

# **A Gift From Heaven**



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The text in this booklet is based on stories from the Bible.

You are welcome to contact us if you have questions.

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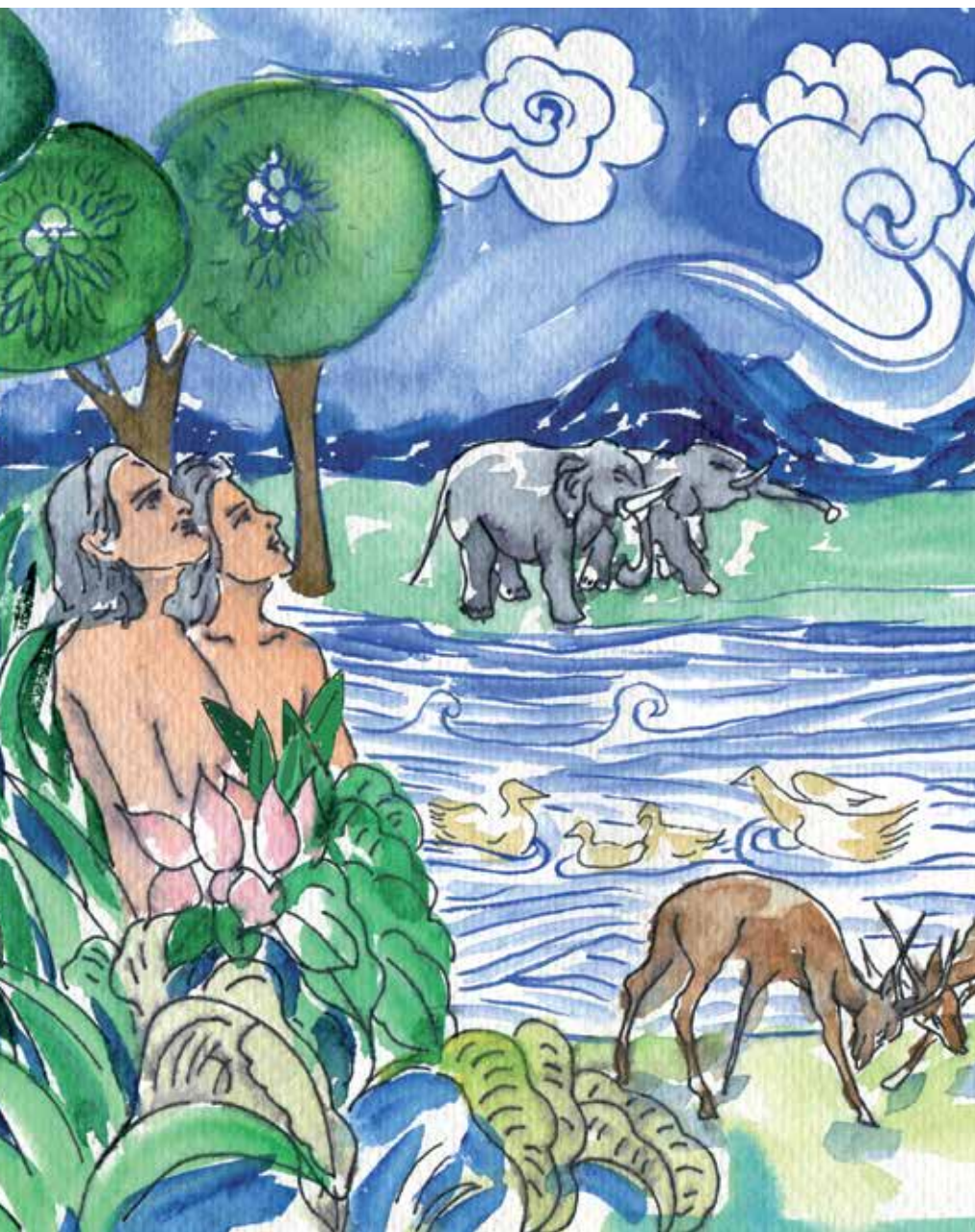
## A Gift From Heaven

The most precious gift of all times was given to the people of the whole world. The gift to us is a person who came from Heaven. If we truly understand who He is, our lives can be changed forever.

This is how it all began...

This is a story about the Sovereign God. He is the Creator of the universe, and He existed before anything else. It is a story about God who wants to have relationship with His creation. This story is written in the Bible, the book that is inspired by God Himself. The creation story of the Bible is not a myth. It is a real, historical account.

God is the most powerful being in both the seen and the unseen world. When He created the world He spoke a sentence, and things miraculously came into existence. For example, He said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds; livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And this is what happened. The animals were created just as He spoke. God is also very creative, so there



■ Adam and Eve in the garden

is no limit to the shapes, forms, colors of animals and nature He created. Everything was beautifully and wonderfully made! The most important part of His creation was the people. God formed the first man from dirt and breathed life into his nostrils. God named him Adam. Then he made Eve, the first woman. God placed them in a beautiful garden.

Everyday they walked with God and talked to Him. He wanted them to understand that He was trustworthy and that He loved them.

Adam and Eve were free. Free to relate to God and talk to Him, free to enjoy the beauty of the garden, free to be who they were without shame or fear of death. They were learning that He was like a very good Father caring for His children.

God told Adam and Eve to have children. He wanted them to fill the earth with people. God created people because he wanted to have relationship with them, with us. He made us creative and full of ideas to come up with new things.

God had also created lots of beautiful trees and plants in the garden, and He told Adam and Eve that they could eat any fruit or vegetable they liked, except from the fruit that grew on one tree



in the middle of the garden. God told them, "If you eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, you will die!"

Now at that time there was an evil spirit called Satan. Previously he was one of God's helpers, but he had rebelled against God and as a result had become an evil spirit. Now the devil, called Satan, came in the form of a snake and deceived Eve.

"Did God really tell you not to eat any of this tasty fruit?", the snake asked. Eve looked at the beautiful fruit on the tree in the middle of the garden.

The snake went on, "Taste a little bit! It will make you wise like God, you will not die."

Satan wanted to trick Eve and make her believe that God could not be trusted. Satan wanted her to think that she would have to look out for herself rather than trusting God for His provision and care. She ate the forbidden fruit. Then she took some to Adam, and he tasted it too. They heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. They knew they had disobeyed Him, so they hid.

The Lord God called to Adam, "Where are you?" Adam answered, "When I heard You coming I was frightened." "Did you eat the fruit I told you not to touch?" God asked. "The woman gave it to me!" said Adam. "The snake said it was okay to eat!" said Eve.

Adam and Eve had disobeyed God. The moment they ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, they invited sin and death into the beautiful world God had created for them. This is how sin came into the world. Sin separated Adam and Eve from God. Right away they felt shame, fear and guilt. They were no longer able to walk with God in the garden.

From now on Adam and Eve could not be in God's presence because they had disobeyed Him by believing what the snake told them. God was grieved that they had not obeyed Him.

God told Adam and Eve, "Because you chose to not obey me, you must leave the garden



■ Adam and Eve leaving garden

immediately."Then He made clothing from animal skins for them to wear and sent them away from the garden, away from the life close to Him.

God didn't want people to be separated from Him forever, for He had created people to have relationship with Himself. So He made a new plan. God first cursed the snake, satan, and said, "Snake, you will crawl on your belly forever!" God then told satan that a Savior would crush his head and would save people in the future.

God had already decided that He would send His Son to earth, so that He could restore the relationship that God had with people. Many years went by. God formed a new nation, the nation of Israel. His plan was that the Savior would come from this nation.

Thousands of years later God had still not forgotten about the promise He had made, that satan would be defeated. His plan of salvation was soon going to unfold! And this is why this next part of the story is so important. This is the part of the story where God sends His own precious Son down from heaven to become a human being. This took place about 2000 years ago in the country called Israel. This is the Christmas story:



■ An angel visits Mary

Mary was a young Jewish girl engaged to Joseph, the carpenter. Joseph was a good man who loved God. He would make a fine husband for Mary. But Mary's life was about to change forever. One day, God sent an angel to Mary. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. God is pleased with you. He has chosen you to be the mother of Jesus. This Holy Child will be the Savior that God promised.



And He will be called the Son of the Most High God." Mary did not understand. The angel said, "The Holy Spirit will make this happen." When Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he got very upset. He was very disappointed, because he thought that she had been with another man. He was very afraid of what other people might do to her. At that time in Israel, if a woman was found to be together with a man she was not married to, she could be stoned to death.

One night, an angel, a messenger from God, came to Joseph in a dream. "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit," the angel said. "You will call Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." This means that God himself was the Father of Jesus, the baby, not another man. So Joseph and Mary were married.

The emperor in Israel at that time said that all people must go to their birth places to list their names and to pay taxes. Joseph and Mary travelled many miles to Bethlehem, their hometown. Mary was tired since she was pregnant, but there was no place to rest. Bethlehem was very crowded and Mary and Joseph had to spend the night in a stable. During the night, Mary gave birth to the baby. She really cared for her special child. She wrapped Him in warm clothes and made a cosy bed for Him in a feeding trough.



■ Shepherds visit the manger

Some shepherds were watching their sheep in a nearby field. Suddenly, an angel appeared. The shepherds were frightened. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I am bringing you good news. Tonight your Saviour was born in Bethlehem, He is the Messiah whom God promised long ago." This meant that God's promise to send a savior who would restore the relationship between God and people had been fulfilled.

Then a choir of angels sang, "Glory to God in heaven." When the angels left, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem. They found the

baby with Mary and Joseph. The shepherds were amazed! They returned to the fields, praising God.

This is the true Christmas story! The little baby that was born was the true Son of God! This is why people share presents and gifts at Christmas time to celebrate that God gave His greatest gift to the world, His own son who came down from heaven.

There was a special reason that God gave his son to live on earth. He had promised that He would kill the snake, remember? This is the next part of the story:



■ Jesus with His closest friends

The baby, Jesus, grew up. He knew that He was the Son of God, born by Mary. He lived on earth among people, but there was a big difference between Jesus and other people, because Jesus never sinned. He obeyed his Father in every way possible. He loved people and wanted them to understand that they could come to Him so that He could heal them from their diseases and free them from the power of demons. He had twelve close friends who always walked together with Him.

Satan (the snake) knew that Jesus was the Son of God. Satan was afraid of Him, so he wanted to kill Him. He made people turn against Jesus. But actually Jesus needed to die in order for God to fulfill His plan to save people again. This is what the next part of the story is about:

One day, Jesus invited his closest friends and said, "Come, we are going to share a meal together, I have something important that I want to talk to you about."

He sat down with them and they ate together. Jesus knew it was almost time for Him to go back to heaven where He had come from. Jesus knew He would die for the sins of the people. He said, "I will be leaving soon."





■ Jesus caught in the garden

Jesus was sad. He told his friends, "Stay awake and pray for strength." Then Jesus knelt to pray. An angel from heaven came to comfort Him.

When Jesus finished praying, His disciples were asleep. "Wake up!" Jesus said. "The time has come!" Judas, one of Jesus' twelve friends, had turned his back to him and he led an angry crowd to Jesus. They were carrying torches, swords, and clubs.

The disciples felt very sad. But Jesus encouraged them, "Don't worry. My Father will give you another Helper. He will send the Holy Spirit. And later I will come back to you."

When the meal was over, Jesus and His disciples sang a song. Then they went to a place to pray. Jesus warned them, "Tonight you will all leave me."

"I won't!" said Peter, who was one of his close friends. Jesus said, "Before morning, you will say three times that you don't



■ Peter just denied Jesus

Judas had promised to hand Jesus over to the Jewish leaders for thirty pieces of silver. He acted like a friend and kissed Jesus. That was how Judas pointed out Jesus to the soldiers.

The soldiers grabbed Jesus to arrest Him. Peter took a sword and cut off a man's ear because he wanted to protect Jesus. But Jesus cried, "Stop!" Then He touched the man's ear and healed him.





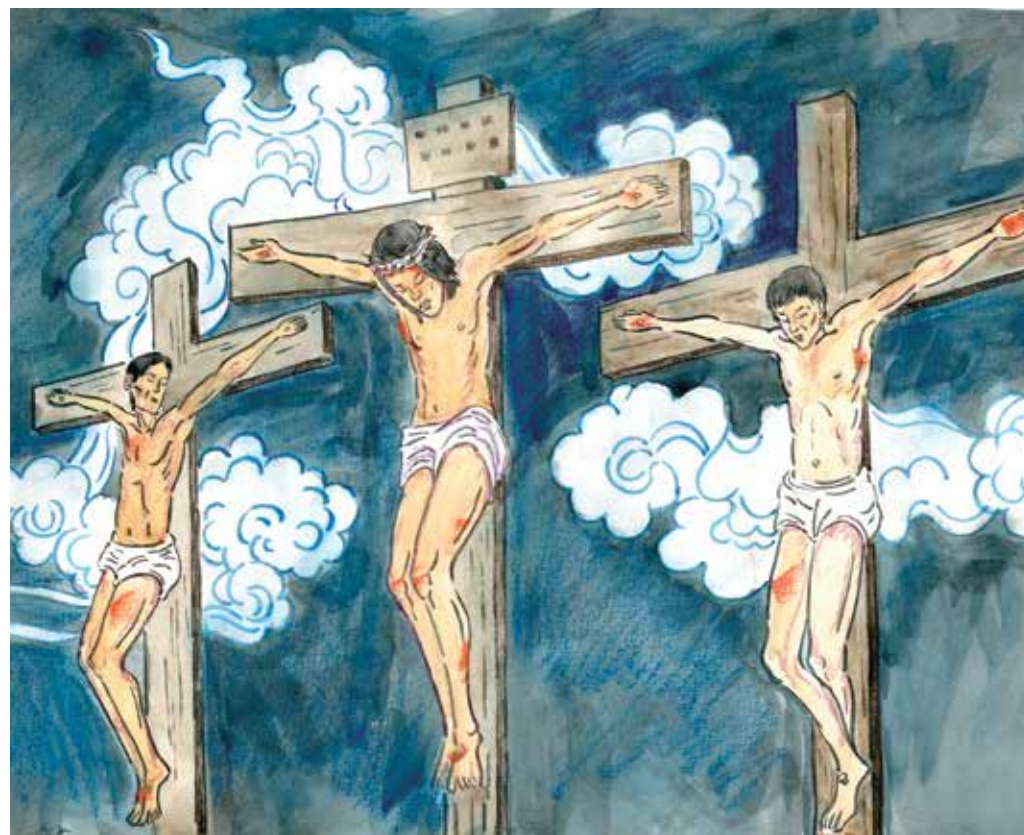
■ Jesus caught, soldiers and priests around him

All Jesus' friends were afraid and ran away. The soldiers took Jesus to the house of one of the religious leaders. Peter followed far behind them. In the courtyard, a servant girl asked Peter, "Are you a follower of Jesus?" Peter said, "No!"

Someone else said, "You were with Jesus!" Again Peter said, "No, I wasn't!" Later some people said, "You talk like Jesus." Peter swore, "I don't know Him." Just then a rooster crowed. Peter remembered Jesus' words and was filled with sorrow.

The lawyers told people in town to lie about Jesus to the Jewish court. When these people lied, Jesus said nothing. Then the priest asked, "Are You God's Son?" Jesus said, "I am."

His answer made the people angry. They spat on Him and slapped His face. Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor. They told Pilate, "He claims to be a king!"



■ Jesus on the cross between the two criminals

Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you a king?" Jesus answered, "Yes. My Kingdom is not of this world." Jesus was talking about the Kingdom of God that was so much bigger than a human king ruling in one country. Pilate found nothing wrong with Jesus. Pilate told the people that he was going to release Jesus.

But the angry people yelled, "Kill Him! Kill Him on a cross! Free the prisoner Barabbas instead." Pilate listened to the people. He let Barabbas, a murderer, go free. And he said Jesus must die on a cross.

The Roman soldiers beat Jesus. They dressed Him like a king to make fun of Him. Then they made Him carry a cross through the city.

The cross was very heavy. So the soldiers forced a man in the crowd to help Jesus carry it. Finally, they came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). There, the soldiers nailed Jesus' hands and feet to the cross.

Two criminals were nailed to crosses next to Jesus. Jesus' followers were sad and cried. But many people mocked him. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

When Jesus died, the sky turned black and the earth shook. The soldiers were terrified. They said, "He really was the Son of God!" Jesus' body was laid in a tomb. A large stone was rolled across the entrance to the tomb.

Satan had been afraid of God's plan, because he remembered what God had told him in the garden thousands of years earlier: that Jesus would crush his head. Now he thought that he had made the people kill Jesus, the Son of God. But something else happened:

On Sunday morning, three days after Jesus had been crucified, a woman named Mary Magdalene and some other women went to the tomb. They were very sad that Jesus was dead.



■ Women and an angel at the grave



Just then there was an earthquake. An angel came down from heaven and rolled away the stone from the tomb. The angel sat on the stone. The soldiers guarding the tomb shook with fear and became like dead men. The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus. But He is not here. He has risen, as He said He would. He is alive!"

Then the angel said, "Go quickly. Tell His friends Jesus has risen from the dead!" The women hurried away. They were afraid yet filled with joy. They ran to tell Jesus' friends what had happened. Suddenly Jesus stood before them. The women fell down at His feet and worshipped Him. "Don't be afraid," Jesus said. "Tell my brothers to go to Galilee. They will see me there."

Wait, did you notice what just happened? Jesus rose from the dead after three days in the grave!! This part is really important to understand! So let us explain it a little more...

God sent His son, Jesus, from heaven down to earth. He wanted to restore the relationship that had been broken in the garden thousands of years earlier. The sin and disobedience that had come into the world when Adam and Eve ate from the tree caused a separation between God and people on earth.

So the sin had to be washed away with a sacrifice. The sacrifice was Jesus, the Son of God, who was without sin. He died on the



■ Jesus ascending to heaven

cross, so that he could remove the power of sin and defeat death itself. He was crucified by people, but this was actually God's plan since the time of the garden. God defeated satan, because death didn't have any power over Jesus.

So Jesus won the battle. Therefore we as human beings can have the same, close and intimate relationship with God as Adam and Eve did. The reason is that Jesus has removed the sin and the darkness that stood in the way.



Jesus walked among His friends in Israel for 40 days after He had risen from the dead. Then He led His disciples to a mountain outside the city. He said, "In a few days, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Don't leave Jerusalem (the capital city of Israel) until you receive this promise." The "Holy Spirit" Jesus was speaking about, was the Spirit from God. He is also called "Helper" and "Encourager". Jesus continued, "The Holy Spirit will give you power to be my witnesses in all the world." Jesus blessed them. The disciples worshiped Jesus, then He went up into heaven.



■ Tongues of fire on the heads of the followers

They watched Jesus ascending to heaven in a cloud. Suddenly, two angels appeared. They said, "Jesus will come again in the same way you saw Him go!" Jesus didn't die, but He returned to His Father in heaven, and He is still alive. Each day Jesus' disciples and other followers gathered together to pray. They were waiting for the promise from God, the Holy Spirit.

During this time, the followers gathered to celebrate Pentecost. This was the Harvest Festival in the land of Israel. Suddenly a noise came from heaven. It sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house.

It looked like a tongue of fire rested on the head of each of the followers. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in different languages!

Even today, the Holy Spirit enables Jesus' followers to connect with their heavenly Father and live lives pleasing to Him. The Holy Spirit also empower followers of Jesus to stand strong, even in the face of persecution.

Jesus is inviting each person and family in the world to say yes to His invitation to a relationship with Him. A relationship where there is no shame or fear. He is calling us his sons and daughters. He has made a way for us all to return to our true Creator and Father. His gift to us all is His Son, Jesus Christ. He is truly an amazing gift to us!

If you want to know more about the Creator God and the Savior Jesus Christ, you can read more on [lambardu.org](http://lambardu.org)

