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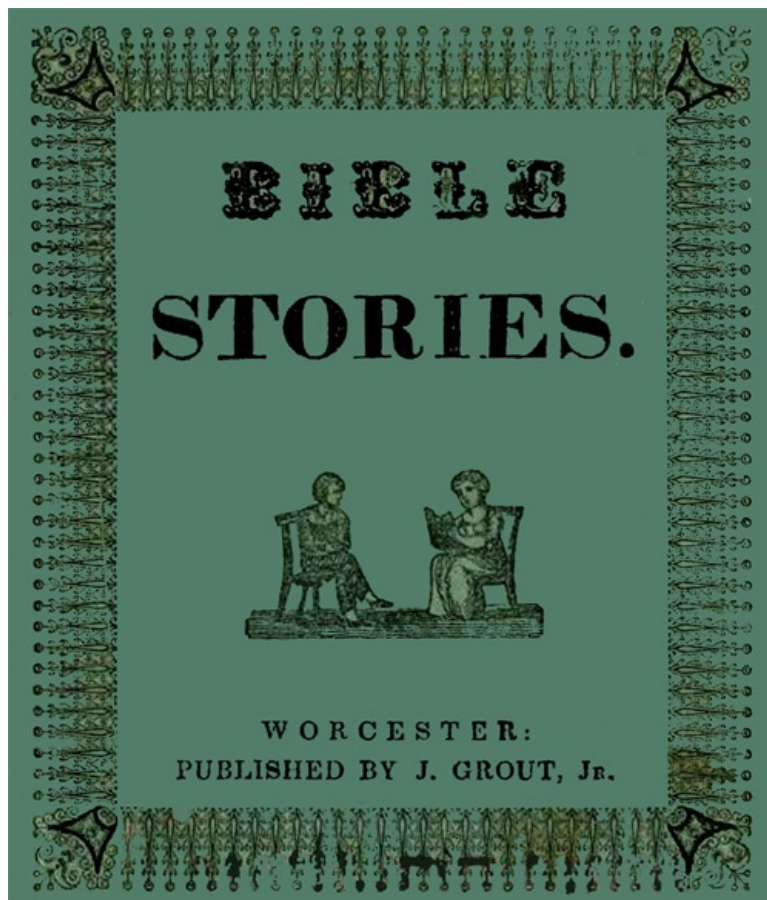
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**BIBLE**

# STORIES.

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## BIBLE STORIES.

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## BIBLE STORIES.

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### EARLY LIFE OF THE SAVIOR.

Nearly six thousand years ago the first man and the first woman were formed, out of the dust of the ground. Their names were Adam and Eve. They were placed in a very pleasant and beautiful garden, called Eden, where they had every thing they could wish; and were permitted by God to eat of the fruit of all the trees in the garden, except one.

"One tree that in the midst was placed,  
 God bade them not to take;  
 But ah! the fruit they dared to taste,  
 And his commandment break."

In an evil hour they listened to the temptations of the serpent—the great enemy of mankind—and ate of the forbidden fruit. Then God was angry with them, and sent his Angel to drive them out of the garden, to a place where thorns and thistles covered the ground, and they were obliged to work hard for a living. God cursed the ground for their sake, but at the same time he promised that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."

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This promise was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world and suffered and died to save men from the consequences of the first man's disobedience. I will now tell you something about this wonderful event.

A little more than eighteen hundred years ago, as some shepherds were taking care of their sheep by night on the hills of Palestine, an angel of the Lord came to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were very much afraid. But the angel told them not to fear, for he brought them good news: "For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

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As soon as the angels were gone, the shepherds went to Bethlehem, to see the Savior that God had so wonderfully made known to them. They found his reputed father with his mother, Mary, and the babe lying in a manger: "because there was no room for him in the inn." The shepherds then went to their homes praising God, and telling every one they saw of the new-born Savior.

Sometime afterwards, a wonderful star was seen by some wise men in the country east of Judea; and they concluded that it must be a sign that the long expected Messiah was born. They therefore went at once to Jerusalem, where they inquired for the "king of the Jews," stating that they had seen his star in the east, and were come to worship him.

Herod was the king of Judea at this time: and when he heard of the new king, he was very much troubled, and the people were also troubled, not knowing what to expect. Herod made particular inquires about the place where it was expected Christ would be born: and when he found that it

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was at Bethlehem, he sent the wise men there, telling them to bring him word when they had found him, that he might go and worship him too.

So the wise men went to Bethlehem: and the star which they had seen in the east went before them till it came and stood over the place where the infant Savior was. They were glad when they saw this: and when they came into the house and found Jesus and his mother, they fell down on their faces and worshiped him. Then they made him many presents of money, and rich spices which were found in their country.

When the wise men were ready to return, the angel of the Lord appeared to them, and told them not to go back to Herod, as he had directed. So they went to their home by another way. The angel also appeared in a dream to Joseph, and told him to take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt; and Joseph did as the angel had said.

Herod was a cruel, wicked man, and was afraid if Jesus grew up, he would be king of the Jews instead of him; so he intended to kill him while a little child. But when he found the wise men would not tell him where to find him, he sent his soldiers to Bethlehem, and ordered them to kill all the children under two years old, hoping in this way to come at Jesus: but the Lord had before provided for his safety, by sending him to Egypt.

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When Herod was dead, Jesus returned with his parents from Egypt, and went to live in the city of Nazareth. Joseph was a carpenter, and we are told that when Jesus was old enough he worked with him at the same trade. The Bible tells us he grew in stature, and in favor both with God and man: and that he lived with his parents, and was subject to them, or did as they wished to have him. Thus he set an example of obedience to parents which every child should follow.

When he was twelve years old, he went with them to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover; and after the close of the ceremonies, when they were going home, they found Jesus was not with them. So they returned to look for him and found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the learned men, hearing them and asking them questions; so that they were astonished at his knowledge.

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When his mother told him they had been looking for him, sorrowing, he replied, "How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

There was a law among the Jews that no one should be a public teacher, or minister, till he was thirty years old. Jesus wished to show respect to the laws of his country, and therefore we may suppose he continued to work as a carpenter till he was of that age. He was then baptized in the river Jordan by his forerunner, John the Baptist, and commenced choosing his disciples and preaching the gospel.

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The story of his life after this time,—how he went about teaching the people, though they often abused him; how he gave them food when they were hungry, though he had not where to lay his head, healed the sick, and in every way returned good for evil to his ungrateful countrymen, for three years, till they cruelly put him to death,—is told at large in the New Testament, where we hope all our young readers will read it again and again, with earnest attention. They will find it a very interesting narrative, and in it instructions capable of making them wise unto salvation.

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## CRUCIFIXION OF OUR SAVIOR.

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Our blessed Savior, having passed a life of piety and virtue, amply illustrated by the doctrines he had taught and practised, and the benefits rendered mankind, was at length betrayed by Judas Iscariot into the hands of the Jewish High Priest and Council, whose hatred and malice against him were without bounds, as the truths he had proclaimed were but faithful commentaries on the vice and wickedness of their own characters.

He was tried and condemned—though his judge declared that he found no fault in him,—his body mangled with whips, and a wreath of thorns pressed upon his head as a mock crown. They spit upon him, taunted him, smote him on the crown with staves, that it might wound the more

deeply, till his head, face, and body were bathed in blood.

In this situation, condemned and abandoned by the world he came to save, the heavy cross was laid upon his shoulders, and he was conducted in public through the city. [Pg 13]



Passing the gates, he was brought to a place called Golgotha and Calvary, the place of execution for the city. His clothes were then stripped off, his body stretched out, and his hands and his feet nailed to the cross, which was then lifted up. Over his head the inscription was placed by Pilate, "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS," in three different languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, in order that strangers might know for what he suffered. With this inscription the Jews were offended, and wished it altered. But Pilate replied that what he had written should stand good. [Pg 14]

While our Savior hung thus languishing in torment on the cross, the multitude around strove to add to his misery by reviling speeches and horrid blasphemies. Some nodded their heads and cried, "If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross." The priests and rulers scoffed in like manner, "He saved others, but himself he cannot save." The blessed Savior replied not, but lifted up his eyes and prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Nay, even one of the thieves who were crucified, one on each side of him, derided and urged him to save himself and them, if he was the Messiah. But his fellow criminal acknowledging the justice of their condemnation, and the entire innocence of Christ, seriously rebuked him, and looking upon Jesus with humble reliance, cried "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The Lord rewarded his great faith, embraced him with the arms of mercy, and assured him, that "that very day he should be with him in Paradise." [Pg 15]

His mortal agonies became now unutterable. His enemies still mocked him with their bitter taunts and revilings; they gave him vinegar to allay his burning thirst. He tasted thereof, and feeling the pangs of death, he cried, "all is accomplished.—Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" and meekly bowing his head, he expired.

His death was accompanied by a terrible earthquake. Rocks were shattered, graves were opened, and the veil of the temple torn in two parts. In short, the whole face of nature seemed changed. The sun was so shadowed that the stars appeared. The eclipse was awful, and the miraculous darkness universal, having been recorded by many even of the Pagan writers. It continued for three hours, during which time all things were full of terror.—Many who saw and heard were converted, and cried "Truly this is the Son of God." [Pg 16]

The body of our Savior having been buried, by one of his friends, in a new tomb hewn out of a rock, the Jews and rulers went to Pilate and told him, that this impostor having declared within his life time that he would rise again within three days, they wished the sepulchre kept under a strong guard until the third day, lest his disciples should come by night and steal the body, and then persuade the people that he had risen from the dead. They procured the desired guard, and secured the tomb, setting a seal upon the stone. Vain precaution!—The prophecy was fulfilled. The Savior burst from the tomb, and rose triumphant to the bosom of his Father which is in heaven.

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## THE GREAT COMMISSION.

After the resurrection of our Savior, he appeared several times to his disciples. He strengthened them in the walk of faith; enlarged their power and commission; declaring to them, that all power was given to him in heaven and earth. Therefore he commanded them to go through all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all things that he had commanded them. Adding further—that he that believed and was baptized should be saved, but he that believed not should be damned. He promised them his continual protection—that he would be ever present with them, even to the end of the world. [Pg 17]

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On his last appearance to the apostles he particularly commanded them, that they should not depart from Jerusalem till they had received the promise of God, and were invested with power from above. That after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them they should have sufficient power and knowledge, and have the honor of being his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and in the farthest parts of the earth.

He then led them out of the city to that part of Mount Olivet which was near Bethany, where, lifting up his hands which showed the marks of his sufferings, he gave them his last benediction.

And while they were all in the posture of adoration, he was parted from them by degrees, taken up in a cloud, and carried triumphantly into the ineffable glories of heaven.

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## STEPHEN

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Was chosen one of the first deacons of the Christian Church at Jerusalem. He was of high report for wisdom, and the endowments of the Holy Spirit. He confuted the most learned Jews in their arguments, and applied such wholesome truths to the test of their consciences, that being sorely galled, and unable to answer, their rage was unbounded.

Stephen, however, regarded them not, but fixing his ardent gaze upward, was ravished with the vision of glory revealed to him, and declared that he saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.

This farther enraged his enemies, who resolved to deal with him as a blasphemer; and, therefore they raised a great noise and clamor, stopped their ears to hear no cries for mercy, and rushing upon him, they hurried him out of the city in order to stone him, according to an ancient law against blasphemers.



The witnesses, according to custom, stripped themselves, and then began the tragedy, which was soon seconded by the multitude. During all this, the pious martyr was on his knees praying to God, and earnestly interceding for his murderers, "that he would not charge this guilt upon them"—till at length he fell asleep in the arms of death, being the first martyr who suffered in the Christian Church, A. D. 34.

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## SAUL OF TARSUS, OR PAUL.

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This great agent in the first persecution of the Church of God was well educated in the learning of the times, and one of the most strict of the sect of the Pharisees. He was born in the Roman city Tarsus, and enjoyed the privilege of a free citizen of Rome, which gave him high influence among the Jews, and increased his power to injure the followers of Jesus. He pursued the

Christians with the fury of a bigot and the rage of a madman. He paid no regard to age or sex; tearing the husband from the wife, and the mother from her children, and breathing vengeance and blood wherever he came.

But at last it pleased God, A. D. 35, to put a stop to his violence and wickedness. And wonderful was the change of his heart. Having dispersed the Christians from Jerusalem, he was on a journey to renew his persecutions in Damascus, when a sudden light from heaven smote him to the ground, and he heard a voice, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" The haughty Saul trembled, his conscience smote him, his soul was humbled, and his feelings melted for the cause he had heretofore hated and persecuted.

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Saul became now, after this miraculous conversion, one of the strongest pillars of the Christian Church. He preached the gospel in public, laboring with pious zeal as if to make up for the guilt and crimes of his former life.

Thousands were converted by his preaching, and he endured the persecutions of the unbelieving, remembering when he too was a leader among them.

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He was stoned at Lystra, A. D. 46, and left for dead,—but suddenly revived as the disciples were attending upon his body. Having thus escaped the fate of Stephen, he travelled on from city to city, openly proclaiming the Gospel.

At length after a long life spent in fearless devotion to the cause of the crucified Savior, he was taken up in Rome, thrown into prison, and in a few months after, condemned to suffer martyrdom by beheading, A. D. 68.

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## LUKE.

This apostle and Evangelist, was the companion and assistant of Paul, who calls him "the beloved Physician." After the death of Paul, he preached the gospel with great success in Egypt and Lybia, and also in Italy and Macedonia. As to his death, there are different accounts. Yet the best writers say he suffered martyrdom in Greece. A party of infidels there made head against him, and drew him to execution. For the want of a cross, they hung him upon an olive tree. He was in the eighty-fourth year of his age at the time of his death, A. D. 74. His gospel was written, while he was in company with Paul, A. D. 61—13 years before his martyrdom, and 28 years after the ascension of our Lord.

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#### **Transcriber's Note**

- Page [24](#), "eightyfourth" changed to "eighty-fourth"

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