whole wide world. And we know that all of God's promises will come true!

#### A LAME MAN MADE WELL QUESTIONS

Will the time ever come when all the lame people in the world will be made well?

What does the word "restitution" mean, and how many of God's prophets mentioned it in their writings?

## THE SIN OF LYING

WHAT do you think should be done with a man and his wife who told a lie to one of Jesus' disciples? There was such a man and a woman who did this very wicked thing. The man's name was Ananias, and his wife's name was Sapphira. The disciple to whom they lied was Peter. It is wrong to lie about anything. It is even worse to lie about the things we do in the service of God, and it was this kind of lie that Ananias and Sapphira told to Peter.

Peter and another disciple of Jesus, named John, were working together preaching the Gospel. In my last story I told you about the healing of a lame man, which was a wonderful miracle performed by Peter. Because of this good deed there were many people who believed what Peter and John told them about Jesus and the wonderful blessings which he will, by and by, give to all the people in the world.

Peter and John were preaching in Jerusalem, and in the temple of God. The religious rulers of the Israelites became jealous of them, just as they were of Jesus, and told them that they would have to stop preaching about Jesus. But these two disciples believed that it was their duty to obey God, who had told them to preach the Gospel of Jesus in Jerusalem and wherever they could throughout the whole world. So when they were told to stop preaching they asked: "Is it right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God? We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

So they continued to preach.

The religious rulers of the people were really afraid to punish Peter and John, because so many people in Jerusalem believed that they were servants of God. The good news about the crippled man who had been healed caused them to think a great deal of these two servants of God. Thousands of people believed the story of Jesus, and decided that they would become his disciples.

These people were all very enthusiastic, and they wanted to do all they could to tell others about Jesus. In order to do this, they decided among themselves that they would put all their belongings together just as though they were one large family, and in this way use everything they owned in the service of God. Those who owned land or had other valuable belongings sold what they had and put all the money into the one common treasury. Then this money was used to buy food and clothing for all the disciples, so they could be free to preach the Gospel of Jesus.

Now, Ananias and his wife learned about the arrangement of the disciples to sell everything and use the money in the service of God, and they pretended to do this just as the other believers had done. But they lied about it. And it was Peter who discovered that they had told an untruth. No one told Peter that they had lied. The power of God helped him to know that Ananias and Sapphira were deceiving him. They sold a valuable possession, and kept part of the money for themselves. The Bible says that Satan filled

their hearts and caused them to lie to Peter, telling him that they had put all the money into the treasury of the disciples.

Satan causes people to lie whenever he can. Probably that is because he lies so much himself. I wonder if you remember the wicked lie Satan told to mother Eve in the Garden of Eden? He said to her: "You will not surely die."

God had told Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit of the tree of which he told them not to eat they would surely die. But Satan lied about it, telling them that they would not surely die. Of course they did die, as we know, and that is why everybody dies now. And because Ananias and his wife lied to Peter, God caused them to be put to death suddenly so that everybody knew they had done wrong.

Then, more than ever, the people knew that God was blessing Peter and John, so the religious rulers became even more jealous, and they caused these two servants of God to be put into prison. But that night one of God's angels opened the prison doors and set them free, and told them to return to the temple and continue to preach about Jesus. They did this, and still more people believed.

Again the religious rulers arrested Peter and John. But this time the chief one among them advised that it was not wise to try any longer to interfere with the disciples of Jesus, because they might be working against God. The others agreed. So, after giving Peter and John a severe beating, they set them free. Thus God protected them, and they were able to continue preaching the Gospel.

## THE SIN OF LYING QUESTIONS

Who were Ananias and Sapphira, and what great sin did they commit?

How was Peter able to know that Ananias and Sapphira were not telling him the truth?

How were Ananias and his wife punished for their wrongdoing?

## **A YOUNG BELIEVER STONED**

MORE and more of the Israelites believed that Jesus was the One whom God had sent to make all his promises come true. One of these was a young man named Stephen, who became a believer and a disciple. He was made a deacon among the believers. A deacon was one who helped serve the other disciples by waiting on the tables when they ate their meals. It was very important to have some who did this kind of work for God. Any work that is done for God is important, and whatever we do for him, should be done as well as possible.

Stephen was very faithful in serving God in other ways, also. Whenever he could, he told the people about Jesus, and the wonderful blessings God would by and by give to them through Jesus. So the religious rulers became jealous of him, just as they did of Jesus, and of Peter and John. Jealousy is certainly a terrible thing!

Stephen was arrested and put on trial before these jealous rulers, and when he was given in opportunity to answer for himself, he told a wonderful story about the promises of God, and how Jesus was the One who would make those promises come true.

Stephen told the wonderful story of Abraham, and the promise God made to him. Then he told about Isaac and Jacob, and the twelve sons of Jacob. He told about Joseph, and how he was sold as a slave into Egypt. He also reminded his accusers of Moses, the great leader of the children of Israel, who led them out of the land of Egypt.

Stephen said to these jealous rulers that it was people just like themselves who had persecuted all of God's servants, and that they were doing the same thing. Stephen told them the truth, all right, but it made them even more angry.

And what do you suppose they did? Why, they decided that Stephen should be killed; so they stoned him to death.

Stephen was the first disciple who was put to death because he believed that Jesus was the One whom God had sent to make his promises come true. It was really a great honor to die for this reason. It did not mean, of course, that God failed to take care of Stephen. God took care of Jesus, but he let him die, because it was necessary for Jesus to die in order that others might live.

And now others were to have the privilege of dying as Jesus died, because God plans to use them by and by to work with Jesus in making his promises come true-those wonderful promises that he will bless all the families of the earth. All those who die as Jesus died will be made alive just as he was. Just as Jesus will be a king, so they, too, will be kings, and will work in his kingdom with him.

I don't mean, though, that all the disciples of Jesus have to be stoned to death in order to be made alive with him. The Bible says that they all die "like Jesus" because they spend their lives in the service of God and of others.

Some believers, or disciples, spend their whole life serving God, and thus they die in this service.

Some have lost their lives because they served God, just as Stephen did.

And all those who die doing what God wants them to do will be with Jesus when they are made alive again, and they will be kings together with King Jesus.

#### A YOUNG BELIEVER STONED QUESTIONS

Who was Stephen, and why does the Bible say he was a deacon?

Why did the religious rulers decide to stone Stephen to death?

Why did God allow Stephen to be stoned to death?

## **A PHARISEE CHANGES HIS MIND**

HAVE already told you about the scribes and Pharisees. They were the religious rulers of the Israelites, many of whom were jealous of Jesus and Stephen, and caused them to be put to death. They were also the ones who put Peter and John in prison, and who said that they would have to stop telling the people about Jesus. Of course Peter and John continued to tell the people about Jesus because that was what God wanted them to do.

Now I don't want you to think that all the scribes and Pharisees were jealous and wicked men. Oh no! Some of them were good, sincere men. These good Pharisees persecuted God's people because they did not know any better. They thought Jesus and his disciples were doing what God did not want them to do, but these good Pharisees were wrong. We should always make sure that what we do is right, because we may think we are doing right when we are really doing wrong.

That is the way it was with one of the Pharisees by the name of Saul. Saul's home was in a city named Tarsus, so he was called "Saul of Tarsus." Saul was one of the Pharisees who decided that Deacon Stephen should be stoned to death. Saul didn't actually throw any stones at Stephen, but he held the coats of those who did throw the stones. But he didn't do this because he was jealous of Stephen. Saul thought Stephen was one of God's enemies, and therefore should be put to death, but he was wrong.

Many others besides Stephen were made to suffer by Saul, not only in Jerusalem but in other cities as well. While in Jerusalem, Saul visited the high priest of Israel who gave him letters of authority to arrest the disciples of Jesus wherever he could find them, and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished. So Saul started out to find as many of the disciples as he could. He was on his way to a city named Damascus, when suddenly he was surrounded by a very bright light. The light was even brighter than sunshine. The Bible tells us that it was a light from heaven.

When Saul saw this bright light shining all around him he fell down upon the ground. He was probably very much frightened. Then he heard a voice speaking to him, saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

Saul just couldn't imagine who was speaking to him, so he answered the voice, saying: "Who art thou, Lord?"

Saul knew that the voice he heard was not the voice of a man. The word "Lord" means "mighty one," and probably Saul thought he had heard the voice of one of God's mighty angels.

But the voice Saul heard was the voice of One much more important than an angel. Whose voice do you suppose it was? We will let the Bible answer that question. When Saul asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" the voice replied: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Wasn't that wonderful! Jesus was speaking to Saul from heaven.

Saul was certainly surprised! He had been arresting the disciples of Jesus and putting them in prison, and he had consented to the stoning of Stephen for preaching about Jesus. But now Jesus was speaking to Saul, and he knew from this that he had been doing wrong in causing the friends of Jesus to suffer.

When Jesus was made alive after he had been crucified, the scribes and Pharisees told the false story that someone had stolen his body from the tomb, and that he had not been made alive at all. Saul must have believed this story, but now he knew that he had believed a lie about Jesus. He knew now that Jesus had been made alive again, for he had heard his voice speaking to him from heaven.

Saul was a good man, but he had been deceived. Now Saul had found out he had been deceived, and he wanted to work just as hard for Jesus as he had been working against him. So Saul replied to his Master: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Jesus answered, saying: "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Saul arose from the ground, and discovered that he was blind! The bright light from heaven was more than his eyes could stand, and it had blinded him. There were others traveling with Saul, and when they realized that he had suddenly become blind they led him into the city of Damascus.

He was taken to the home of a man named Judas. This was not, of course, the Judas who betrayed Jesus. There were many people then who had the same name as others, just as they do now. He remained in the home of Judas for three days, and during all that time he didn't eat or drink a thing.

At the same time God spoke to one of Jesus' disciples who lived in Damascus. He asked him to visit Saul and explain what God wanted him to do. God told his disciple that Saul had seen a vision and that he now believed in Jesus and wanted to serve him. This disciple was named Ananias. Ananias had heard about Saul, and knew that he had been causing the disciples of Jesus to suffer, so he was a little afraid to visit him.

But the Lord assured Ananias that Saul was a sincere believer and would be glad to see him. So Ananias went to the home of Judas, and when he saw the Pharisee Saul, who had changed his mind and now believed that Jesus was the great One whom God had promised to send to bless the people, he spoke to him, saying: "Brother Saul."

Ananias then explained to Saul what he was to do in the service of God.

Yes, Saul certainly changed his mind about Jesus. He had been on his way to Damascus to arrest the disciples of Jesus, but now that he was in the city and had learned the truth, he went to work preaching to the Jews about Jesus, telling them that he was the Son of God, and the great One whom God had promised to send. You see, when Ananias visited

Saul and told him what he was to do for God, Saul's eyesight was restored. And now, wherever Saul went he told the people about Jesus.

#### A PHARISEE CHANGES HIS MIND QUESTIONS

Who was Saul, and why is he called "Saul of Tarsus"?

Why was Saul going to Damascus, and what occurred before he arrived?

What work did God have for Saul to do?

## **PETER'S STRANGE DREAM**

GOD loved Peter because he tried so very hard to do everything God wanted him to do. Peter worked for God and for Jesus.

He went from place to place telling the people that God loved them, and that a time was coming when he would make everybody happy because Jesus had died for them. One of the places Peter visited to tell the people this good news was called Joppa. The city of Joppa is still in the country where Peter worked for God, but now it is known as Jaffa.

In Joppa there was a good woman whose name was Dorcas. She became very sick, in fact, so sick that she died. Her friends were very sad because she died. They sent for Peter, and God helped Peter to make Dorcas alive again. It will be wonderful when all the people who have died are made alive again? Yes, that is what God has promised to do.

When the people of Joppa learned that Dorcas had been made alive again, many of them believed God and believed that Jesus was his Son, and they became disciples of Jesus. One of the men in Joppa who believed in Jesus was called Simon, and his business was to tan leather, so he was called Simon the tanner. I suppose there were other Simons in Joppa. There may have been Simon the fruit dealer, or Simon the carpenter. We know there were carpenters in those days because Jesus was a carpenter when he was a young man.

Simon the tanner lived in a house by the edge of the sea, and he invited Peter to live with him while he stayed in Joppa. I imagine Peter was very glad to have such a nice home in which to live.

Most of the houses in those days had flat roofs, which sometimes were used as resting places. Late in the afternoon one day, Peter was tired and hungry and he went up on the roof of Simon's house to pray while he was waiting for the folks to prepare dinner.

In a little while he fell asleep, and had a very strange dream.

In his dream he saw an unusual sort of basket that seemed to come directly down out of the sky. The basket looked just like a sheet with the four corners fastened together. But even stranger than the basket itself was what Peter saw in it. That basket was full of all sorts of queer animals of various kinds! Some were like snakes, and others probably like lizards. The Bible calls them "creeping things."

There were also odd looking birds in the basket.

My, but that was a strange dream! As Peter watched the basket, he heard a voice saying to him: "Get up, Peter; kill some of these animals, and eat them."

But Peter wouldn't do it, because God had told the people of Israel, the Jews, that there were certain kinds of animals which they were not to eat. These were called "unclean." It

was all right for them to eat the meat of cattle and sheep, but not the meat of the animals which Peter saw in his dream.

However, the basket full of unclean animals was lowered the second time, and again Peter was invited to eat. Three times Peter saw the same thing, and three times he was urged to eat of these animals, but he continued to refuse.

Finally Peter awakened, and naturally he wondered about the dream. What could it mean?

Just at that time God informed Peter that some men had called to see him, and that they were waiting downstairs in front of the house. Peter went down to see who they were, and found that they were men who had been sent from a place called Caesarea to invite him to go back with them to visit their master, whose name was Cornelius.

They explained to Peter that an angel had spoken to Cornelius and had told him to send for Peter because he would have something very important to tell them. Now wasn't that wonderful!

Yes, it really was wonderful, because Cornelius was a Gentile. I have never told you about the Gentiles, have I? All my stories, beginning with the story of Abraham, have been about the family of Abraham. These, as you know, are sometimes called the "children" of Abraham, sometimes the "children" of Israel, and sometimes the Hebrew "children." Of course, they are not all boys and girls. You see, the Bible calls grown-up folks "children" of their parents.

The Bible calls everybody Gentiles who are not "children" of the family of Abraham. So, to be a Gentile simply means that one is not of the Jewish people. That's simple, isn't it? Most of us are Gentiles. God had always loved the Gentiles. God loves everybody, and when all his promises come true, everybody will be made happy. But God had never asked any of the Gentiles to be his people until he sent one of his angels to speak to Cornelius.

Peter knew this, and you can see he must have been very much surprised when he learned that God wanted him to go and visit Cornelius, who was a Gentile. I suppose, too, the Jewish people were quite proud because God called them his people. They didn't know that God really loved the Gentiles just as he loved them, so sometimes they rather looked down on the Gentiles. They didn't even want to eat with them.

Well, Peter thought the matter over, and decided that he had better do what God wanted him to do, so he went to visit Cornelius. When Peter arrived, Cornelius bowed down to worship him as though he were God, but Peter said to him: "Stand up. I myself also am a man."

At the home of Cornelius he found the whole family waiting for him. Besides, some of the neighbors, who were also Gentiles, had been invited to come and hear Peter talk to them.

Peter felt rather strange to be with all those Gentiles. Cornelius explained to Peter that God had asked him to send messengers to Joppa to request that he visit him. And Peter remembered his dream in which he saw unclean animals, and that in this dream he was told that God had made the animals clean. So now he knew what that dream meant.

It meant that Gentiles were now pleasing to God, and that God wanted him to tell them about Jesus, and to tell them the good news of the kingdom to come which would bring blessings to everybody, both Jews and Gentiles.

What a wonderful lesson to learn from a dream!

Yes, Peter had the right understanding of the dream, and he told the Gentiles about Jesus. Then the power of God came upon them just as it had come upon Jesus and upon the disciples after Jesus had been made alive. You remember that story, don't you? Now God was showing Peter that these believing Gentiles were just as pleasing to him as were the Jews who believed in Jesus. Now the time had come when Jews and Gentiles were to be alike to God. Any of them since that time who have believed in Jesus have been pleasing to God.

#### PETER'S STRANGE DREAM QUESTIONS

What did Peter dream while he was on the roof of a house in the city of Joppa?

Who was Cornelius, and why was Peter sent to his home?

Why did Peter know what his dream meant, after he visited the home of Cornelius?

## **PAUL PREACHES ON MARS' HILL**

AFTER Saul of Tarsus became one of Jesus' disciples he changed his name from Saul to Paul. The name Saul means "asked," possibly because it was the name of a very large man who became the first king of Israel at the request of the nation of Israel. I told you about King Saul in my story, "Israel's First King." Saul of Tarsus was so ashamed of himself for having caused the disciples of Jesus to suffer that he no longer felt important, so he changed his name to Paul, which means small, or "little." Paul is said to have been a small-sized man.

It is always wise to consider ourselves small and unimportant, just as Paul did. Actually however, Paul was a very important servant of God, and a faithful disciple of Jesus. It was always a great joy to Paul when he had an opportunity to tell the story of Jesus, and of God's wonderful plan for blessing the whole world through Jesus. An opportunity of this kind came to Paul while he was in the city of Athens waiting for two of his companions to join him. These two friends were Silas and Timothy.

The city of Athens is in Greece, as you probably know.

There were some Israelites living in Athens at the time Paul visited the city, but most of the people there were Greeks. Paul mingled with the people in the market places and also visited the Jews in their synagogues, and wherever he went he told the story of Jesus, explaining that God had made him alive again, and that by and by God would also make the whole world alive again.

The people of Athens had never heard this before. They decided they would like to hear more about it, so they took Paul to a place called Mars' Hill, overlooking the city, and said to him: "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean."

The place on Mars' Hill to which they took Paul was called Areopagus. It was somewhat like a large theater, only it was out of doors. The people of Athens were in the habit of gathering at this place to hear speeches and attend important trials, and no doubt there were many who heard Paul.

Paul certainly told the people of Athens some wonderful things about Jesus and about the plan of God. They were heathen, who worshipped idols. Paul found many idols there, and all but one had been given the name of a false god. But on one of the idols the people of Athens had written: "To the unknown god."

These heathen people seemed to realize that there was a God whom they did not know. At least, they wanted to make sure they weren't overlooking some other god, unknown to them.

When Paul started to preach on Mars' Hill he reminded the people of their idol to the unknown god, and then told them that this was the God he wanted to tell them about. He said: "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Yes, this was the true God. Paul explained that this true God had made the worlds, and everything that was in the worlds. He said that this God is "Lord of heaven and earth," therefore "dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

Paul also explained to the people of Athens that God had made "of one blood all nations of men." You see, Paul knew what the Bible says about Adam and Eve, and that they are the "first parents" of everybody who lives on the earth. Adam and Eve received life from God, which means that all the people who came from them have also received life from God. Paul explains this, saying: "In him we live, and move, and have our being."

The people of Athens had never before been told about the true God, so that is why they didn't know about him. Because they didn't know about God they were not to be blamed for not worshipping, him. But Paul told them that a time is coming when God will expect them to worship the true God, because they will then know about him. Paul calls this time that is coming a day in which God "will judge the world." The Bible also calls it the "day of judgment."

To judge means to try, or to test.

God tested Adam and Eve while they were in the Garden of Eden, but they didn't pass the test, did they? They did what God didn't want them to do. Because of this they died, and everybody else has died, too. That is why people are dying today.

But, as I have told you before, Jesus died for Adam, and for all the people, and this means that they are to be made alive again, and that they will have another trial, or another chance, to live.

All are to be judged.

This is what Paul meant when he told the people of Athens that a day is coming in which God "will judge the world." Paul also said that God has proved to us that this day of judgment is coming by making Jesus alive again. Jesus, you see, is to be the great Judge of the world. Won't the people of the world be fortunate to have Jesus judge them!

Jesus will be able to judge the people because God made him alive again. Those people of Athens died hundreds and hundreds of years ago, but they will be made alive again and will have a chance to do what God wants them to do. If they obey God they will not need to die again at all!

The Bible tells us that when the people heard what Paul told them about being made alive again, some of them mocked him. This was more than they could believe. Others said: "We will bear you again about this."

But there were some who believed what Paul told them. Aren't we glad that we are like those who believed! Isn't it grand to know that a time is coming when all who have died will be made alive again!

#### PAUL PREACHES ON MARS' HILL QUESTIONS

What did Paul say to the people of Athens when he preached to them on Mars' Hill?

Who was the unknown god that the people of Athens worshipped?

Did the people of Athens believe what Paul told them about Jesus?

## FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

PAUL was a faithful servant of God, and a true disciple of Jesus. He traveled from place to place telling the people about the wonderful things God was planning to do for them when Jesus is King. After a while God made it known to Paul that he should visit Jerusalem. He always did what God wanted him to do, so he started to travel in the direction of Jerusalem.

They didn't have airplanes or railroad trains or automobiles at that time, so it was much more difficult for Paul to travel than it is for us. Sometimes he walked. Sometimes he traveled in a sailboat.

On his way to Jerusalem he visited the disciples of Jesus in many places, and when it was possible he preached to them. In a place called Troas the disciples of Jesus met together, and Paul preached to them all night. One young man, who was sitting on a window sill, went to sleep while Paul was preaching, and fell out of the window, and when they picked him up he was dead. But Paul used the power of God to make this young man alive again.

As Paul went from place to place on his way to Jerusalem, some of his friends advised him not to continue his journey to Jerusalem. They said that when he arrived he would be put in prison. But Paul didn't take their advice. He knew that God wanted him to visit Jerusalem so he was determined to go. He said: "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When Paul and his companions reached Jerusalem they went to the home of James. There they met a number of Jesus' disciples, and Paul told them about the many wonderful experiences he had enjoyed when telling the people about Jesus. Then he visited the temple, and while he was there some of the Israelites, who had been acquainted with him and knew that he now was a disciple of Jesus, arrested him.

These were the same kind of people who caused Jesus and Stephen to be killed; and now they wanted to kill Paul. We mustn't think badly of them, though, because they thought Paul was one of God's enemies. Paul himself at one time thought that Jesus and Stephen were enemies of God, but now he understood better. Now he knew that Jesus was the "Lamb" of God who had died in order that all the people might be made alive again.

The Israelites-as I have told you before-were not the real rulers of Jerusalem. The city was under the rule of the Romans, and when the Roman chief of police heard that the Israelites had seized Paul and were beating him and intended to kill him, he sent soldiers to rescue him.

This Roman officer was called the "chief captain of the band." He supposed that Paul had committed some great crime, so he told his soldiers to put two chains on him and take him into the castle where he could be questioned.

The people were greatly excited!

The Roman soldiers had to carry Paul to keep him from the mob. As they were carrying him up the stairs into the castle, Paul asked permission to speak to the people who were crying out against him. He was given this permission. He waved to them with his hand, and they stopped their shouting long enough to hear what he had to say. Then Paul told them that at one time he was just like them, that he, too, thought all who believed in Jesus were God's enemies, and that they should be put to death.

Paul then told the people who were trying to kill him about the wonderful experience he had when Jesus spoke to him while he was on his way to Damascus to arrest the disciples of Jesus who lived there. It was then that he learned how wrong he was. He found out that Jesus was the Son of God, who had come to the world to die for the people.

Yes, Paul told his enemies a wonderful story, and it was a true story, too. But still they wanted to kill him. Finally the people wouldn't listen any more, and they cried out saying: "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."

Then the chief of police gave orders that Paul be taken into the castle and that he should be beaten to make him tell the truth about the great crime which it was supposed he had committed. Of course Paul had done no wrong, but the chief of police didn't know this. He didn't realize that the people could be so angry with Paul just because he was a disciple of Jesus.

It is really wrong to be angry with people just because they don't think as we do.

When the Roman soldiers had securely bound and were about ready to beat Paul, he spoke to a guard who was standing nearby, and asked him if it was lawful to beat a Roman who had not been tried and condemned. The guard was very much surprised that Paul was a Roman, and he quickly reported it to his chief. When it was discovered that Paul was a Roman they arranged to hold a trial for him, and let the people tell what great wrong he had done.

Yes, Paul was a Roman, but he was also an Israelite. It was something like one who is an Englishman becoming a United States citizen. Even though one's parents are English, if he is born in the United States he is a citizen of the United States. One who is not born in the United States can become a citizen by taking out citizenship papers.

So there were these two ways of becoming a Roman citizen. Paul, although his parents were Jewish, was born a Roman citizen. It was a very good thing for him to be a Roman citizen, for because of this the Roman soldiers had to protect him.

The next day the chief of police arranged for Paul to appear before a council of Israelites to defend himself. Some of the men in this council were called Pharisees, and some were Sadducees. The Pharisees believed that God would make dead people alive again, it the "resurrection of the dead." The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Paul knew

this, so he told the council that the thing he was being accused of was his belief in the resurrection.

Well, that started an argument among the Pharisees and Sadducees who were in the council. Besides, the Pharisees believed in angels, and they thought perhaps an angel had spoken to Paul. If so, they were afraid to do anything to harm him. But the Sadducees didn't believe in angels, so this was something else over which they argued.

They not only argued, but started to fight one another. The chief of police saw what was occurring, and he was afraid Paul would be seriously hurt, so he ordered his soldiers to take him back into the castle where he would be safe.

That night a very wonderful thing occurred. The Bible tells us that the Lord stood by Paul and said to him: "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

Now Paul knew what to expect. He was sure that he would be delivered from the Israelites in Jerusalem, and that he was to go to the city of Rome, in Italy, to tell the people about Jesus, and about the resurrection. But the way in which Paul traveled to Rome was very strange indeed.

The next day after the Lord spoke to Paul, a group of more than forty Israelites banded together and agreed that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. They told the chief priests and elders about it, and suggested to them that they ask the chief of police to bring Paul before them again for further questioning. They explained that this would give them an opportunity to seize Paul and kill him.

But this plan didn't work. Paul had a young nephew who lived in Jerusalem, and he overheard the plans that were made by these wicked men to kill his Uncle Paul, so he hurried to the castle, where he was able to see the chief of police and warn him of the plot.

Then the chief of police, whose name was Claudius Lysias, decided to send Paul out of the city to a Roman governor in Caesarea by the name of Felix. So he arranged that night for two hundred soldiers, seventy cavalrymen, and two hundred spearmen to take Paul out of the city to Caesarea.

Claudius sent a letter to Felix, explaining what he knew about Paul and the charges against him, and that he was sending him to Felix to be tried because he was a Roman citizen. Five days later a committee of Israelites came from Jerusalem to accuse Paul before Felix.

Felix was a clever man, and he could see that Paul had done no wrong, so he sent these men back to Jerusalem, telling them that he would examine the case further at a later time. Then he instructed the guard to give Paul as much liberty as possible, and to allow his friends to visit him. And there Paul remained for more than two years.

Then another Roman officer named Festus took the place of Felix in Caesarea, and it was arranged that Paul should be tried again before him. Festus, who was then visiting Jerusalem, insisted that his accusers go with him to Caesarea. At this trial Paul, knowing that God wanted him to go to Rome, appealed to Caesar. Caesar was the emperor of the Roman Empire, of which Rome was the capital. As Paul was a Roman citizen, his appeal was honored, and now he was to be taken as a prisoner to Rome.

But before Paul started on the journey toward Rome, arrangements were made by Festus for him to present his case to a Roman king named Agrippa. King Agrippa was very much interested in what Paul told him, and said that he was almost convinced that he should be a disciple of Jesus. Paul certainly did preach a wonderful sermon to King Agrippa, telling him about Jesus, and that he had been made alive again, and that all who have died are also to be made alive again.

King Agrippa said that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed his case to Caesar. But God had told him he was to go to Rome and tell the people there about Jesus. So, determined that he would do what God wanted him to do, it made little or no difference to him whether he were free or not.

After awhile arrangements were complete for Paul to leave by ship, together with other prisoners, on the long journey to Rome. All these prisoners were put in charge of an officer named Julius. There were no vessels which went directly to Rome, so they sailed from place to place, changing from one ship to another several times until they reached Alexandria in Egypt.

There they arranged to sail in a ship that was going to Italy. But this ship never reached Italy, because it was wrecked in a severe storm off the island of Melita.

Before this happened and before they set sail again, they were stopping for a while in a place called "The Fair Havens." It was by now very late in the fall of the year, and Paul advised the captain of the ship to remain in The Fair Havens for the winter. There were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. Many of them were anxious to get to their destinations so it was decided to set sail and not take Paul's advice.

But it turned out that Paul was right. A heavy winter storm arose, and it seemed certain that the ship would be wrecked. The people on the ship were very much frightened, so Paul delivered a wonderful message to them, saying: "Now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship."

Then Paul explained to the people on the sinking ship why he was so sure that they would all be saved. He said that one of God's angels had spoken to him, saying: "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

They steered the ship as best they could toward the land, and it went aground some little distance off shore. Those who could swim ashore did so. Some used boards, and others

used broken pieces of the ship to keep themselves afloat, and finally they all managed to get to the dry land and to safety. The people who lived on this island of Melita were very kind to the shipwrecked travelers. It was rainy and cold so they built a fire for them.

Paul helped to build the fire, and as he was putting wood on it a poisonous snake called a "viper" bit him on the hand. The Bible says that the viper came out of the heat. It was cold weather, and probably the serpent had hidden itself away in the wood for the winter, and the fire drove it out.

The people of the island, as well as the passengers, knew that anyone bitten by a viper was almost certain to die. But Paul was not harmed. God was taking care of him because he wanted him to tell the people in Rome about Jesus. When Paul didn't die from the viper bite, the people of the island were kinder to him than ever.

The ruler of the island was named Publius. His father was very sick, and Paul healed him. Paul also healed other sick people on the island. They remained on Melita for three months. By that time the worst of the winter was over. Another ship from Alexandria, which had not been wrecked, but had remained at Melita for the winter, was sailing, so Paul was taken on this ship to complete his journey to Italy. After two more stops on the way, Paul finally arrived in Italy by ship, at a seaport which was quite a journey from Rome.

The Roman officers knew that Paul had not committed any crime, so when they brought him to Rome they did not put him in prison as they did other prisoners, but allowed him to hire a house for himself. He was not free, though, because he was kept chained to a soldier all the time, day and night. It was arranged that different soldiers would take turns in thus guarding Paul.

For two years Paul lived this way. And what do you suppose he did all this time?

Well, first of all, he sent for the important Jews of Rome to come and see him. He told them about Jesus and the resurrection. Some of them believed what he told them, and some did not.

After that various Gentiles visited him.

So all day long, day after day, for two whole years, Paul continued to tell the people who came to see him about Jesus, and about all the good things God will do for the people when Jesus becomes King of all the earth.

The Bible doesn't tell us very much about what Paul did after this. It is believed, though, that he was set free, but later arrested by the Romans again and brought to Rome, where he was put to death. Like Jesus, however, Paul was not put to death because he had done wrong. He was put to death because the rulers didn't want him to tell the people about King Jesus. Won't it be grand when everybody will love Jesus, and will be glad that he is their King?

## FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME QUESTIONS

What happened to Paul when he visited the temple in Jerusalem?

Name the Roman rulers to whom Paul explained why his enemies hated him?

What happened to Paul on his way to Rome, and why did he spend the winter in Melita?

How was Paul treated after he arrived in Rome?

## **JOHN SEES TREES OF LIFE**

IN THE second story of this book, called "At Home in a Garden," we learned that Adam and Eve, the first man and woman who ever lived on this earth, did not do what God wanted them to, and because of this they were not allowed to remain in that beautiful Garden of Eden which God had planted for them. This was very sad indeed because there was everything in that garden necessary to keep Adam and Eve alive forever. Just think how wonderful it would have been to remain in that garden, where they could have kept right on living without growing old or getting sick, or dying!

If you have read that story you will know that God's enemy, Satan, told a lie to mother Eve, saying that she would not die at all even if she did what God told her not to do. What a lie that was! And isn't it strange that so many people have believed it! The Bible says that Satan has deceived the people.

To be deceived means to think that something is true when it is not. So it is very important, you see, to make sure that what we believe is really the truth.

In telling you the story about Adam and Eve being sent out of the Garden of Eden because they had done wrong, I said that the time would come when they would be allowed to return to that garden, or to a much larger and better garden. I said that because God has promised it, and we know that God's promises will all come true.

We have already learned about many of those promises! And now I want to tell you about more of them, some of which were written down by the Apostle John in the last book of the Bible.

The Apostle John was one of Jesus' very dear friends. Jesus loved all of his disciples-in fact he loved everybody-but he loved John in a very special way. God wants us also to love everybody; but, like Jesus, we too have friends whom we love a great deal more than we love those whom we do not know! Well, Jesus and John knew each other very well, for John always stayed as close as he could to his Master. He wanted to learn all he could from Jesus, and he wanted to be near to help him whenever he needed help; and Jesus appreciated this, and loved John for it.

Many years after Jesus was crucified and made alive again, John, who continued to be his faithful disciple, was sent as a prisoner to a small island called Patmos. While he was a prisoner on this island he had a most wonderful experience. He had what we call a "vision."

A vision is like a dream, only it is not an ordinary dream, but a dream in which God tells his servants what he wants them to know. In a vision, words are heard, and pictures are seen which illustrate the meaning of the words.

Many of God's servants have been given visions, or special dreams, by him. You remember the story, "Peter's Strange Dream, don't you? But John's vision on the island of Patmos was more wonderful than any of the others.

In this vision John heard the voice of his beloved Master, Jesus, making wonderful promises for his people. Angels also spoke to him and explained the meaning of many of the remarkable things he saw in the vision. Yes, John saw and heard many, many, very odd and very wonderful things in this vision, so many, in fact, that it won't be possible to tell you about all of them.

But I do want to tell you about John's vision of the "trees of life," for this is part of what he saw on the island of Patmos. When the Bible tells us that all the people will by and by return to the Garden of Eden, we must remember that it means the whole earth will be made like the Garden of Eden; for that small garden in which Adam and Eve lived will not be large enough for everybody! We should remember this when we read about John's vision of the trees of life. He tells us that he saw these trees of life growing on both sides of a wonderful river. He calls it the "pure river of water of life." That surely is a wonderful name for a river! He says that the trees which he saw growing by the sides of this river had twelve kinds of fruit, and that it was fruit-picking time each month. - Re 22:1, 2 So you see, the water of life and the fruit of life were there all the time!

There were trees of life in the Garden of Eden, and the Bible tells us that if Adam and Eve could have eaten the fruit of those trees they would never have died. This means that those who eat the fruit from the trees of life which John saw in his vision will never die. So you see, trees of life are trees which give life.

John tells us that the leaves of these trees were for the healing of the nations. Yes, all the people will be blessed by these trees of life. That is just what God promised to do! And we have learned that all of God's promises will come true.

Of course, John didn't see a real river and real trees. What he saw was like a picture of a river and fruit trees. There couldn't be a real river large enough to have room on its banks for enough trees to supply the fruit of life for all the nations of the earth! So what John saw was a "picture" which was like another promise of God that by and by he will heal all the sick people in the world, and help them to live without dying, just as Adam and Eve would have lived without dying if they could have remained in the Garden of Eden.

And I want to tell you something more about the picture of this river which John saw. He tells us that the river flowed from underneath the "throne of God and of the Lamb." Now what do you suppose that could mean? Most rivers flow from the sides of mountains and hills. But the "river of the water of life" is different. It flows from a throne! In America we don't have kings who sit on thrones, but I am sure most of us have heard about the kings of other countries. And we know that they sometimes sit upon thrones.

Of course, kings do not actually sit on their thrones much of the time. A new king usually sits on his throne while his crown is placed on his head. A throne, you know, is a very

fancy chair, and those who sit on thrones are rulers-those who rule the people. So when we read that a king sits upon the throne of a nation, it means that he rules over the people of that nation.

Well, the Bible tells us about God's throne. It doesn't mean that God has a fancy chair in which he sits. No, not at all! It means that God is a Ruler, that he has the right to say what everybody in the whole wide world should do, and what they ought not to do.

Now, God had the right to tell Adam and Eve what they should and should not do, but they thought they knew better than God; so they did what he told them not to do. Because of this they were not allowed to remain in the Garden of Eden where they could have eaten from the trees of life and thus could have lived forever.

So now we can understand why John saw the "river of water of life" flowing from underneath the throne of God. This is God's way of explaining to us that all those who want to live forever will need to know that God has the right to say what they should do and what they should not do. Yes, they will need to obey him because he will be the Ruler.

I am sure you have learned that beautiful prayer which Jesus taught his disciples, in which we pray for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done on the earth as it is in heaven. Doing God's will is doing the things which please him, and when John saw the "throne of God" it was an illustration to show that God's will is to be done, and because of this the river of life and the trees of life will keep people alive forever and ever.

But John tells us something else which is also very important to remember. He says that the throne he saw, from which the river of life was flowing, was not only the throne of God, but that it was also the throne of the Lamb.

I wonder if you remember about God's Lamb. We have learned a great deal about that Lamb, haven't we? Abel, one of the first children of Adam and Eve, brought a lamb to God for a sacrifice. God was pleased with Abel's gift, and now we know why. It was because the lamb was a "picture" of Jesus, and the Bible tells us he was the "Lamb of God."

And then God provided a lamb for Abraham to offer in sacrifice in the place of his son Isaac. I am sure you remember that story. Well, that lamb also was a "picture" of Jesus.

Then there was the lamb that was slain at the time the Israelites left the land of Egypt. That was called the "passover" lamb. From the Bible we learn that Jesus is the real Passover Lamb; and because he died, all the world is to be brought out of death-that is, they will be made alive again.

Now, as we have learned, when a lamb was given to God for a sacrifice it was killed; so Jesus, the Lamb of God, was killed as a sacrifice for all the people who have ever lived. The next time you hear anyone say that Jesus died for us, you will know what they mean!

It is because Jesus died for us, and for all the world, that everybody is to be made alive again.

The Bible tells us that Jesus will be Ruler over the earth for a thousand years, that he will be the great King, to teach and train people to do the will of God. So that is why the throne which John saw in his vision is called the throne of the Lamb as well as the throne of God. It means that Jesus will be the King at that time, and that those who want to live forever will have to do what Jesus wants them to do.

It also means that they can have life only because Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died for them.

There was something else John saw in this vision which you should know about. As he watched the river flowing, and the trees of life on its banks bearing an abundance of the fruit of life, he heard a voice saying: "Come. . . . And ... take the water of life freely."

And who do you think it was that he heard speaking? Why, he tells us it was the "Spirit and the bride." Now who do you suppose they could be? The Bible tells us about the Spirit of God, which means the power of God. And sometimes the Bible speaks of Jesus as being "that Spirit," so it means that the power of God speaks through Jesus to invite all to partake of the water of life.

And who is the "bride" who also says, "Come, and help yourself to the water of life"? All the followers of Jesus-those who live and die serving him, those who love him more than anyone else-are to be with him when he is reigning over the people. They, too, will be kings. The Bible tells us this, and we know that the Bible is true. But these will have another name also. Because they will be with Jesus, and live in a heavenly home where he lives, the Bible calls them his "bride."

And who will these be? Of course, I cannot tell you who all of them will be, but the Bible tells us about some of them. Peter will be one, and Paul, and John-in fact, all the apostles. Maybe when you grow up, if you do your best to follow Jesus and do what he wants you to do, you also can be with him in the kingdom. And all those who are with him, and who work with him to make God's promises come true, are called his "bride." And together with him, they will all say to the peoples of the world: "Come, and partake of the water of life freely."

Now we can see how it is that all of God's promises will come true. Think of that wonderful promise God made to Abraham. You remember it, don't you? God said to him that he would use his "seed," or children, to bless all the people of the earth. But, as we know, Abraham died, and in all the long, long time since, people have continued to die without receiving this blessing which God promised.

But God hasn't forgotten that promise!

Instead of forgetting the promise, God has been getting ready for many years to make that promise, and all his other wonderful promises, come true. That's why he sent Jesus into the world as his Lamb, to die for the people. That is why Jesus, doing what God wanted him to do, selected John, and Peter, and Paul, and his other apostles and disciples, to work with him.

The Bible tells us that Jesus, and together with him, all his followers, are the "seed," or children, which God spoke of in the promise to Abraham. So now we can see how that promise will come true. Jesus and his followers, or his "bride," will make it come true.- Ga 3:8, 16, 27-29 We know, though, that people cannot be blessed while they are dead, so everyone who has died will be made alive again. Then they will hear the invitation: "Come and partake of the water of life freely."

Yes, that will be when Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, and Noah, and Abraham-and everybody-will be made alive again.

The followers of Jesus are the first to be made alive. When they are made alive, they will be with Jesus in heaven above. They will not need to drink of the river of life, because they will have heavenly life the same as Jesus. They will have the great joy of helping to give life to all the rest of mankind, who are to be made alive and live here on the earth in peace and happiness forever.

Aren't we glad that God's promises are coming true? In another part of John's vision all the people of the world were happy, so he says that God had wiped the tears from their eyes. Isn't that wonderful! And how will God wipe away the people's tears? He will do that by allowing them to eat of the trees of life, which means that he will help them to live on and on forever and not die. John tells us that he saw in the vision that a time was coming when there would be no more death."

Won't it be wonderful when nobody dies? And that's just the way it will be when all of God's promises come true. People will not get sick and die; nor will they grow old and die.

There will be no wars then to kill people, either.

So very many today are worrying about those terrible atomic bombs because they can kill so many people. But when God's promises come true he will not allow bombs of any kind to kill people.

And we know that God will be able to do all that he has promised to do. It was God who made this earth; and he also made the sun, and moon, and stars. We can't understand how God was able to do such wonderful things; but we know that he did. And because God was able to make the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and stars, we know that he will surely be able to do all that he has promised to do.

Let us, then, trust God, and do the things which will please him. And let us tell our friends about him and about the wonderful time of peace and joy there will be all over the earth when God's promises come true!

#### JOHN SEES TREES OF LIFE QUESTIONS

What is a vision, and where was John when God gave him a wonderful vision?

What are the trees of life, and the river of life?

What is the throne of God and of the Lamb?

When will all of God's promises come true?

## **THE STORY OF GOD'S BOOK PART II**

THE story, "The World's Most Wonderful Baby," and all our stories which follow have been taken from what is called the "New Testament," which, of course, is a part of the Bible.

The "Old Testament" part of the Bible begins with the time when God made all things. It also tells us of God's wonderful care for his people who lived before Jesus was born.

The word "Testament" means agreement, or promise, and the Old Testament relates many wonderful promises of God. The New Testament tells of still more wonderful promises, and also explains how and why all of God's promises will come true. The New Testament, just like the Old Testament, is made up of many parts, called "books." The first book in the New Testament is called Matthew.

**MATTHEW** The full name of this book is "The Gospel According to Matthew. The word "Gospel" means "good news," and "Matthew" is the name of one of Jesus' disciples; so the "Gospel According to Matthew" means the good news as told by Matthew. Matthew wrote the most wonderful news that has ever been told, for it is the story of Jesus, and how Jesus will make all of God's promises come true.

The Book of Matthew tells us about the wise men who came to see Jesus when he was a very young child, and how the wicked king Herod wanted to put Jesus to death fearing that he would grow up to be a king. The Bible tells us that Jesus is a most wonderful King, and that he will yet rule over the whole earth.

In the Book of Matthew we find a wonderful sermon which was preached by Jesus as he stood on the side of a mountain. It is called "The Sermon on the Mount." I hope you remember what I told you about the chapters and verses of the Bible. Well, "The Sermon on the Mount" begins in chapter 5 of the Book of Matthew.

You should try to memorize verses 3 to 10 of this chapter. In these verses you will find what are called the "Beatitudes, which mean words of blessedness. The first Beatitude is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now find the 5th chapter of Matthew and read the other Beatitudes.

**MARK** This is the second book of the New Testament. Its full name is, "The Gospel According to Mark." Mark was also a faithful disciple of Jesus, and the book which he wrote is another story of the wonderful works of Jesus. This story is also good news because Mark reminds us over and over again that Jesus is the One who will make all God's promises come true.

In the 10th chapter of Mark, verses 13 to 16, a short story is told which should be very interesting to children. The story is that children were brought to Jesus, but his disciples, supposing that their Master did not want to be bothered, scolded them and tried to send

them away. But they were probably surprised when Jesus said: "Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not."

Then Jesus said that all those who will be in the kingdom with him, to help him bless the people, will have to become like little children. When Jesus said this, he was thinking of children who obey their parents, and who are sweet and kind. If grownups feel very important, and think they know more than they really do know, God is not pleased with them. God is our Heavenly Father, and he wants us all to be obedient children.

LUKE This, the third book of the New Testament, is another story of the things which were said and done by Jesus. The full name of this book is "The Gospel According to Luke." One of the most important things in this book is the story of the angels who told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus. You will find this story in the 2nd chapter. Luke tells us that the angel said to the shepherds: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

In the 12th chapter Luke tells about a wonderful promise Jesus made to his disciples about God's care for his people. Jesus said to them that even the hairs of their heads were numbered by God. Jesus explained that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God knowing about it, and that he can certainly be depended upon to care for all the needs of his people. JOHN There were four of Jesus' disciples who wrote a history of their Master's life, and one of them was John. The book he wrote about Jesus is called "The Gospel According to John." John wrote his book after the other three had been written, so he tells about many things which Jesus did and said that are not written down in any of the other Gospels.

I wonder if you remember the story called "God, Who Made Us"? Well, in that story I told you that God created, or made a very wonderful being which was his Son, and that one of his names was "Logos." It is in the first chapter of the Book of John that the Bible tells us about the Logos. But you won't find the word Logos in your Bible, because it is a Greek word. It means "Word," so John tells us that "in the beginning was the Word."

John also tells us that the "Word" of God, which means the "Logos" of God, was the One whom God used to make everything, just as I told you in that first story.

In the Bible the Logos is sometimes called "the Lord," because "Lord" means "mighty one," and Jesus is a mighty One. But the Bible never calls Jesus "God," so don't ever make the mistake of calling Jesus "God." Jesus was the Son of God, so he couldn't be the Son of God and also be God!

ACTS The Book of Acts was written by Luke. The full name of the book is "The Acts of the Apostles." It is a story of what the apostles did and said after Jesus returned to heaven. It is in this book that we are told about the Holy Spirit, or power of God, coming upon the disciples at the time of Pentecost. The Book of Acts contains many of the stories I have told you about the disciples of Jesus. When you read these stories again you

should try to find them in the Bible also. In this way you can make sure that I have told them to you correctly.

**ROMANS** The full name of this book of the Bible is "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, which means the letter which Paul wrote to the Romans. Paul didn't write this letter to all the people who lived in Rome, but only to the followers of Jesus.

Yes, the people in those days wrote letters much the same as we do now. They couldn't send them by air mail as we do, nor were they carried by railway trains. Paul wrote many letters, and most of them were carried by his friends, who went all the way from one city to another to deliver them.

We learned in one of our stories that Paul was taken to Rome as a prisoner, and that he lived as a prisoner in Rome for a long time. But there were disciples of Jesus in Rome before Paul lived there, and it was to these that he sent this letter. One of the things he wrote is this: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation."- Ro 1:16 As you know, the word "Gospel" means good news, and we are not ashamed of the good news of Christ, either! The good news of Christ means all the wonderful promises of God to make the whole world alive again. That certainly is good news, and we should be very glad to tell people about it whenever we can.

**CORINTHIANS 1 and 2** Paul wrote two letters to the disciples of Jesus who lived in Corinth, Greece. They are called his first and second epistles to the Corinthians. Paul was very much interested in the disciples who lived in Corinth. It was because of his preaching that many of them had learned about Jesus. It is in the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Acts that we learn about Paul's visit to Corinth, and it is a very interesting story.

Paul went to Corinth from Athens, which is also a city in Greece. When he first arrived he met a man and his wife whose names were Aquila and Priscilla. They were Israelites and had come to Corinth from Rome because the governor of Rome asked that all the Israelites leave the city.

We know that Paul was a wonderful preacher of the good news concerning Jesus; but he knew how to do other things, also. He was what the Bible calls a tentmaker. When he told the people about Jesus and about his wonderful kingdom, he never collected money for doing it. He didn't even collect enough money to buy his own food. He earned money for this by making tents and sewing canvas together for sails to be used on sailboats.

When he arrived in Corinth and became acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, he found out that they also were tentmakers, so they lived together and worked together for a year and a half. They also worked together in telling the people about Jesus.

For a while Paul preached only to the Israelites. Then he began to preach to the Gentiles, and after a year and a half there were many in Corinth who had become disciples of Jesus. These disciples were called the "Church at Corinth." After a while Paul left Corinth and went to Syria, but he didn't forget his friends in Corinth who had believed on

Jesus, for he wrote these two letters to them. In the letters he gives them good advice and reminds them of many of the wonderful promises of God.

In the thirteenth chapter of the first letter to this church at Corinth, Paul writes about love and how important it is that we have love in our hearts for everybody. We should never hate anyone, not even those who are unkind to us. We should be like Jesus, who loved even those who put him to death. In fact, he died for the very ones who asked for his crucifixion.

In the fifteenth chapter, Paul writes about the resurrection of Jesus, telling us that God made him alive again, and that by and by the power of God will make alive all who have died. We are glad that Paul wrote these letters to the disciples in Corinth because in them we learn so many good things.

**GALATIANS** This book is another letter written by the Apostle Paul. It was written to the disciples of Jesus who lived in Galatia. Galatia was not a city, though, but like one of our states. It was called a province, like the-provinces of Canada. In this province of Galatia there were several groups of disciples, and Paul sent this letter to all of them. Of course they couldn't all read it at the same time, but it was sent from one place to another so that all the disciples had an opportunity to read it.

In the third chapter of the letter Paul writes about the wonderful promise God made to Abraham telling him that he planned to bless all the people of the world. In this chapter Paul explains that Jesus and also the disciples of Jesus are the ones whom God will use to make his promise to Abraham come true. So if any one asks you where the Bible says that Jesus and his disciples will make God's promises come true, you can tell them that one of the places where it is found is in the third chapter of Galatians.

**EPHESIANS** This book of the Bible is a letter which Paul wrote to the disciples of Jesus who lived in the city of Ephesus, which was in the district of Ionia. Years before, Paul had visited Ephesus and preached to the people about Jesus. In this city Paul healed sick people just as Jesus did, and many of them believed in Jesus.

In those days nearly all the people in Ephesus were worshipers of the false goddess, Diana. There was a huge temple in the city called the Temple of Diana. Besides, in Ephesus, there were various kinds of fortune tellers, and others who deceived the people and took their money away from them.

Paul stayed in Ephesus for awhile and healed many sick people and told them about Jesus and the wonderful promises of God which will come true by and by. Many of these fortune tellers and other deceivers realized they were doing wrong, so they brought their books of instruction into the public square and burned them. That, of course, caused a great deal of excitement.

In Ephesus there were men who made images of Diana, the false goddess, and sold them to the people. It seems that many people in those days liked to have images in their

homes just as some do now. The men who made these images sold them for a good price, and in that way they obtained much money from the people. When they noticed how many were beginning to believe in Jesus they were afraid that all the people would believe in him. They knew that if the people believed in Jesus instead of Diana, they would not be able to sell their images, so they started to talk against Paul. It wasn't long before they had the people of Ephesus all excited. Ever so many of them rushed into the huge Temple of Diana, and they shouted: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Then the mayor of Ephesus, who was a very wise man, did the best he could to quiet the people, and finally the crowd left the temple, and no harm was done. So you see, the Apostle Paul had a very exciting time at Ephesus. But while he was there, some became disciples of Jesus, and it is to these that he wrote this letter. In the letter Paul calls the disciples at Ephesus "children," and says: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."

**PHILIPPIANS** Paul wrote many letters, and this book of the Bible is another one of them. It was sent to the disciples of Jesus who lived in Philippi, which was a city in Macedonia. After Paul had been traveling for a long time, telling all who would listen about Jesus and the promises of God, he had a wonderful dream. In this dream he heard a voice saying to him: "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."- Ac 16:9 So Paul and the disciples who were working with him obeyed this call and went to Macedonia, and Philippi was the first city they visited in this new country. Paul knew from his dream that God wanted them to go to Philippi, and before long they learned the reason.

Soon after they arrived they heard of a place just outside of the city where good people were in the habit of going when they wanted to pray together. It was called a place of prayer. Believing that this would be an excellent place to tell about Jesus, Paul went there.

He found a number of people who were glad to listen to his Gospel story, and several of them believed and became disciples of Jesus. One of them was a very good woman, named Lydia. She was a business woman. The Bible says that she was a "seller of purple." ( Ac 16:14) This probably means that she sold purple dyes, or possibly purple cloth. Lydia had a nice home in Philippi, and when she became a disciple of Jesus she invited Paul and those who worked with him to live in her home. And they held meetings there also.

But Paul had some serious trouble in Philippi. Some men there had a woman working for them who was a fortune teller. The Bible says that there was an evil spirit in this woman, and that it was this evil spirit who helped her to tell the people what they wanted to know. This evil spirit caused the woman to cry out to the people that Paul was a servant of God, and that he was able to tell them how they could get life. Of course this was true, but Paul knew it was wrong for this evil spirit to be telling the truth in this way, and that no good could come from it. So he put a stop to it by causing the evil spirit to leave the woman.

But this meant that she was no longer able to earn money for the men she was working for, so they became angry and complained to the authorities about Paul, and his fellow-worker, Silas. They said: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city." -Ac 16:20 The people in the city were very much excited about this complaint, and Paul and Silas were put into prison. As was often done to prisoners in those days, Paul and Silas were cruelly beaten, and then they were put into what the Bible calls the "inner prison," which was probably a dark dungeon. There they were tied with chains. But they were not discouraged. No doubt their backs were sore from the beating, and perhaps they couldn't sleep very well, but instead of complaining about it they began to sing hymns.

And then something wonderful occurred.

There was a great earthquake which shook the very foundations of the prison building. Not only that, but the doors of the prison were thrown wide open by the earthquake. Even the prisoners' chains were broken loose during the earthquake. Wasn't that wonderful?

The prison keeper, or jailer, was very much afraid, not of the earthquake, but because he thought all the prisoners would escape and he would be blamed for not looking after his work properly. You see, the jailer was asleep when the earthquake occurred. He was awakened by it, and not knowing what had happened and seeing the doors of the prison open, he supposed the prisoners had escaped. He decided he had better kill himself, but Paul called out to him: "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here."- Ac 16:28 The keeper of the prison was so impressed that Paul and Silas had not run away, that he was willing to hear what they had to say about Jesus. And he believed what they told him and became one of Jesus' disciples. His family became disciples also.

The next morning after the earthquake, Paul and Silas were released from prison, and advised to leave the city. But before they left they arranged for all the disciples to meet together in Lydia's home, where they must have had a grand time together talking about all the wonderful things God had done for them.

Now we can see why Paul loved the disciples at Philippi. Long years after this, while he was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote this letter to his dear friends, the Philippians. In the letter he tells them to be sure to continue serving God as disciples of Jesus, which we are sure they did. One of the beautiful things he wrote in this letter was: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." -Php 4:4 COLOSSIANS Another of Paul's letters. It was sent to the disciples who lived in Colosse, which was a city in Asia Minor. The Bible doesn't tell us much about the disciples at Colosse, but Paul knew them and wrote them a very beautiful letter. One important thing he said in the letter was, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." ( Col 3:20) We all want to be pleasing to the Lord, I am sure!

THESSALONIANS 1 and 2 The disciples of Jesus who were known as Thessalonians lived in a city called Thessalonica. Thessalonica was in the country known as Macedonia. There are two books of the New Testament called Thessalonians, and both of them are letters, or epistles, which were written by the Apostle Paul. Paul was the first to preach

the Gospel in Thessalonica, and two other disciples of Jesus worked in the city with him. Their names were Timothy and Silas.

When they first went to Thessalonica they visited the synagogue. A synagogue is a Jewish church. There they found some who were glad to learn about Jesus. Besides the Jewish believers, quite a number of Greeks became Christians. But there were many in those days who did not like to hear about Jesus. Several of these got together and tried to make trouble for Paul.

There was one believer by the name of Jason, and these trouble makers went to his home expecting to find Paul and Silas, but they were not there at the time. Disappointed in not finding Paul they then seized Jason and the other disciples with him, took them before the city rulers, and asked that they be punished. They said concerning Paul and the other disciples: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." -Ac 17:6 However, the rulers of the city decided not to punish Jason and the other disciples who were arrested with him. But the disciples of Jesus thought it would be best for Paul not to remain in Thessalonica, so they advised him to leave, which he did that very night. ( Ac 17:10) After he had been gone a long while, he wrote these two letters to them.

He had heard that the Christians in Thessalonica were working hard to tell as many people as they could about Jesus, and this made Paul very happy. In his second letter to them he wrote: "Be not weary in well doing." ( 2Th 3:13) That's good advice.

**TIMOTHY 1 and 2** The first and second Books of Timothy are letters written by Paul to a faithful disciple of Jesus whose name was Timothy. Timothy and his mother Eunice learned about Jesus from Paul and became disciples while Timothy was a very young man. Later he joined Paul in many of his journeys and worked with him. Paul loved this young man very dearly, and called him his son Timothy. Timothy was not actually Paul's son, but the apostle called him his son because he was the one who had first told him about Jesus.

Paul's second letter to Timothy was written while the apostle was a prisoner in Rome, and only a little while before he died. In this letter he tells about his trial before the wicked Nero, the emperor of Rome. He says that none of the disciples stood with him during that trial except Luke, but that the Lord helped him, and that he was delivered from the mouth of the lion.

In those days many Roman prisoners were given to lions to be killed and eaten, but God helped Paul to escape this experience.

Because so many of the disciples forsook Paul in this time of need, he asked Timothy to come to Rome and visit him and to come before winter time if possible. I think we can all understand why Paul was so anxious to see Timothy; and we all hope that Timothy was able to go to Rome to visit the apostle!

**TITUS** The New Testament Book of Titus is still another letter written by the Apostle Paul. Its name is that of a Gentile believer in Jesus to whom the letter was written. Titus traveled and worked with Paul for quite awhile. He was with him in Jerusalem and Ephesus, and in a number of other places. Titus was on the island of Crete at the time this letter was sent to him. In it Paul explains how to do the Lord's work among the disciples of Jesus who lived on the island.

**PHILEMON** The Book of Philemon is named after the disciple Philemon. This faithful disciple of Jesus lived in Colosse, and the other disciples of this city met together in his home to hold their meetings. Philemon was a business man, and had many servants. In those days they were called slaves. The name of one of his slaves was Onesimus. The slave ran away from Philemon which, according to the custom of those days, was a very wrong thing to do.

Onesimus, after running away from his master, Philemon, went to the city of Rome. He was in Rome at the time Paul was there as a prisoner. Although Paul was a prisoner, he was allowed to live in his own house, where Onesimus visited him. Paul told Onesimus about the good news of Jesus, and he believed it. In this way Onesimus became a disciple of Jesus, just like his former master, Philemon.

Those who believe in Jesus and become his disciples must do all they can to correct their past wrongs. Onesimus had treated Philemon badly by running away from him and now that he had become a disciple of Jesus it was his duty to return to his former master. That was a difficult thing to do!

But Paul helped Onesimus by writing a letter to Philemon, explaining that his former slave had become a disciple of Jesus and was now returning to him. He asked Philemon to receive Onesimus and to be kind to him, and to treat him as a brother, not as a slave. When Onesimus returned to Philemon, he took this letter with him-the letter which is now the New Testament Book of Philemon.

**HEBREWS** This is another letter written by the Apostle Paul. The name "Hebrew" in this case means disciples of Jesus who had been born Israelites, or Hebrews. Paul was a very wise man, and he knew that there were some things which these Hebrew disciples needed especially to learn, so he wrote this letter to them for this purpose.

Although the letter was written to Hebrew disciples, it is good for all of us. It is a part of the Bible, and we should read every part of the Bible as much as we can. In this letter Paul says: "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." -Heb 2:1 This means that we should remember what we have learned in the Bible.

**JAMES** The full name of this book is "The General Epistle of James," which means the letter which James wrote to all the disciples of Jesus, particularly those who had been Israelites. James was one of Jesus' disciples who followed him before he was crucified. He lived in Jerusalem, and it was there that he wrote this letter. In it he writes many good

things. One of them is that we should be "swift to hear, slow to speak." ( Jas 1:19) This is good advice for children and also for grownups. It means that we should listen to what other people say to us, and to be careful how we reply.

PETER 1 and 2 These two books of the New Testament are called the general epistles, or letters, of Peter. We have already learned that Peter was one of Jesus' faithful disciples. Before he became a disciple of Jesus he was a fisherman. He made his living by catching fish and selling them. When Jesus called Peter to be a disciple, he said to him: "Follow me and I will make you a fisher of men."- Mt 4:19 Jesus said this to others also. It meant that Jesus wants his disciples to do all they can to tell others the good news of his kingdom, and to tell them about him also-that he is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." -Joh 1:29 When Peter and the other apostles wrote letters, they didn't begin them as we start letters today. They didn't write, "Dear Sir," or "Dear Madam," or "Dear Mr. Jones." They usually commenced by using their own name. Peter starts his first letter by saying: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."

He sent the letter to a lot of people, didn't he? And now both of his letters are in the Bible, and are being read by people all over the world. Isn't that wonderful?

JOHN 1, 2, and 3 I have already told you about the Gospel of John, which is his report of the sayings and works of Jesus. In addition to his Gospel book, John wrote three epistles, or letters, to the disciples of Jesus. John is the only one of the disciples who wrote a record of Jesus' life and who also wrote letters to the church. We are glad, though, that John wrote these three letters, because he has written many things in them which are important for us to know. In John's first letter he writes: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."-1 Joh 2:1 Jesus said that those who will be in his kingdom must be like children. When John writes about "little children" he means grown-up people who have become disciples, and who are like good children, very obedient to what God wants them to do.

All children should be kind and loving and obedient to their parents. Children who love their parents will do what their parents want them to do, and then their parents will love them all the more. So disciples of Jesus, who love him, will do what he wants them to. In the last letter John wrote, he said: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." -3 John 4 When John wrote this letter he was probably nearly sixty years old. He had been a faithful disciple of Jesus for many years. Most of those reading his letter would be younger than John, and for this reason also he writes to them as his "children." And, just like all good fathers, he is happy to know that his "children" are doing the things which they should do. John calls this walking "in truth."

The "truth" is what God has caused to be written in the Bible, which tells us all the wonderful things he plans to do for the people, and what he wants us to do. Sometimes we call this God's plan, and it is very important for all of us to do the things which God has written in his plan. John says: "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which

is good." -3 John 11 That which God forbids is evil, and that which he wants us to do, is good. So let us all try to do that which is good!

**JUDE** The full name of this book is "The General Epistle of Jude," which means the letter which Jude wrote to all the disciples of Jesus. It is not a very long letter, but it has many important lessons in it. Jude writes about various ones who had not done what God wanted them to do, and tells us how they were punished. He speaks of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by fire because the people there were so very wicked.

These cities were near the place where Abraham lived, and they were destroyed while Abraham was still alive. God saw that it was best for those wicked people to be put to sleep in death. But many times people do things which God does not want them to do, because they do not know any better. This was true of those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, so they will be made alive again when Christ is King over the earth.

Then they will learn what God wants them to do. If at that time they obey God, they will not need to die again. ( Eze 16:46-63; 18:21-23) We should be very thankful that we know about God, and know what he wants us to do. And we should always try to do the things which please him. Jude calls this keeping ourselves in the love of God.

**REVELATION** This is the last book of the Bible. It was written by the Apostle John, but he wrote only what he was told to write, and what was necessary to describe the wonderful things which were shown to him in a vision, or dream. In the story, "John Sees the Trees of Life, I told you that the apostle saw a vision while he was a prisoner on a little island called Patmos; but in that story I told you only a few things which John saw.

The very first verse of this book calls it "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." It was Jesus who appeared to John in vision and showed him all the wonderful things which he describes. I won't try to tell you much about them because it would take too long. However, in this book John tells us that he saw beasts, horses, locusts, and a sea of glass. He tells us also of a certain very wicked city which was like a bird cage full of all sorts of ugly birds. ( Re 18:2) Now when you grow up and study the Bible for yourself you will learn that all these various things which John saw were just like pictures, or illustrations, of other things.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Perhaps you have heard people speak of their troubles as being clouds. And then we hear people say that clouds have silver linings. What they mean by this is that no matter how severe our troubles may be, something good always comes out of them. Thus, if we could see the other side of our clouds of trouble we would discover that they are not nearly as black as we thought, but that there is a bright side to all of our troubles.

Now that is the way God talks to us in the Book of Revelation; that is, he does it by using illustrations. The beasts and the horses and the many other things which John saw are merely "pictures" of something else. In this vision John sees the "Lamb of God" several

times. We know who the Lamb of God is, don't we? Yes, the Lamb of God is Jesus. He is called the Lamb of God because he died for us and for all mankind.

One of the beasts John saw in his vision tried to fight against the Lamb, but the Lamb was victorious. This means that no matter what is done by wicked people to interfere with what God has planned to do for the blessing of all mankind, they will not succeed. God has promised that Jesus, his Lamb, shall be King over the whole earth, and nothing whatever can prevent that promise from coming true.

So let us be glad that God has made so many wonderful promises, and let us be glad that they will all come true, and that when they do, everybody in the whole wide world will be happy forever. I John also tells us that in this vision he saw God's Lamb on top of Mount Zion. Mount Zion is one of the "pictures" God shows to us in the Bible of that wonderful kingdom in which Jesus will be the Ruler. John says that he saw many people with God's Lamb on Mount Zion. He says that these followed the Lamb to Mount Zion. Of course, we know who these are, don't we? They are the faithful disciples of Jesus who try to do everything God wants them to do, just as Jesus did. Because they do this, they will be in the kingdom with him. They, too, will be kings, or rulers, in that kingdom. But this will be after they are made alive again.

In another part of the vision John saw God and the Lamb together, and everybody on the earth and all the angels in heaven were praising them. Today there are many, many people in the world who do not know enough about God to praise him, but we are glad that when all his promises come true, everybody will know about God's love and they will want to praise him, just as we want to praise him now.

Aren't we glad that God has given us the Bible, and that in the Bible he has told us so many wonderful things? We are thankful for all the stories of the Bible, and we are thankful that in those stories God has told us over and over again of his love.

We are also glad that Jesus loves us, and that he died for us on the cross so that all might be made alive again.

We are glad that Jesus is to be King over the whole earth, and that then there will be no wars, no sickness, and that people will not need to die any more.

Yes, all of these wonderful things have been promised by God, and we know that his promises will come true. And because his promises will come true, some day you will be able to see many of the wonderful people God has told us about in the stories of the Bible. How grand it will be to see Adam and Eve, and Abel!

And won't it be grand to hear Noah tell all about building that big ship on the dry land, and that finally it rained so much the water floated the ship-that ship which the Bible calls an ark!

Yes, all the people we have seen in these stories will be made alive again. Most of those we learned about in the New Testament part of the Bible will be with Jesus, but all those wonderful people of the Old Testament will be made alive right here on the earth.

Wouldn't you like to see Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, and Daniel, and all those other good people who did what God wanted them to do?

Well, you will see them, and that will be when all of God's promises come true!