

THE BIGGEST STORY



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DAY 1

The Snake Crusher Is on His Way

There are many stories in the world about kings and dragons and damsels in distress. They're all true—in a way. All those stories tell us something about good and evil and our need to be rescued. But only one rescue story is true inside and out, all the way down from heaven to earth (and back again).

This is the story about *that* story, the Biggest Story. In this story, we are the damsel in distress, God's Son is our king, and the dragon . . . well, he is a dragon.

Sort of. The dragon isn't an actual fire-breathing, flying, swooping, sneezing, sneaking dragon (though he is sneaky, and he will end up in a lake of fire). The dragon is actually the devil, and he first showed up in the world as a snake.

The slithering snake tricked Adam and Eve into eating the fruit that God told them not to eat. And that was how everything good in the world started to come undone.

But it was also the start of God's promise to make everything new. No sooner had that ancient serpent done his foul deed than God promised to send a Snake Crusher to step on his head. It would take some waiting, but eventually, one day, many days and centuries later, the woman would be rescued, the dragon would be slayed, and the King would come.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, we are trapped in sin and must be rescued. Thank you for sending the Snake Crusher to save us. Amen.



DAY 2

A Promised Child

Once there was a good man named Abraham. Actually, his name started out as Abram. And actually he didn't start out as a good man. Abraham lived in a land far away and worshiped false gods.

But the true God called Abraham to leave his home. And he also made amazing promises: promises to bless Abraham with his loving kindness, with land, and with lots of children.

This was certainly good news, so Abraham left his country behind and followed the Lord.

The hardest part was waiting for all the promises to come true, especially the one about all those kids. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, didn't have any kids. So they waited.

And waited. And waited. Until they were both so old that they had no business thinking about babies of their own. But God promised again that Abraham would have a child. Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord counted that faith as righteousness.

And do you know what? God made good on his promise. Abraham and Sarah had a baby boy. They named him Isaac, and eventually their family grew big and strong. What a happy ending.

Except that's not the end of the story, because God's promise was not mainly about Isaac. God had something (and someone) much better in mind—a great-great-great-(keep going with a lot of greats)-grandson of Abraham, who would be a blessing not just to one family but to the whole world.

PRAYER: Dear God, we praise you for blessing us, and the whole world, through the promised child of Abraham. Amen.



DAY 3

A Lion from Judah

If Abraham had to wait a long time for his promised son, Abraham's grandson Jacob had to wait a long time to stop having sons. All told, Jacob had twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. You may have some boys in your family with one of those names (and if your family has *all* those boys, then you are very special indeed!).

When Jacob was about to die, he called all his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come." And so, one by one, Jacob predicted what would happen to each of his sons. Some of the predictions were about good things, and some were not so good. Some were long, and some were short. Some of Jacob's words are hard to remember, but there is at least one word we should never forget.

That word is *lion*, and it goes with the predictions for Judah.

In those days the best blessings usually went to the first son. But in this case God reserved the most important promise for Jacob's fourth son, Judah. He said that Judah would be like a lion—strong, fierce, and a great leader.

And that's exactly what the children of Judah became—the biggest and the best tribe. But more importantly Jacob's blessing meant that the Lion of the tribe of Judah was on his way. And by the roar of his mouth he would rule over everything.

PRAYER: We stand in awe of you, Lord, for you are holy, glorious, and mighty to save. Amen.



DAY 4

A Star from Jacob

Balaam was a strange prophet in Israel's history. For starters, he wasn't even from Israel. He was from a place called Aram. Balaam was hired by Balak, the king of Moab, to prophesy judgment against Israel. But when it came time for Balaam to say bad things about God's people, God's Spirit made him say bad things about Moab and good things about Israel. Very strange indeed.

Oh, and one time, when Balaam wasn't listening to God, he got yelled at by a donkey!

All told, Balaam made four speeches for Balak. All of them were supposed to curse Israel, but all of them blessed Israel instead. In the final speech the Lord spoke through Balaam about a Deliverer to come. He called this Deliverer a star from Jacob (because he would shine with a heavenly light) and a scepter out of Israel (because he would rule over God's enemies).

The Lord was telling his people that a ruler was coming, even if they might have to wait awhile for him to come. "I see him," Balaam said, "but not now; I behold him, but not near."

And so, God's people waited. If God was able to speak through Balaam (and through his donkey!), then he was a God whose word could be trusted. Even if that meant that things would get darker before the star of Jacob would light up the sky.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, we pray for the morning star of Christ's love and glory to rise in our hearts. Amen.



DAY 5

A Prophet Like Moses

Prophets in the Old Testament did lots of amazing things, and no one in the Old Testament did more amazing things than Moses. Think of all the crazy, scary, miraculous, and mighty things Moses did.

He turned sticks into snakes. He turned water into blood. He made the sky rain down frogs and gnats and hail. Then he turned the sky as black as night. He summoned the angel of death. He parted the Red Sea. He called down manna from heaven. He littered the ground with quail. He made water gush from the rock. He led God's people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. He gave Israel the Ten Commandments. He heard from God. He spoke for God. He prayed for the people when they disobeyed God. And, when he was on the mountain, he even came face to face with God.

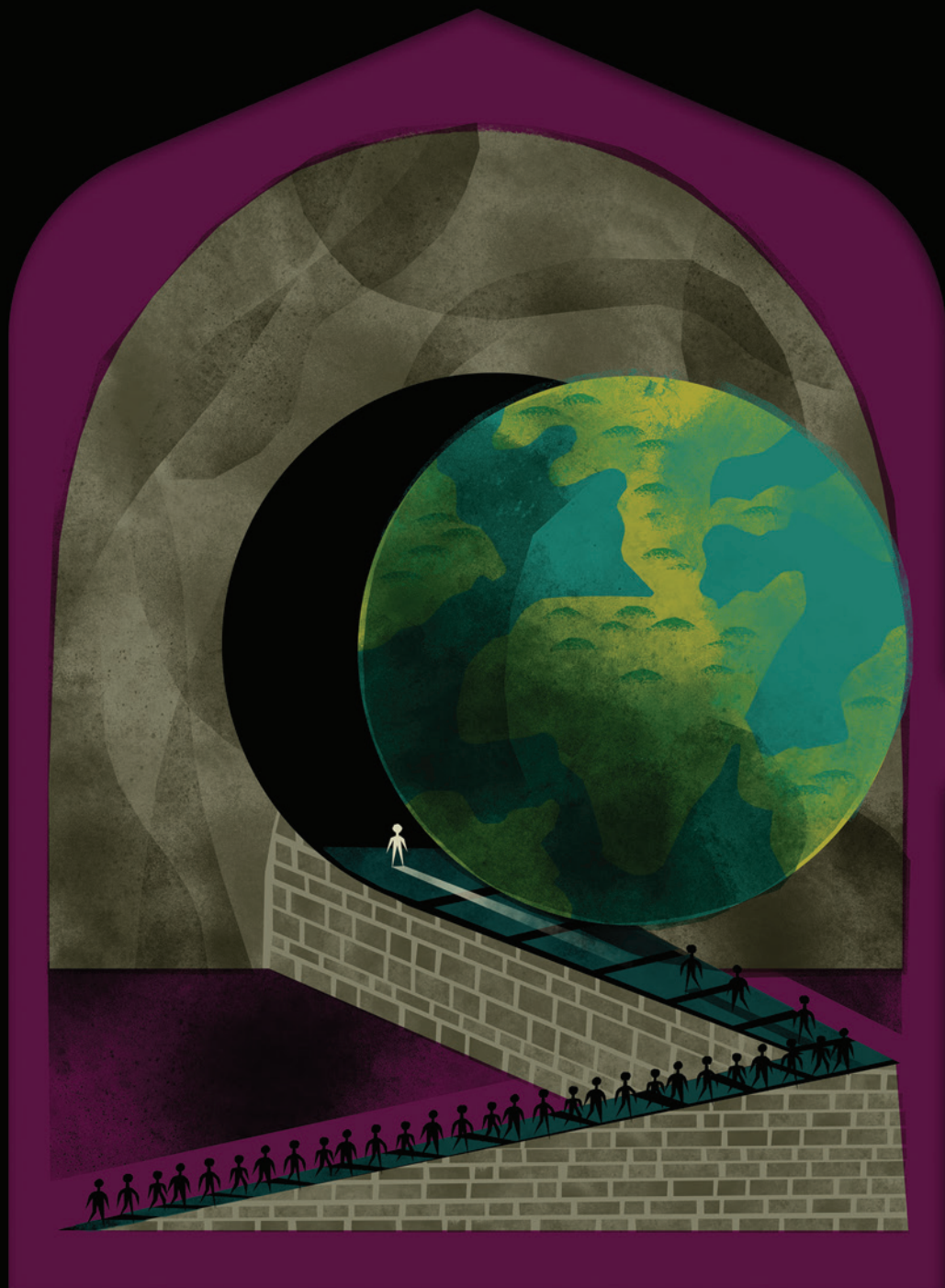
That's quite a life!

But, for all that Moses did, there's one thing God wouldn't allow him to do. Moses never made it into the Promised Land. He couldn't lead God's people forever. He couldn't lead them to the very place they had all been waiting for centuries to see.

Israel needed a prophet like Moses. They also needed a prophet *better* than Moses. The Israelites needed this prophet to be, like Moses, of their own flesh and blood. But they also needed a man who, better than Moses, would always do and say what is right.

Good thing that's exactly what God had planned for his people.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for the Word made flesh—for sending your Son, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.



DAY 6

A Son of David

The Snake Crusher, who was promised in the garden, cannot be described with just one promise. God's Deliverer would be not just one thing but many things. The child that God's people were waiting for would be the offspring of Abraham, the star of Jacob, the prophet like Moses, and the son of David.

When David was king over Israel, God made a covenant with him. A covenant is an agreement—sort of like when two people get married and make promises to each other. Except that, in God's covenant with David, God was the one who made all the promises. He promised that David's son would rule over a great kingdom.

Now, you might think that this promise was about David's son Solomon. And it was, but it wasn't *only* about Solomon. When God makes promises, he usually keeps them one way in the short run and another way—a much bigger and better way—in the long run.

And in the long run this promise was about a heavenly King who would reign over a heavenly kingdom. This kingdom would be much bigger than a small piece of land called Israel, and this King would be much better than a sinful king named Solomon. God promised David that he would never fail to have one of his offspring on the throne. And the throne that God had in mind was not the one in Jerusalem that reigns over Israel but the one in heaven that reigns over all the earth.

PRAYER: Dear God, you are a great King. Thank you that, because of what Jesus did on the cross, we can be a part of eternal kingdom. Amen.



DAY 7

A Begotten Son

We've already seen that God's promised Deliverer would be a child of Abraham, a star of Jacob, and a descendant of David. Now we see that, in addition to being a son, the Snake Crusher would also be *God's* Son.

That's a little confusing, because God doesn't have a body, and he certainly doesn't have a wife or family like an earthly king. When the Bible talks about God's Son, it's talking not about a different *God* than God the Father but about a different *person*. That means the Son shares all the same God "stuff" with his Father, but he is not the Father. I told you it was a little confusing!

There is an important word in this promise from Psalm 2. It is the word *begotten*. That's a word we don't use much anymore, but it just means "how one thing brings about another thing." We sometimes use the word to talk about a baby's birth. But God's Son was *not* born. There never was a time (or even a "time" before time!) when the Son of God did not exist. He is not a created Son; he is God's *eternally* begotten Son.

The anointed King, who was coming to rule over the nations, would be more than just a faith-filled man like Abraham, or a great prophet like Moses, or a mighty king like David. He would be God's own Son, and that meant he would be God himself.

PRAYER: We pray, O Lord, that you would make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. Amen.