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# THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The first book of the Bible is called *Genesis*, which means “the Beginnings.” It contains stories that people told for centuries before anyone wrote them down. The stories in the first eleven chapters are about prehistoric times. (See glossary, p. 318, ff.) They don’t contain science or history. Instead, they tell us basic truths about God and people.

*Genesis* belongs to the *Pentateuch*. “Pentateuch” means “five books.” The books of the Pentateuch are the first five books of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles or Scriptures. Jewish people call the Pentateuch “the *Torah*,” the Law.

*Genesis* begins with a story of the creation of the world and everything in it, including human beings. Through this story of creation, God through the human writer tells us that God loves and cares for us members of the human race in a special way.

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## Genesis 1

**I**n the beginning God created heaven and earth. The earth was wasteland, and the deep waters were covered by darkness. But the spirit of God was soaring above the waters. God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. God saw that the light was good. Then God separated the light from the darkness. He called the light “day,” and he called the darkness “night.” Evening came and then morning. It was the first day.

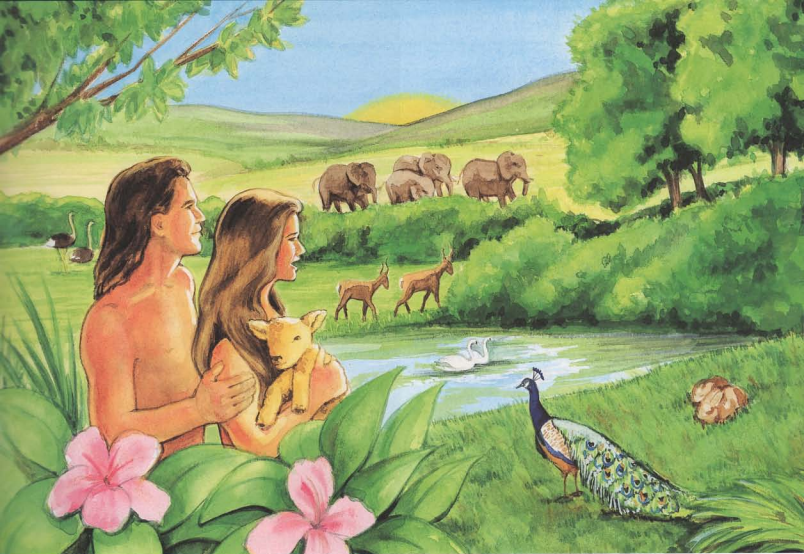
God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from each other.” So God made the dome to divide the waters under the dome from the waters above it. And God called the dome “sky.” Evening came and then morning. It was the second day.

God said, “Let the waters under the sky come together in one place and let dry land show.” And that was what happened. God called the dry land “earth,”

and he called the gathered waters “the sea.” God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth produce grass and plants that make seeds—trees that produce their own kinds of fruit with seeds inside.” And that was what happened. God saw that it was good. Evening came and then morning. It was the third day.

God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate day from night, to mark the times for celebrations, to separate the days and years, and to shed light on the earth.” And that was what happened, God made the two great lights—the stronger light to rule over the day, and the weaker light to rule over the night—and the stars. God saw that it was good. Evening came and then morning. It was the fourth day.

God said, “Let the waters be filled with groups of living things, and let birds fly above the earth against the dome of the sky.” So God created huge sea-monsters



and different kinds of living things with which the waters are filled, as well as different kinds of flying birds. God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, so as to fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply.” Evening came and then morning. It was the fifth day.

God said, “Let the earth produce different kinds of living things—cattle, reptiles and wild animals.” And that was what happened. God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, resembling us, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the cattle, and all the earth.”

So God created human beings in the image of himself. He created them as male and female. Then God blessed them. He said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, so as to fill the earth and take care of it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky and everything alive that crawls on the ground.” God also said, “Look, I am giving you every seed-producing plant on the whole earth, and every tree on which there is seed-producing fruit. You will have these for food.” And that was what happened.

Then God looked at everything he had made, and it was very good. Evening came and then morning. It was the sixth day.



# THE BOOK OF EXODUS

*Exodus* (which means “going out”) is the name of the second book of the part of the Bible called the Pentateuch. The Book of Exodus tells about the most important events in the history of Abraham’s descendants: God’s rescue of these people (the Israelites) from slavery in Egypt and the covenant (agreement), which God made with Abraham’s descendants at Mount Sinai. The covenant was very important for the Israelites and for us.

*Exodus* and the last three books of the Pentateuch also contain laws given by God—some for people of all times and others for the people of Israel at certain points in their history. This is why the Hebrew name for the Pentateuch is the *Tōrah*, which means “the Law.”

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## Exodus 1

**H**ere is the list of the sons of Israel who, with their families, went to Egypt with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. Joseph was in Egypt already.

*Each of Joseph’s brothers became the ancestor of a large group, or tribe, named after him. Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, also became the ancestors of tribes. Together, these tribes made up the people of Israel. They were also called the Israelites.*

## Slavery in Egypt

Joseph, as well as all his brothers, had died. But the Israelites had such large families and grew so powerful that the land was full of them.

A new king came to power in Egypt. Knowing nothing about Joseph, he said to his own people, “As you see, the Israelites are more numerous and powerful than we are. Let us find a way to handle this situation. Otherwise, they may keep

increasing and, if a war breaks out, they may fight on the side of our enemies.”

So, to make life hard for the Israelites, they forced them to work building the cities of Pithon and Rameses in honor of Pharaoh. But the Israelites kept growing in numbers as much as Egypt made life hard for them, so the Egyptians continued to worry. Then, they completely made slaves out of the Israelites. They gave them a bitter life with mortar and bricks, and with all kinds of farm work.

## Moses

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### Exodus 2

Pharaoh was afraid that in a few years there might be so many Israelites in Egypt that they could start a revolution. So he ordered that all Hebrew baby boys be drowned in the Nile River.

A son was born to a family of the tribe of Levi. To save him from being killed, his mother hid him for three months.

When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus-reed basket and plastered it with pitch. She put the child in it and set it

among the tall grasses at the edge of the Nile. The baby's sister stood a little ways off to learn what the people would do with him.

Now, Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile for a swim, while her maid-servants walked along the river bank. She saw the basket in the midst of the grasses and sent a handmaid to fetch it. As she opened it, she saw the baby boy, crying. Pharaoh's daughter was moved to pity for him and said, "This must be one of the children of the Hebrews."

The baby's sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Should I go and call someone from among the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

"Please," Pharaoh's daughter answered her.

So the girl went and called the child's mother, to whom Pharaoh's daughter said, "Take this child away and nurse it for me. I myself will pay you."

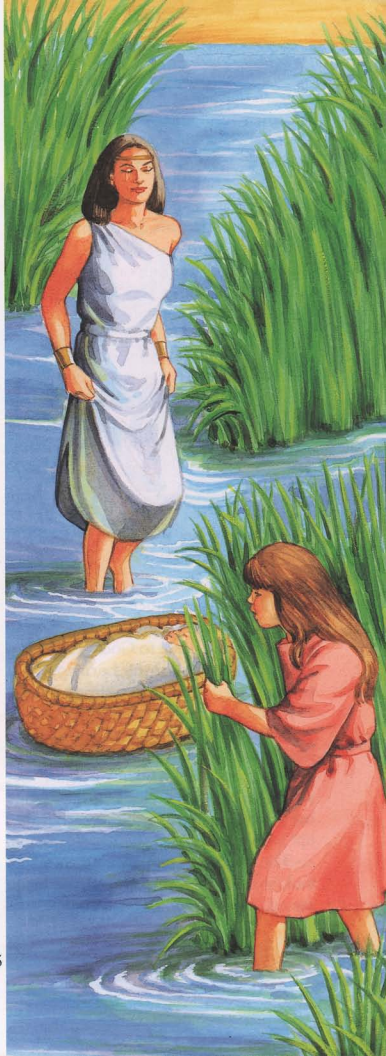
The woman took the child and nursed him. The child grew. And when she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, he became her son. She named him Moses.

After Moses grew up, he went out to visit his brother Israelites and saw their life as slaves. An Egyptian was beating one of the Israelites. Moses looked all around, and, not seeing anybody, he struck down the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

When Moses went out the next day, two Hebrew men were fighting.

To one he said, "Why are you striking your companion?"

But the man answered back, "Who has set you up as judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?"



bearer, "Come up, follow me. The Lord has given them into the hands of Israel." Then Jonathan climbed up on all fours, followed by his armor-bearer. He lunged into their midst, knocking the Philistines to the ground, while his armor-bearer followed, killing the fallen.

Terror fell on the Philistine camp. Saul's lookouts saw the camp in a tumult, with men rushing here and there.

Saul gathered all the troops under his command, and they marched into battle. Seeing this, some Hebrews who had joined the Philistines decided to side with Saul and Jonathan. And the Israelites hiding in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing and joined in their pursuit. That day the Lord gave Israel a victory.

## The Lord Chooses David

1 Samuel 15–16

Saul disobeyed the Lord a second time. After that, Samuel told him that the Lord had rejected him and had chosen someone else to be king.

The Lord said to Samuel, "Fill your flask with oil. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

Samuel did what the Lord had commanded. When he arrived in Bethlehem, he invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice.

When he saw Eliab, he thought, "Definitely, here in the Lord's presence is his anointed one!" But the Lord said to Samuel, "Pay no attention to his looks and his height, for I have rejected him. A hu-

man being chooses according to a person's appearance, but the Lord chooses according to a person's heart."

Jesse brought seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "None of these has been chosen by the Lord." So Samuel asked Jesse, "Haven't you any more sons?"

Jesse answered, "There is still the youngest, but he's tending the flock."

Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him." Jesse sent word and had him come. He was good looking, with a ruddy complexion and bright eyes. Then the Lord said, "Anoint him. This is the one." Samuel took the jar of oil and anointed him among his brothers. From that day on, the spirit of the Lord was a strong force in David's life.

## David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17

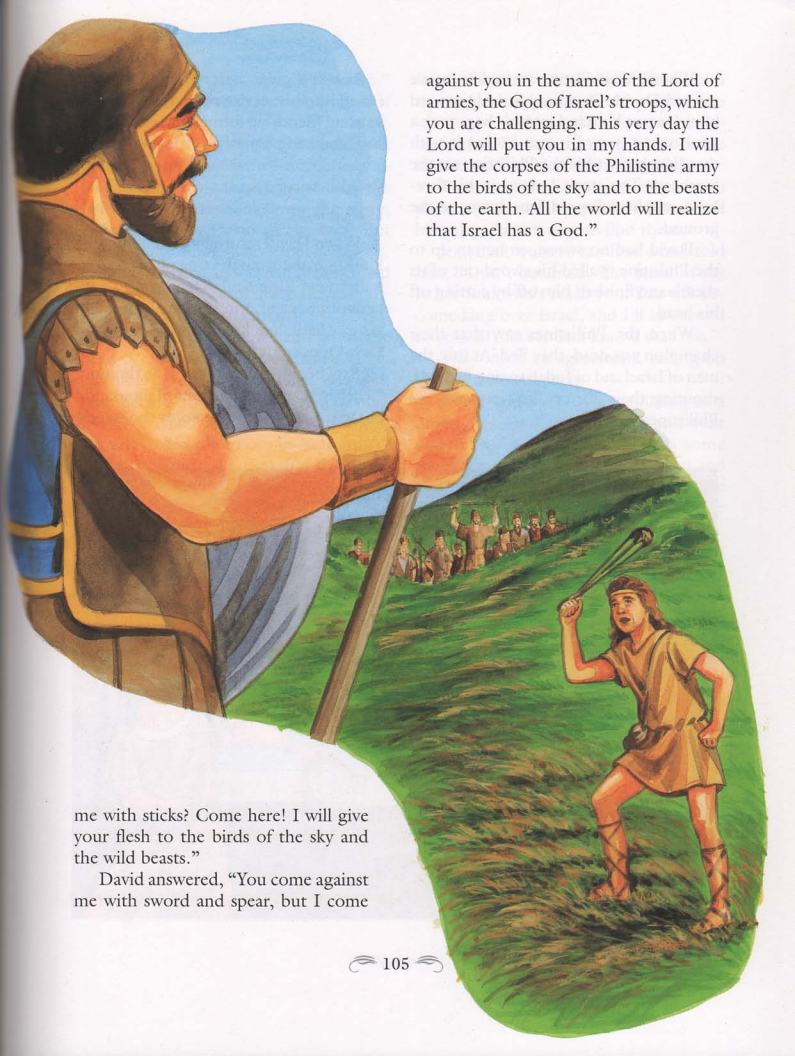
David had been anointed, but Saul didn't know it, nor did he want to think of anyone else becoming king in his place.

The spirit of the Lord had left Saul and an evil spirit had overcome him. So Saul's officials suggested finding someone to play the harp to calm the king whenever he felt disturbed.

One of the servants said, "I have seen a son of Jesse from Bethlehem who can play. He's also a brave fighter. He speaks pleasantly and is handsome. The Lord is with him."

Saul sent messengers to Jesse with these orders: "Send me your son David." So David came to Saul and became his servant. Saul liked David very much.



A large illustration on the left shows Goliath in profile, wearing a brown helmet and armor, holding a spear. On the right, a smaller illustration shows David in a yellow tunic and sandals, holding a slingshot. In the background, a group of soldiers is visible on a green hill under a blue sky.

against you in the name of the Lord of armies, the God of Israel's troops, which you are challenging. This very day the Lord will put you in my hands. I will give the corpses of the Philistine army to the birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth. All the world will realize that Israel has a God."

me with sticks? Come here! I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts."

David answered, "You come against me with sword and spear, but I come



# THE GOSPEL AS TOLD BY MATTHEW

“Gospel” means “Good News,” and the Good News is Jesus. The four Gospels are very important, because they tell us what God has done in and through his Son, Jesus, the heart and center of what we believe and how we live as Catholics and Christians.

Each of the Gospels tells us truths about who Jesus is and what he did and taught. The Gospels were written several years after Jesus’ resurrection (from about thirty to sixty years, with *Mark* probably first and *John* last). Before the material in the Gospels was collected, the events, stories and teachings were told over and over again by the members of the early Church when they gathered to talk, pray or celebrate the Eucharist.

Some of the stories about Jesus and teachings by him are repeated in the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark and Luke. These three Gospels are called *synoptics*. This word comes from the Greek language and means “at a glance.” When a person glances at the synoptic Gospels, all three look very much alike, because many stories and teachings are almost the same in each one. But there are also differences between the synoptics, and these differences are important. The differences help us learn more about the writers and the life of the early Church. Also, some sections of *Matthew* are not found in *Mark* and *Luke*. The same is true for *Luke* and to some extent even for *Mark*, the shortest. So to really learn about Jesus, it’s important to get to know each of the Gospels well.

The first synoptic Gospel is *Matthew*. It is named after an apostle, but Matthew may not have been involved in any stage of its writing. The final editor is unknown.

*The Gospel As Told by Matthew shows connections between Jesus and the Old Testament. It begins with a list of Jesus’ ancestors, including David, through his legal father, Joseph. This information was important for Jews who were becoming Christians. They could see Jesus as David’s descendant, the Messiah.*

## The Birth of Jesus

### Matthew 1

**T**his is the way Jesus Christ was born. When his mother Mary had been promised to Joseph, but before they began to live

together, she was found to be carrying a child through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph, her husband, since he did not want to shame Mary in public, decided to divorce her secretly.

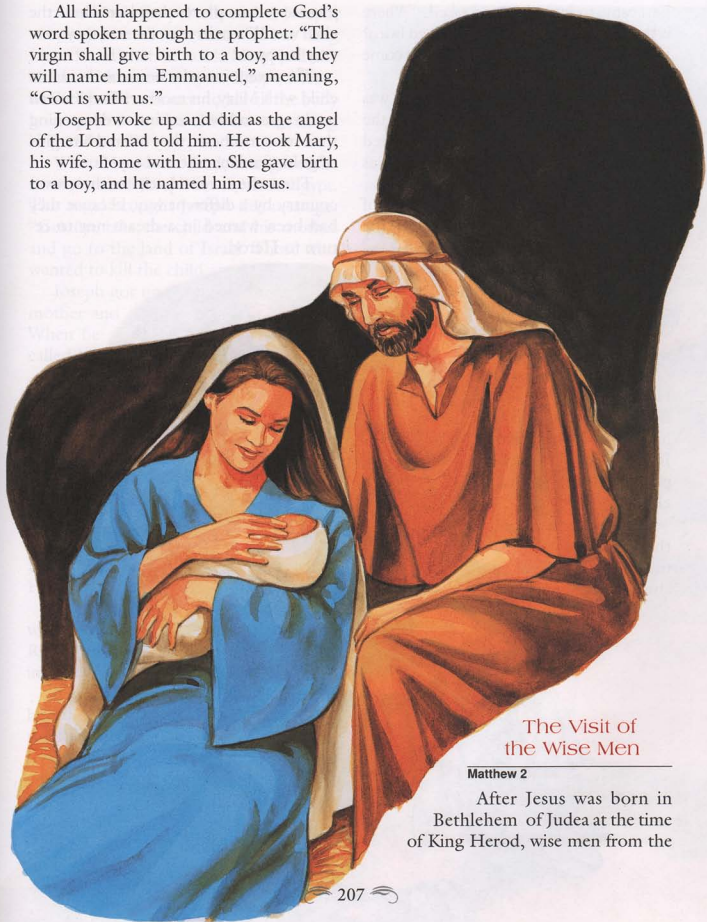
Then an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take your wife, Mary, home with you. The child within her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a boy, and you must name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”\*

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\* “Jesus” means “God saves.”

All this happened to complete God's word spoken through the prophet: "The virgin shall give birth to a boy, and they will name him Emmanuel," meaning, "God is with us."

Joseph woke up and did as the angel of the Lord had told him. He took Mary, his wife, home with him. She gave birth to a boy, and he named him Jesus.



### The Visit of the Wise Men

#### Matthew 2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea at the time of King Herod, wise men from the

was. He held her hand and said to her, "Little girl, I tell you to get up." She stood up, and everybody was astonished. Then he ordered them not to let anyone know about this. He also told them to give her something to eat.

## Jesus Travels through Galilee

### Mark 6

*Mark is the Gospel that tells us what Jesus' relatives and neighbors thought about his teachings and miracles. His "brothers" (cousins) didn't believe that Jesus had a special mission. At one point they had even taken Mary with them to try to get Jesus to leave Capernaum and go back to Nazareth. When Jesus did go back to Nazareth and spoke in the synagogue, the people of his village did not accept him as someone speaking for God.*

Most of his hearers were surprised and said, "Where did this man get this from? Isn't this man the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Jude and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?" So they found it hard to believe in him.

Jesus said to them, "A prophet isn't looked down on anywhere except in his own hometown, among his relatives and in his own family."

He wasn't able to perform miracles there, except for curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

*This shows how important faith is. Many times in the Gospels we see that Jesus praised people for believing in his power to work miracles.*

Jesus went through the villages teach-

ing. At one point he called the Twelve together and sent them away two by two, giving them power over the devils. So they went out and urged people to have a change of heart. They threw out devils and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

When the apostles came back, they told Jesus everything they had done and taught. And he said, "Come by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a little." So they left by boat for a lonely place to be by themselves. But people saw them leaving, and many found out where they were heading. So they went hurrying out from all the villages and gathered there ahead of them.

When he got out, he saw a large crowd and felt sorry for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them and continued for several hours.

When it was late, his disciples went up to him and said, "Send the people away, so they may go to the farms and villages nearby and buy themselves something to eat."

But Jesus answered, "Give them food yourselves."

They said, "Are we supposed to go and buy bread at the cost of two hundred days' pay and give them food?"

"How many loaves of bread do you have?" Jesus asked. "Go check."

They checked and said, "Five. And two fish."

Then he told them to have everyone sit down in groups on the grass.

So the crowd relaxed in rows, grouped by hundreds and fifties. Then Jesus took







to take half my property and give it to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I'll repay him four times the amount."

And Jesus said, "This household has been saved today. The Son of Man came to search out and save what was lost."

*Like Matthew, Mark and John, Luke tells us about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem a few days before his death. Then, like Matthew and Mark, Luke continues with various events and teachings.*

*People were doing business in the Temple's outer courts—selling animals to be used for sacrifices. There was much noise and confusion.*

When he entered the Temple area, he began to drive out the sellers, telling them, "Scripture says, 'my house will be a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."

## Jesus' Lasts Days in the Temple

Luke 21

Jesus looked up and saw rich people tossing their donations into the contribution box. Then he noticed a poor widow dropping in two tiny coins. He said, "I tell you that even though this widow is poor, she has dropped in more than all of them. All the others have put in something extra, but she's so poor that she put in what she had to live on."

Someone mentioned that the Temple was decorated with beautiful stones. Jesus said, "As for these things you are looking at—a time will come when not even one stone will be left on top of another.

They will all be thrown down. When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you must realize that the city will be destroyed. There will be great sorrow in the land and great cruelty against the people."

*These sad events took place about forty years later. Some of the Jewish people, called Zealots, rebelled against Rome and their revolt was crushed.*

*Next, Jesus spoke about the end of the world:*

"In the sun, moon and stars there will be frightening signs. Nations will suffer. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and bright light."

## Jesus' Sufferings and Death

Luke 22–23

*All four Gospels tell us about the Last Supper and Jesus' sufferings and death. Here are some details that Luke gives us which are not found in the others:*

An argument began among the apostles as to which of them should be considered the most important. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the pagans lord it over them. But it isn't that way with you. Instead the greatest among you must act as if he were the youngest and the leader as a servant.

"Simon, Simon! Certainly, Satan has asked to sift all of you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And in your turn, once you have come back again, you must give strength to your brothers."

Jesus said this to Simon Peter. That

