



What Is the Story of the Bible?

“Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever.” (Mark 13:31)

Although made up of sixty-six books, the Bible is just one story – God’s story. He begins his story in the Old Testament by telling how he created the world and everything in it. He describes how he created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden. To test their love and obedience to him, he said, “Do not eat from this one tree.” But they didn’t listen. They chose to disobey and ate from the tree. That made a mess of everything! Their precious relationship with God was broken. Now all their future descendants were in trouble. The Old Testament asks the question: **“How can we have a relationship with God since we’ve chosen to go our own way?”** God loved Adam and Eve very much and gave them hope through a promise to Satan (disguised as a serpent) who had tempted them. God said, “ONE DAY a descendant of the woman will crush the serpent’s head! (Genesis 3:15)

The broken world

Adam and Eve had two sons, Abel and Cain. Out of jealousy, Cain murdered Abel. Their descendants continued to ignore God, going their own way. When God saw that the crime rate was rising rapidly and the world was rotten to the core, he even regretted creating people! However, one of their descendants, Noah, had a close relationship with God and obeyed his commands. Through Noah, God decided to give the human race another chance. He sent a worldwide flood, destroying everything except Noah’s family and animals who lived safely in Noah’s big boat (Ark). When the waters receded, the world started over with Mr. and Mrs. Noah, their three sons and their wives.

The call of Abraham

Noah had many descendants but it didn’t take long for them to begin choosing their own way instead of God’s way. They didn’t want a relationship with God. Again, God gave them another chance by choosing and making an agreement with a man named Abraham. God promised Abraham many descendants, one of which would be the Messiah, the deliverer who would make right this thing Adam and Eve messed up. Abraham’s part of the promise was that he and his descendants would take their relationship with God seriously and be circumcised as a sign of their commitment. The people we call Jews or Israelites descended from Abraham. God gave Abraham a wonderful promise. ONE DAY “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:3) Jesus Christ, the Messiah (anointed one), is a descendant of Abraham.

The founding of a nation

Abraham had two sons. One son, Jacob, had twelve sons who became heads of twelve tribes. During a famine, they all moved to Egypt and became a great nation. Alarmed at their size, Pharaoh made them slaves. One Hebrew baby, Moses, escaped slavery and grew up in the king's palace. God called Moses to rescue his people and bring them back to the land of Canaan where Abraham had settled a long time ago. It is the land called Israel today. Because of their lack of faith and rebellion, the Jews wandered in the desert for forty years before entering Canaan (Israel), sometimes called the Promised Land.

The command of God

Because the people who lived in Canaan worshiped idols, God commanded Joshua (the new leader after Moses) to conquer the land and run everyone else out. He knew that the idol worshippers would influence his people. In the desert, God had given the Israelites the Ten Commandments by which to live. The very first one said, "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" (Exodus 20:3, NIV) Unfortunately, they failed to run all the idol worshippers out. They soon began mixing their worship of God with idol worship. As a result, the nation became weak and an easy prey for the surrounding nations. God raised up prophets who cried out to their people, "Turn back to God. He loves you and will protect you from your enemies." They refused to listen and trouble came. The kingdom of Israel split into two – the northern and southern kingdoms. Jerusalem became the capital of Judah in the southern kingdom. Because of their disobedience, God let their enemies capture the people and take them to foreign countries.

The rest of the Old Testament revolves around Israel's struggle to worship only God. God told these stories so that you might learn from them. The historical books tell of their being captured by their enemies and taken to other lands. They describe how God returned them back to their land. The truths of the books of wisdom encouraged them. The books of prophecy warned them of the bad things that would happen to them for turning away from God. These books also prophesied of the Messiah who would fix the mess people were in because they chose to live their own way. ONE DAY "*the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [God with us].*" (Isaiah 7:14, NIV)

The New Testament

The New Testament answers the Old Testament question: How can we be right with God and have a relationship with him since we have chosen to go our own way? God himself, Jesus Christ, came to earth to restore that relationship! He came as a baby to give his life and take the punishment for all the sins of the world. Those who believe in Jesus Christ – his life, death and resurrection are forgiven, born again spiritually and have a relationship with God. Jesus was God in human flesh. He taught the people about God, healed the sick and did many miracles.

The crucifixion

At the age of thirty-three, the religious leaders turned against him and had him nailed to a cross (crossbeams of wood). There he died a painful and agonizing death. Though innocent, he willingly took the punishment and wrath of God for all the sins of the world so that all who believed in him could be forgiven and have a relationship with God.

The resurrection

Amazingly, in three days he came back to life. He spent more time with his close friends and then he ascended to heaven. Before he left, he promised to return one day. He charged his followers to love each other and spread the Good News to everyone. Those followers became the first missionaries and spread the word that Jesus had paid the price on the cross for the failure of people to stay in a relationship with God. They preached forgiveness of their sins. They began new churches in major cities. Some wrote letters back to the people to tell them how to live until Jesus returns.

The first four books of the New Testament tell the story of all Jesus did while on earth. The fifth book, Acts, tells the exciting story of how the first church began. The next twenty-one letters tell the new believers how to live by faith and love. The last book prophesies about Jesus' return and tells what will happen at the end of the world, as we know it.

That's the wonderful story of the Bible. It is God's story of how he created you and wooed you into a relationship with him. How precious you are to him!¹

Attitude Check:

- How eager are you to read God's story and come to know the God who created you?

Explore:

- Read "Studying the Bible Is Necessary for Our Spiritual Growth, (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Decide on a plan to read the Bible daily.

Talking with God:

- Father, give me a deep desire to read and study your story that I might get to know you.

¹ Adapted from *The Everyday Guide to the Bible* by Carol Smith, Barbour Publishing, Inc. pp. 15-21