



# THE STORY

See the Big Picture of the Bible's Story and Message

A Self-study Booklet (Easy-to-Read Version)

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introducing the Story

Books and articles always promise answers to life's problems. They always say that their "recent studies" can show us how to have longer and better lives. This is a bad promise since their answers change every day. Today's research always seems to disagree with yesterday's answers. The Bible is not like this. The Bible has changed people for thousands of years and it has only taught people about one problem and one answer. Death is our problem. Jesus is our answer.

Sadly, many do not find life in God's word because they do not understand the whole message of the Bible. Most people know some history and some details in the Bible, but most people do not truly *know* God, the Bible, or why those details are important. Many people also do not know why we must know the Bible today. They have many important questions. Who is God? Why did God create people? Why does God give us laws? Why should we care about God? How can we start a relationship with God? Our goal is to answer many questions like these by seeing a big picture of the Bible in five lessons.

1. **Sin Separates Us From God and Kills Us** (pg. 3)
2. **The Law of Moses Shows Us Our Sin** (pg. 5)
3. **A New Covenant Promises Hope** (pg. 7)
4. **Jesus Defeats Sin and Death** (pg. 9)
5. **The Spirit Gives Restoration and Life** (pg. 11)

Many people do not think they can understand the Bible, but God speaks so that common people like us can understand him (Ephesians 3:3-5). You can see the history of the Bible in the picture on the front of this booklet. God blessed people and let them live with him *in the garden of Eden*. People did not listen to God, so they lost eternal life and their relationship with God. Most people think they can save themselves by doing good things, but God gave *the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai* to show us that we are all sinful and that we all deserve death. Thankfully, God shows us that he loves us by sending his Son, Jesus, to die *on a cross* so our sins can be forgiven. From start to finish, the Bible shows us how great God is by telling us the story of how God gives weak people like us eternal life and joy with him.

The Bible has 66 books in it. These 66 books were written by forty different authors. These authors lived at different times and places. It took almost 1500 years for these authors to write the Bible. Each book has its own important message; but, when we see these 66 books together, we can see them as part of a one, big story. The story is about a great God who loves his people and judges his enemies. The books of the Bible are united because Yahweh, the LORD God, is the true author of the Bible. The Holy Spirit put God's words in the minds of human writers ("inspiration"). These writers wrote exactly what the Holy Spirit said to them (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Very careful writers ("scribes") made thousands of copies of the Bible books. We have thousands of these copies today ("manuscripts"). People make mistakes, so there are some small differences between these copies (i.e., spelling mistakes, minor differences in the order of words, etc.). Our Bibles today are translated from the original languages. Large groups of experts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek very carefully translate the Bible into English and many other languages. There are so many copies of the books of the Bible that the translators are able to see where the mistakes are. This is important because we need to be able to trust that the Bible is reliable. The Bible truly is God's word and it gives us victory over sin - the only problem that is important.

## #1: Sin Separates Us From God and Kills Us (Genesis 3)

**Genesis 1:1** says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Many people want to know why God's creation is so beautiful. **Psalms 19:1-4** says creation tells us about the glory of God everywhere on the earth. Every big star, beautiful sunrise, and small particle was created to show God's greatness. After God created the heavens, earth, plants, sun, moon, stars, and animals, **Genesis 1:26-28** says God made men and women in his own image and told them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. We could also ask why God created mankind in his image. **Isaiah 43:7** says God created people for his glory. Just like a picture of a bird looks like a bird, we were created to be a picture of who God is. People exist to fill the world with living "pictures" of God's purity so God is praised.

Our study begins with the first man, Adam. God created a garden in Eden and put Adam there to work in it. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone," so God made an equal helper for Adam, Woman. She became his wife and Adam named her "Eve." Since Adam and Eve were pure like children, they were not ashamed to be naked. God and the tree of life were in Eden, so it was perfect. **Genesis 2:16-17** says God told Adam and Eve to stay away from one thing. They could eat fruit from every tree, but they must not eat fruit from the tree that gives knowledge of good and evil. God said they would die the day they ate from this tree. **1 John 3:4** says "sin" is disobeying God's law. **Genesis 3:1-6** tells us how God's enemy, Satan, came as a snake to trick Eve into breaking God's law. Let's notice what happens so we know how Satan tries to trick us today.

### Sin Is Tempting (Genesis 3:1-6)

*Revelation 12:9 says that this snake is Satan. Satan is the one who tricks everyone. Since this is first time Satan tricked a human, we should notice how he works. Notice three ways Satan tricked Eve.*

1. What does Satan say to trick Eve in **verse 1**? How does Satan do the same thing against us today?
2. How does Satan trick Eve in **verse 4**? How does Satan use the same tricks against us today?
3. How does Satan continue tricking Eve in **verse 5**? How does Satan use the same trickery today?

### Sin Is Shaming (Genesis 3:7-13)

*This is the pain of spiritual death. Satan's promises were lies. Sin always looks good on the outside, but sin always leaves us empty in real life. Notice two ways Adam and Eve showed shame after sin.*

4. How do Adam and Eve show their shame in **verses 7-10**? How do we do this today?
5. How do Adam and Eve show their shame in **verses 11-13**? How do we do the same thing today?

## **Sin Is Painful (Genesis 3:16-24)**

*The results of sin are painful. Because God gives men and women different roles and places to work, the results of their sins are also different.*

6. Notice **verse 16**. What results does sin bring for the woman? How do these results continue today?

7. Notice **verses 17-19**. What results does sin bring for the man? How do these results continue today?

8. What happens to Adam and Eve in **verses 22-24**? Why is this so bad?

Sin became worse outside of Eden. Pain and death grew. **Genesis 6:5-7** says people only thought about evil things. People were violent. This made God sad. God wished he did not create people, so he decided kill them in a flood. Noah was the only one who obeyed God, so God was kind to him. God saved on Noah's family of eight and many animals in a big boat. Everyone else died. Sadly, Noah's children still disobeyed God after the flood. People made a group to build a tower to honor their own name. They did not want to make a group to honor God's name, so God confused their languages. People spread across the world. People disobeyed God and fought against each other. The Bible shows how good God is because God had an answer. God had a plan to let his chosen people live in peace with him and with each another. God wanted his people to have the tree of life and to live with him forever. God gave hope when he cursed Satan (the snake) in **Genesis 3:14-15**.

## **Hope for the Woman's Offspring (Genesis 3:14-15, 12:1-3)**

*Genesis 3:15 (NET), "And I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; her offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her offspring's heel."*

9. What bad results does Satan (the snake) have for tricking Eve in **verses 14-15**? How does **verse 15** give us (the children of the woman) hope today?

10. Read **Genesis 12:1-3**. Abram's name is later changed to Abraham. Though Abraham's wife could not have kids, what promises does God make to Abraham? How do these promises give us hope today?

*In the next lesson we will turn to Exodus 20 to see how God made Abraham's children into a great nation and gave them a great Law. We will learn about the purpose of the law God gave them.*

## #2: The Law of Moses Shows Us Our Sin (Exodus 20, etc.)

God created people so they could be pure like God, live with God, and honor God. Sadly, Satan tricked people into disobeying God and living selfishly. Because people acted shamefully, they lost eternal life and their relationship with God. But God promised to bless the whole world through Abraham. God also promised to make Abraham's family into a great nation and give them the land of Canaan. Abraham had no children or land, but he learned to trust and obey God. Abraham was not perfect, but God forgave Abraham since he trusted in God in **Genesis 15:6**. God was faithful to Abraham. God give Abraham children and he made Abraham's children a great nation of 2-3 million people in 400 years. These children of Abraham were called "Israelites." When the Egyptians forced the Israelites to become slaves, God sent ten plagues against Egypt through Moses and freed Israel from slavery.

Before God took Israel into Canaan, he made an agreement (i.e., "covenant") with them at Mt. Sinai. Notice what God's goal was in **Exodus 19:4-6**. *"4 You people saw what I did to the people of Egypt. You saw that I carried you out of Egypt like an eagle and brought you here to me. 5 So now I tell you to obey my commands and keep my agreement. So if you do this, you will be my own special people. The whole world belongs to me, but I am choosing you to be my own special people. 6 You will be a special nation—a kingdom of priests."* God freed Israel from slavery to show how he loved them. God wanted Israel to be his special people. But the Israelites had to follow God's agreement. This agreement is also called the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses (cf. Exodus 34:28; Joshua 8:31). If Israel obeyed God, they would be priests. Priests show others how to be pure and have a relationship with God. In this lesson, we want to learn what the Law shows us. Let's read the first four commands in the Law in **Exodus 20:1-11**.

### The Law of Moses is Given (Exodus 20:1-17)

1. Read **Exodus 20:1-11**. Which relationship do these first four commandments focus on? How would you summarize these first four commands (see Matthew 22:36-38)?

2. Read **Exodus 20:12-17**. Which relationships do these final six commands focus on? Which commands stand out to you? How would you summarize these last six commands (see Matthew 22:39-40)?

If the Law is really teaching us how to love God and love people, we must obey the Law on the inside and outside. God is not okay with us trusting money even if we do not bow to it. God is not okay with lust as long as we do not commit adultery. True obedience happens in our hearts and our actions.

### The Law of Moses Is Broken (Daniel 9:11, etc.)

3. **Daniel 9:11**, *"All the people of Israel disobeyed your teachings and turned away from you. They did not listen to you. We sinned, so you did what you promised to do. All the curses and promises in the Law of Moses, your servant, happened to us."* What does Daniel say about how Israel lived?

**4. James 2:10–11**, <sup>10</sup> *You might follow all of God’s law. But if you fail to obey only one command, you are guilty of breaking all the commands in that law.* <sup>11</sup> *God said, “Don’t commit adultery.” The same God also said, “Don’t kill.” So if you don’t commit adultery, but you kill someone, you are guilty of breaking all of God’s law.”* What does James say? Why do we fail to keep the Law?

**5. Deuteronomy 6:25**, *“If we carefully obey the whole law, exactly as the Lord our God told us to, he will say that we have done a very good thing.”* **Deuteronomy 27:26**, *“Cursed is the one who does not support this law and agree to obey it.”* What warning did Moses give about the Law?

**6. Romans 3:9–12**, <sup>9</sup> *“So are we Jews better than other people? No, we have already said that those who are Jews, as well as those who are not Jews, are the same. They are all guilty of sin.* <sup>10</sup> *As the Scriptures say, ‘There is no one doing what is right, not even one.* <sup>11</sup> *There is no one who understands. There is no one who is trying to be with God.* <sup>12</sup> *They have all turned away from him, and now they are of no use to anyone. There is no one who does good, not even one.”* **Romans 3:23**, *“All have sinned and are not good enough to share God’s divine greatness.”* According to these passages, who is righteous?

**7. Romans 6:23**, *“When people sin, they earn what sin pays—death.”* What does sin pay us? What does this mean? What did God tell Adam that sounds like this?

God told Israel to give animal sacrifices so their sins could be forgiven. But **Hebrews 10:1–4** says the blood of animals cannot take away sin forever. God promised to bless the world through Abraham, but Abraham’s children were punished! Fortunately, God knew the Law would not save us. God even promised a new prophet and new agreement in the Law (cf. **Deuteronomy 18:15–19** and **30:1-10**). God knew the Law of Moses was temporary. But if God planned to give his people a new prophet, law, and covenant, why did God give the Law of Moses? This question is answered in **Galatians 3** and **Romans 3**.

### **The Law of Moses Shows Us Sin (Galatians 3:19, 22; Romans 3:19-20)**

**8. Galatians 3:19, 22**, *“So what was the law for? The law was given to show the wrong things people do. The law would continue until the special Descendant of Abraham came... The Scriptures put the whole world in prison under the control of sin, so that the only way for people to get what God promised would be through faith in Jesus Christ. It is given to those who believe in him.”* Why does Paul say the Law was given? What does Paul say the Scripture did?

**9. Romans 3:19–20**, <sup>19</sup> *“What the law says is for those who are under the law. It stops anyone from making excuses. And it brings the whole world under God’s judgment,* <sup>20</sup> *because no one can be made right with God by following the law. The law only shows us our sin.”* What does Paul say the law does? What does the law not do?

*We often think we are good people, so we do not think we deserve death and separation from God. The Law shows us our sin so we will stop trusting ourselves and start trusting Jesus for salvation. In the next lesson we will study prophecies of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 and Isaiah 53.*

## #3: A New Covenant Promises Hope (Jeremiah 31, etc.)

Sin separated God and his people, but God promised to bless the world through Abraham. God tried to live with and bless Abraham's children, the Israelites, but the Law of Moses proved that Israel was guilty of sin. God allowed animals to be sacrificed to take away Israel's sins, but the animal sacrifices could not remove sin permanently. Israel had to repeat these animal sacrifices constantly. This constantly reminded Israel of their sin and did not give them very much confidence before God. We are like Israel. The Law tells us that we all have disobeyed God. The Law tells us that we all deserve to die and be separated from God. It is very important for the Law to tell us this. We normally do not care about an "answer" or "hope" if we do not know that we have a problem. Therefore, it is good for us to lose confidence in ourselves and to become afraid when we see our sins. When we understand our problem of sin, this helps us appreciate the hope God promises.

But how could God be faithful to his promises to Abraham when people are so sinful? How could God give any hope to the world? The writings of the prophets tell us about this hope. The prophets taught against Israel and Judah before, during, and after God's punishments against them. God not only used the prophets to tell Israel and Judah of their sins, God also used the prophets to tell Israel and Judah about a future day of salvation. The prophets speak of how God would one day return to save Israel, Judah, and the world. **Jeremiah 31:31-34** is a good place to start because he writes about the hope God promises in a new agreement ("covenant"). Jeremiah wrote about 600 years before God began fulfilling this promise.

### The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

1. Notice **verses 33-34**. What is the first way this new agreement would be different? Consider the contrast in **Zechariah 7:12**, *"They were very stubborn and would not obey the law..."*

2. Notice the second half of **verse 34**. What is the second way this agreement would be different? How could people with hard hearts know God and accept his law in their hearts?

How can a good and holy God permanently forgive the many shameful things we have done? Let's study an important prophecy of God's future salvation through a special servant in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. Isaiah spoke and wrote about these things around 700 BC or earlier.

### The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

3. Notice **Isaiah 52:12-15**. How is God's chosen servant is described in these verses? Who will he sprinkle (this is a picture of cleansing)? Who will see and understand what they did not know before?

4. Read **Isaiah 53:1-6**. How is God's chosen servant is described in these verses? What would people believe caused his suffering? What was the real purpose of his suffering?

5. Read **Isaiah 53:7-12**. How is God's chosen servant is described in these verses? How would he act when people tried to kill him? Though he would be innocent, who wanted this to happen?

6. Despite the death of this servant (53:12), where do you see references to his resurrection in **Isaiah 53:10-12**?

7. Who is this suffering servant?

This prophesy gives powerful evidence to show the Bible is inspired by God. There are existing copies of Isaiah from the 2nd to 4th centuries BC. This is a long time before Jesus lived or died. Yet, this text speaks in great detail of Jesus' life and death. Jesus' resurrection is even referred to. Verse 10 is a good example of this "Even after giving himself as an offering for sin, he will see his descendants and enjoy a long life." Other prophecies also say Jesus would have God's Spirit on him (Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, 48:16, 59:21, 61:1). Let's read one of the prophecies about God's promise to pour out his Spirit and live with his people again. Notice **Isaiah 32:9-18**.

### **My Spirit in You (Ezekiel 36:25-27)**

8. What did God promise he would do to his people in the future in **Ezekiel 36:25-27**?

*It is prophesied in Joel 2:28-32 that Israel could know that the Spirit had been given when God gave miraculous signs to common people. We will look at this prophecy more closely in lesson 5, but in the next lesson we will turn to the Gospel of Matthew to read in more detail about Jesus. Jesus is the one whom the whole world can come to in order to receive salvation.*

## #4: Jesus Defeats Sin and Death (Matthew 1, 4, 9, 27-28)

Israel and Judah were not faithful to their agreement with God, so God left them. But God promised to make a new, different agreement with his people in the future. Though his people were sinful, God promised to forgive their sins and to write his law on their hearts. **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** prophesied that this forgiveness would come through the death of God's chosen servant. In this lesson we will read from Matthew. Matthew records the good news of Jesus Christ - God's chosen servant to bring salvation to all nations. Notice **Matthew 1:17-25**.

### Jesus Is the Son of God (Matthew 1:17-25)

1. What does this text teach us about Jesus' birth and where Jesus is from?
2. Think about what we have studied. Why is it important that Jesus is from the Holy Spirit?
3. Think about what we have studied. What is important about the name "Immanuel?"

### Jesus Is Perfect against Temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)

4. What do you learn about this Jesus from this passage regarding his fight against sin?
5. How is Jesus' battle against Satan different from Adam and Eve's battle in the Garden of Eden? How does Jesus' fight against Satan compare with Israel's fight for 40 years in the wilderness?
6. How was Jesus able to defeat Satan's trickery? How can this help us defeat Satan and his tricks?

### Jesus Shows Mercy to Sinners (Matthew 9:9-13)

7. Who is unhappy with Jesus? Why? How does Jesus respond to them?
8. Why is Jesus' goal to call sinners and not the righteous important for us to understand today?

The Jewish religious leaders were afraid that Jesus would cause them to lose their influence, so they did not believe in Jesus and began looking for the right time to kill Jesus (John 11:45-57). Jesus told his followers that he would be killed. Jesus also told his followers that he would rise from the dead after three days, but they did not understand. Jesus was betrayed by Judas (an apostle), arrested by the Jews, left alone by his followers, wrongly accused by the Jews, and sent to the governor to for questioning.

## **Jesus Is Crucified to Defeat Sin (Matthew 27:11-56)**

**9.** Write your notes on **Matthew 27:11-56** in the space provided.

**10.** Considering what we have learned in our studies so far, why did Jesus need to die?

**11.** How does Jesus' willingness to become a sacrifice for our sins impact you?

## **Jesus Rose to Defeat Death (Matthew 27:57-28:15)**

**12.** Write your notes on **Matthew 27:57-28:15** in the space provided.

**13.** Why did Jesus need to raise from the dead? What does Jesus' resurrection mean for us?

**14.** How did the Jews try to hide Jesus' resurrection? Nearly all the apostles were later killed because they boldly spoke of Jesus' resurrection. Is the Jews' story logical? Why or why not?

## **Jesus Tells Disciples to Make Disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)**

**15.** What did Jesus command his disciples to do in **Matthew 28:16-20**?

*Jesus died to take away our sins. Jesus defeated death so we can be resurrected on the final day. We can be saved from sin and become Jesus' followers if we will leave our sins, trust Jesus as the Son of God, be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and obey Jesus' commands. But the story is not over. God had promised to pour out his Spirit so God could live with his people and give them life again. John the Baptizer talked about this restoration and judgment when he said Jesus would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). In the next lesson we will read Acts 2 to see God offer salvation and begin fulfilling the prophecies about the Spirit and about God's fiery judgment.*

## #5: The Spirit Brings Restoration and Life (Acts 2, etc.)

God cannot be near us and bless us when we sin. Animal sacrifices cannot permanently remove our sins, so the Son of God became a man and died on a cross. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we can be permanently cleansed of our sins and have a restored relationship with God. Jesus is the Messiah - God's chosen servant that the prophets said would suffer, die, and raise to reign as Lord. But the Jews did a bad thing when they killed the Son of God. How could the Jews be forgiven? How can we be forgiven of our sins? The apostle Peter answered this question in **Acts 2** when God poured out his Spirit on the day of Pentecost - fifty days after Jesus died.

### The Apostles Speak in Different Languages (Acts 2:1-13)

1. What did the apostles do when they were filled with the Holy Spirit?
2. How did the crowd respond when they heard the apostles miraculously speaking their languages?

### Languages are a Sign about the Spirit and Judgment (Acts 2:14-21)

3. Who prophesied that miracles like this would happen?
4. Considering **Joel 2:28-32**, what two important events does this miracle signify?

Judgment was coming upon the Jews for killing the Son of God, but everyone who trusted in the Lord could be saved (verse 21). A new agreement, law, temple, priest, and sacrifice would replace the old agreement, law, temple, priests, and sacrifices. Peter will now continue by claiming that Jesus is David's descendant whom God raised from the dead to reign as Lord and Messiah at God's right hand. But how could Peter prove this?

### Jesus Is Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:22-36)

5. Consider Scriptures below. What evidences does Peter give to support his claim that Jesus is the Messiah and is now reigning as Lord at God's right hand in heaven?

a) **Acts 2:22** —

b) **Acts 2:25-31** —

c) **Acts 2:32** —

d) **Acts 2:33** —

Peter's defense is strong. He is essentially saying, "You saw the miracles, you read the prophecies, we are witnesses, and you can hear us speak different languages through the Spirit: Jesus rose from the dead - he is Lord and Messiah and he is sitting at the LORD's right hand (34-36)." John the Baptizer said Jesus would baptize with the Spirit and with fire. Jerusalem would be destroyed because they murdered God's prophets and God's Son (fire), but restoration and life was being offered (Spirit). How would these Jews respond?

## What Shall We Do? (Acts 2:37-41)

6. What did Peter tell the crowd to do when they realized that they sinned?

7. In what ways do we need to change our minds and and change our lives?

8. What does it mean to be baptized? What two blessings do we receive when we are baptized?

An important promised blessing of the new covenant is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God promised his Spirit would live with his people to give them life (Ezekiel 36:26-27, 37:1-14). We can now receive the promised Spirit. We do not feel the Spirit *physically*. God gives the Spirit to believers when they are baptized so that **spiritual** life and change result inside us (John 7:37-39). Christians must be different from people in the world since the Spirit builds us as a place for God to live (Ezekiel 37:26-28; 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1; Ephesians 2:22).

9. How did the crowd respond in **Acts 2:41** when they received Peter's message?

## The Fellowship of Believers (Acts 2:42-47)

10. Read **Acts 2:42-47**. What were these Christians devoted to and how are they examples to us?

Many Jews in Jerusalem persecuted the Christians, but the Christians scattered everywhere and preached about Jesus (Acts 8:1-4). Even the Gentiles (non-Jews) began repenting. In **Acts 10:44-48**, the Holy Spirit gave a group of believing Gentiles the miracle of speaking different languages. This was a sign that God gives the same life to Jews and Gentiles. All Christ-followers are part of the same family (Ephesians 1:9-10, 2:11-3:13).

## The Judgment (Revelation 20:11-21:8)

12. What does **Revelation 20:11-21:8** say will happen one day? How should this change our lives today?

*God gave us everything, but we have all disobeyed and dishonored him. We deserve death and separation from God, but God sacrificed his Son to free us from sin so we can be with our Father again. Jesus our King has defeated death. He invites everyone to enjoy eternal life with him. When we turn from sin, trust Jesus as the Son of God who rose from the dead, and are baptized, our sins will be forgiven and we will be given the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we use Jesus as our example, we will be changed to be pictures of God's purity again. Through the Spirit, Christians become temples for God. We must shine like lights in darkness. Let Jesus save you. Tell others. Give God the glory.*

## Appendix

### Jesus Is the Only Way

**John 3:18, 36** say that we are condemned and God's anger is still on us, unless we believe in the Son.

**John 14:6** say that Jesus is the Way and people can only have a relationship with the Father through Jesus.

**Acts 4:8-12** says that we can only find salvation through Jesus.

**1 Timothy 2:5** says there is one God and there is only one mediator between God and man - Jesus.

### Baptism

**1 Peter 3:21** teaches us that baptism saves us and is how we ask God for a clean conscience.

**Matthew 28:18-20** shows us how Jesus told his followers to make followers through baptism and teaching.

**Acts 19:1-6** shows us that people can be baptized again through the example of the Ephesian followers.

**Acts 22:6-16** shows us that baptism truly washes away our sins through Paul's example.

**Colossians 2:11-13** says that baptism is how we put faith in God's work, not our works.

**Romans 6:1-8** says our old, sinful body is buried when we are baptized into Christ's death.

### Evidences for Jesus' Resurrection

**Jesus' Brothers.** John clearly says in **John 7:5** that Jesus' brothers did not believe in him before he died. However, Luke's account in **Acts 1:14** shows that this changed after Jesus' resurrection. After this, Jesus' brothers, James and Jude, both wrote inspired letters in our Bibles today. James even became a leader in the church at Jerusalem. Why did they change and believe in Jesus? **1 Corinthians 15:7** says Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection. The resurrection is the great proof that Jesus truly is from God.

**Paul's Changed Life.** Even history experts who do not believe in Jesus say that Paul was a real person who wrote many of the letters in the New Testament. Paul was trained as a boy in the Law of Moses, he became a Pharisee (Jewish leader), and he imprisoned and killed Christians (Acts 8:1-3, 22:3-5; Philippians 3:4-6). Yet, Luke records the thing that changed Paul's life in Acts: Jesus came to Paul on the road to Damascus. After this, Paul stopped persecuting Christians and started making Christians. Paul left his old life and goals. As Paul says in **Philippians 3:7**, *"At one time all these things were important to me. But because of Christ, I decided that they are worth nothing."* If Jesus did not appear to Paul, why did Paul's life change so much?

**The Empty Tomb.** The news of Jesus' resurrection began in Jerusalem and spread from Jerusalem. Many enemies in Jerusalem did not believe in Jesus and did not want this news to spread. They even put followers in prison and killed them. But if Jesus did not rise from death, why didn't these enemies in Jerusalem show everyone Jesus' body? If people saw Jesus' dead body, they would not believe. If Jesus' body was in the tomb, the news of Jesus would not have spread anywhere. The gospel spread because the tomb was empty.

**Motivations of the Apostles.** Many people today still claim that the apostles stole Jesus' body and lied about his resurrection. This would only be logical **if** Jesus' disciples gained something by lying. Muhammad's followers gained riches and power, but Jesus' apostles were killed for telling people about Jesus' resurrection. If the apostles were lying, they would have stopped when people tried to kill them. But they could not stop. As Peter said, *"We cannot be quiet. We must tell people about what we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:20).

**Resurrection or Apparition?** Some will admit that the apostles thought they saw Jesus after his resurrection, but they actually saw a ghost. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, this claim would explain how the apostles were ready to die teaching about Jesus' resurrection. But this argument fails because it relies on many people being able to see the same fake ghost. After his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to small and large groups. Two people can't see the same fake ghost at the same time. This is also true for five hundred people. Either way, if we claim the apostles saw a ghost, we still have to answer the question, *"Where is the body?"*