

Creation to Judgment Story

In the beginning there was only God, for God has always existed. It was God who created all the angels. He made them pure and holy like himself, to obey and do the work he gave them. One angel who was very beautiful, wise and powerful rebelled and desired to take God's place in heaven. He was driven from heaven and one day will be eternally punished.

After God had created the world and all the things in it, he also made the first man and woman and placed them in a garden. God gave them work to do in caring for the garden with one commandment as a warning: They could eat fruit from any of the trees growing in the garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for to do so they would die. In time the evil angel came and spoke to the woman and convinced her it was all right to eat from the tree that was forbidden. She did eat and her husband also ate. Because of their disobedience God said that they would suffer during their lives and one day would die and return to the dust. The man and woman became fearful and tried to hide from God. God still loved them and clothed their nakedness but put them out of the garden where they had lived.

Their disobedience continued to spread first to their own sons when the older killed the younger and soon to all the descendants of that first man and woman. The whole population became filled with violence and evil. God saw this evil and pronounced judgment upon it. He would destroy all the sinful people and animals. But God saw the man Noah who tried to live a life that was pleasing to God. So God revealed to Noah that he must build a large boat, for God was going to save some of the animals and Noah's family. Noah carefully did all that God commanded him to do. When a great flood came only Noah and his family and the animals were saved. After the flood was gone Noah offered a sacrifice to thank God.

Again the population on the earth increased but people soon forgot God again. One day God called a man who came to have the name Abraham. God said to him that one day he would have many descendants and through one of them God would bless all people. Abraham and his wife Sarah were already old and had no children. Then God sent an angel to say that soon Sarah would have a son. Abraham believed God and trusted God to do what he promised. After the birth of the son and some years passed God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son, his only son. Immediately Abraham began to obey God but told his son that God would surely provide a substitute sacrifice. At the time of the sacrifice God stopped Abraham from harming his son and provided a sheep for the sacrifice.

After many more years had passed the descendants of Abraham had gone to live in the land of Egypt. There God had blessed them until they became many in number. But the Egyptians feared Abraham's descendants and forced them into slavery. God heard the cry of the people and called a man named Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. When the king of Egypt refused to obey God's command, God told Moses what to do to punish the Egyptians with many terrible plagues and finally even the death of the Egyptian firstborn sons. But God told the descendants of Abraham what they must do to live—they were to sacrifice a sheep and put its blood on the sides of the door and over the door of their houses. They would be kept safe from the punishment by obeying God and by the sign of the blood.

While Moses was leading the people who were now known as Israelites God gave his holy law known as the Ten Commandments to help the people know what was sinful. Also God appointed some of Moses' relatives to be the priests who would lead the people in their worship of God. To cover the sin of the people when they happened to disobey God, the people were told to sacrifice an animal and sprinkle its blood on the altar. The innocent animal would die in place of the

person who sinned and its blood would provide a covering for their sin.

But over the years the Israelites and all the people who lived around them continued to fall into terrible sin breaking God's holy law and offending God in many ways. Even the kings that God gave the people to lead them, and their priests and some prophets fell into terrible sin and led the people also to sin against God. In spite of God's many warnings of coming judgment and disaster the people refused to listen.

At last the Israelites were overcome by their enemies and taken away into captivity. But God still loved them and wanted to bless them. So God sent prophets to tell the wonderful news that one day a Messiah or Savior would be born who would suffer for the sins of the people and even die, but would rise again. The prophets told where this Savior would be born, who he would be descended from, and who his mother would be.

After many more years passed one day it began to happen just as God had said. For God sent an angel to a young virgin to tell her that she was to give birth to a son who would be called the Son of God. When her husband heard about this he was disturbed but the angel told him that God's Holy Spirit had caused this to happen. The son was to be named Jesus because he would save his people from their sins.

At his birth God sent angels to announce that God's Messiah had been born according to the prophecies. Later wise men from a foreign country saw a sign in the sky and believed that a great king had been born. When they came and found Jesus, they worshiped him as a king, a priest and as someone who was going to suffer and die.

When Jesus came of age he sought out a prophet named John who was baptizing people who repented of their sins. Jesus asked John to baptize him, and when Jesus was coming from the water God spoke from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, and I am well pleased with him." Later when John again saw Jesus he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" When the evil angel Satan tested Jesus, Jesus refused to sin and each time quoted from God's Word what was the right thing to do.

Soon Jesus began to teach about the kingdom of heaven. Many people came to hear him. When the people saw that Jesus had the power to heal the sick and raise the dead they brought many sick people to be healed. As Jesus saw their faith he healed them. He also forgave the sin of people and warned them not to sin again. But the religious teachers were displeased because Jesus called God "Father" and also taught that he had come down from heaven and obeyed God in all that he said and did. Many doubters and enemies of Jesus came to test him with difficult and trick questions. Each time Jesus answered them wisely.

One of the friends of Jesus became sick and was dying. His sisters sent for Jesus. But before Jesus arrived the brother died. Jesus told the sisters that her brother would live again, for Jesus himself was the life and the resurrection and all who believed in him would live. Then Jesus raised the dead man back to life. When the religious leaders heard about this they decided that Jesus must die. Jesus had told his followers many times that a time would come when he would be arrested, falsely accused and put to death but he would live again.

At last a time came during the festival that remembered God's salvation during the days of Moses when the people marked their houses with the blood. As Jesus was eating with his disciples he gave them some drink prepared from grapes and told them that represented his blood that was being shed for the sins of many. Later he said that he must go away to his Father's house

to prepare a place for his followers but he would come back to receive them. For he said that he was the way the truth and the life and no one came to the Father in heaven but by him.

That night Jesus was betrayed by one of his followers, arrested and taken before the religious authorities. Many false witnesses came to testify against him but there was no agreement. At last the chief leader asked Jesus: "Are you the Son of God?" When Jesus said that he was, all agreed that Jesus was worthy of death. In the court of the Roman governor the people asked that Jesus be crucified. So he was taken to be terribly beaten, mocked and despised just as the prophets had said. Then Jesus was led out to be crucified by nailing to a wooden cross between two thieves. One of the thieves mocked Jesus but the other asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into his kingdom.

The religious leaders were there mocking Jesus who prayed asking God to forgive them because they did not know what they were doing. Later that terrible day it became very dark and Jesus cried out in a loud voice saying: "My God, my God, why have you turned away from me?" For at this time Jesus the holy sinless One come from God took upon himself the sins of all people who had ever lived and who would live even in the future. He suffered their guilt. Fellowship with his holy Father in heaven was broken because of the sin that Jesus now took upon himself. When the sacrifice was accepted by God, Jesus cried out with aloud voice: "It is finished! Father, into your hands I give my spirit." So Jesus died.

Some of his faithful followers buried Jesus in a rich man's tomb. Jesus' followers went home very sad thinking that he was gone. But Jesus had promised that on the third day he would live again. Very early on the third day a powerful angel came and opened the tomb and Jesus rose to life again. He appeared to his disciples and to some of the women followers. One of the disciples who doubted that it was really Jesus was asked to touch the wounds in the hands and side of Jesus. When he did he cried out: "My God, now I believe!" But Jesus said to him, "You believe because you have seen me. More blessed are those who believe but have never seen me."

Then a time came when Jesus returned to his Father in heaven. He told his followers that they must be his witnesses where they lived, to their neighbors and even to the ends of the earth. Later the followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised would be sent. They preached to the people that they must repent of their sins and believe on Jesus to be saved. For they said, there is salvation in none other than Jesus, and all who call upon his name will be saved.

One day Jesus will return as he promised and the dead will be raised from the grave. Those who do not believe in Jesus will be judged for their sins and eternally punished. Believers whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their reward and everlasting blessing with Jesus.

One of the stories Jesus told was about a son who demanded his share of the inheritance from his father. Then the son went away and wasted the money living a life that dishonored God and his father. At last when his money was gone the son was hungry with no food and forced to live among some pigs, even desiring to eat their food. At last he admitted that he had sinned against both God and his father, so he would return home and ask only to be hired as a servant. But when his father saw the lost son returning he was filled with compassion for his son and welcomed him back and restored him to the family and called for a celebration. Jesus said it was like that in heaven when one sinner repented and returned to the Father.

Another story Jesus told to warn people was about two men. One a rich man lived in great

luxury, satisfied in every way. The other was a poor man who was sick and covered with sores who longed for any scraps of food from the rich man's table. Both men died, the rich man found himself in the flames of torment. The poor man found himself in the arms of Abraham. The rich man cried out for Abraham to send the poor man to put his finger in some water and place it on his tongue, for he was in great torment. The rich man also asked that Abraham send the poor man back to warn his five brothers so they would not come to that terrible place. But Abraham said that his brothers had the words of Moses and the prophets which they should hear and obey. Even if someone went back from the dead to warn the brothers still they would not listen.

God's Word contains the words of Moses and the prophets and Jesus' own testimony about who he was, the One sent from God to teach about the way to heaven, to suffer for our sins and die in our place. It was God's gift to all people who are willing to turn from their sin and believe on Jesus as Savior.

Jesus said to a man named Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God's Word also says: "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—not by your works, it is the gift of God so no one can boast." "God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2Pe 3:9)

Now that you have heard this story, what is your decision?