

God's Epic Story

Introduction

- What is the longest story that you know?
- How does the writer keep up interest?
- Many great stories are about journeys or rescues
- God's epic story starts after the disaster in the Garden of Eden. Mankind was hopelessly lost.

Chapter 1 Abraham sets out

- After this disaster, God's great rescue story began in earnest with Abraham setting out on a journey. With this promise from God:

'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' (Genesis 12:2,3)

- Sometimes in the years that followed, hope in that promise almost failed.

Chapter 2 Other nations will be involved

- The prophet Isaiah gave them new hope with this promise from God: *'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.'* (Isaiah 60:3)
- That hope was never lost completely.

Chapter 3 Jesus to the rescue

- God keeps his promises and worked towards the fulfilment for a long time. He sent many messengers and finally he sent his own Son Jesus.
- Jesus lived a perfect life, caring for and teaching many people. But he had to die on the Cross – then wonderfully he rose again and came back with special new life.
- After 40 days he ascended back to

heaven, after giving his disciples another great promise:

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:8)

Chapter 4 Strange goings on in Jerusalem

- The events on the Day of Pentecost were part-fulfilment of God's promises from so long ago.
- Jews had come from near and far to celebrate the giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai.
- They spoke the languages of the places where they came from.
- When all these people heard the disciples praising God, something completely supernatural happened and they heard them worshipping in their own languages (Acts 2:6,7)

Chapter 5 The Church is born

- Another promise was fulfilled that day. God had spoken through the prophet Joel: *'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.'* (Joel 2:28-29)
- So what happened next? Peter preached the good news of Jesus. 3000 people believed that day and were baptised.
- All Jews to start with but some time later; Peter was called by God to take the good news about Jesus to a Roman soldier named Cornelius (Acts 10-11).
- Cornelius was the first non-Jew to become a Christian and he too received the Holy Spirit just as the others had on the Day of Pentecost.

- Peter was extremely surprised about this and praised God that he had poured out his blessing upon other people beside the Jews.
- Then more and more people from different countries and nationalities became Christians.

Chapter 6 The story continues

- God has drawn people from all nations and backgrounds to be part of his Church

- He has poured out his Holy Spirit upon all of them, regardless of their origins.
- You too have received the Holy Spirit if you are a baptised Christian – but let the Spirit really fill you.
- His great story is not finished yet! There are more people to be brought in – then comes THE END (which is really the BEGINNING of another story!)

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Acts 2:1-21

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?"

⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"

⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome

¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'