

What
every child
should
know
about
the Bible

A GUIDE FOR
PARENTS AND
TEACHERS

V. GILBERT BEERS



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What Every Child Should Know about the Bible

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*To Arlie, who, through her
role modeling and teaching,
has encouraged five children
and eleven grandchildren
to love the Lord and his Word*

Contents

STORY INDEX ix

INTRODUCTION xxi

CHAPTER 1: Before Creation 1

CHAPTER 2: The Creation of the Universe 3

CHAPTER 3: The Ancients:
From Adam to Noah 5

CHAPTER 4: Disunited Nations:
From Noah to Abraham 9

CHAPTER 5: The Patriarchs:
From Abraham through Joseph 15

CHAPTER 6: Silent Years:
Between Genesis and Exodus 39

CHAPTER 7: Building a Nation:
Slavery in Egypt through the
Exodus 43

CHAPTER 8: The Long Way Home:
Wandering in the Wilderness 59

CHAPTER 9: Winning the Land:
The Time of the Conquest until the
Time of the Judges 71

CHAPTER 10: The Time of the
Judges 79

CHAPTER 11: Israel Begs for a King:
Samuel and Saul 91

CHAPTER 12: The Golden Kingdom:
David's Reign 113

CHAPTER 13: Riches and Poverty:
Solomon's Wealth and Excess 129

CHAPTER 14: Tarnished Gold:
The Divided Kingdom 139

CHAPTER 15: Wasted Opportunity:
From the Division to Israel's
Captivity 143

CHAPTER 16: Everything Falls Apart:
Israel's Captivity 169

CHAPTER 17: Life in a Strange
Land: The Exile and Return 181

CHAPTER 18: Years of Silence:
Between the Old and New
Testaments 197

CHAPTER 19: Before Bethlehem:
The Story before Jesus' Birth 201

CHAPTER 20: The Genealogy of
Jesus 205

CHAPTER 21: The Preparation for
Jesus' Birth 209

CHAPTER 22: The Birth and
Childhood of Jesus 213

CHAPTER 23: John the Baptist
Announces the Messiah 219

CHAPTER 24: Jesus' Early Ministry
in Galilee 223

CHAPTER 25: Jesus' First
Miracles 229

CHAPTER 26: The Apostles and the
Sermon on the Mount 239

CHAPTER 27: Jesus' Second Ministry
in Galilee 243

CHAPTER 28: Jesus Tells Parables in Galilee 249

CHAPTER 29: More Miracles of Jesus 253

CHAPTER 30: Jesus Reaches Out to Gentiles: Beyond Galilee and Home Again 263

CHAPTER 31: At the Festival of Tabernacles 271

CHAPTER 32: Jesus' Ministry in Judea 277

CHAPTER 33: Jesus' Ministry: Jerusalem, Perea, and Bethany 283

CHAPTER 34: Jesus Goes toward Jerusalem 293

CHAPTER 35: Jesus in the Shadow of the Cross 305

CHAPTER 36: The Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane 311

CHAPTER 37: Jesus' Trials, Crucifixion, and Burial 315

CHAPTER 38: Jesus' Resurrection: Appearances and Ascension 325

CHAPTER 39: The Early Church 333

CHAPTER 40: Saul Becomes a Christian 343

CHAPTER 41: Peter's Ministry and Miracles 347

CHAPTER 42: Paul's First Missionary Journey 355

CHAPTER 43: Paul's Second Missionary Journey 363

CHAPTER 44: Paul's Third Missionary Journey 371

CHAPTER 45: Paul's Arrest and Trials 379

CHAPTER 46: Paul's Journey to Rome and Shipwreck 385

CHAPTER 47: After Paul's House Arrest in Rome 395

CHAPTER 48: Other New Testament Letters 397

CHAPTER 49: Beyond Time: A Look at the Future in the Book of Revelation 399

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 401

STORY INDEX

CHAPTER 1: Before Creation 1

CHAPTER 2: The Creation of the Universe 3

Story 1

The Creation

CHAPTER 3: The Ancients: From Adam to Noah 5

Story 2

Adam and Eve

Story 3

The Fall

Story 4

Cain and Abel

CHAPTER 4: Disunited Nations: From Noah to Abraham 9

Story 5

Noah Builds an Ark

Story 6

The Great Flood

Story 7

The Tower of Babel

CHAPTER 5: The Patriarchs: From Abraham through Joseph 15

Story 8

Job Loses It All

Story 9

God Restores Job's Fortunes

Story 10

Abraham Journeys to New Lands

Story 11

Abraham and Sarah Visit Egypt

Story 12

Abraham and Lot Part Ways

Story 13

Lot's Capture and Rescue

Story 14

A Canopy of Stars and a Promise

Story 15

Ishmael's Birth

Story 16

Strangers Visit Abraham

Story 17

Abraham Bargains for Sodom

Story 18

God Destroys Sodom

Story 19

Abraham Lies to Abimelech

Story 20

Isaac Is Born

Story 21

Hagar Is Sent Away

Story 22

Abraham Offers Isaac

Story 23

Sarah's Death and Burial

Story 24

A Bride for Isaac

Story 25

Esau and Jacob Are Born

Story 26

Esau Sells His Birthright

Story 27

Isaac Lies to Abimelech

Story 28

Isaac Refuses to Fight

Story 29

Jacob Tricks Isaac

Story 30

Jacob's Ladder

Story 31
Jacob Meets Rachel

Story 32
Switched Brides: Leah and Rachel

Story 33
Jacob's Children

Story 34
Jacob Works for Laban

Story 35
Jacob Runs Away from Laban

Story 36
Jacob Wrestles an Angel

Story 37
Esau Forgives Jacob

Story 38
Benjamin's Birth

Story 39
Joseph's Coat

Story 40
Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Story 41
Pharaoh's Officials Have Dreams

Story 42
Joseph Becomes a Governor

Story 43
Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

Story 44
Joseph Reveals His Identity

Story 45
Jacob's Family Moves to Egypt

Story 46
Jacob Blesses Joseph

Story 47
Jacob Blesses His Other Sons

Story 48
Jacob's Death and Burial

Story 49
Joseph's Death

**CHAPTER 6: Silent Years:
Between Genesis and Exodus 39**

**CHAPTER 7: Building a Nation:
Slavery in Egypt through the
Exodus 43**

Story 50
God's People Become Slaves

Story 51
Moses Grows Up in the Palace

Story 52
Moses Kills an Egyptian

Story 53
Moses Settles in Midian

Story 54
The Burning Bush

Story 55
Moses before Pharaoh

Story 56
Moses' Rod

Story 57
The First Nine Plagues

Story 58
The Tenth Plague and Passover

Story 59
The Exodus

Story 60
The Pillars of Cloud and Fire

Story 61
Crossing the Red Sea

Story 62
Bitter Waters at Marah

Story 63
Food in the Wilderness

Story 64
Water from a Rock

Story 65
A Great Battle with Amalek

Story 66
Moses Appoints Judges

Story 67
The People Reach Mount Sinai

Story 68
God Gives the Ten Commandments

Story 69

Instructions for the Tabernacle

Story 70

The Golden Calf

Story 71

Moses Sees God's Glory and Receives the Ten Commandments Again

Story 72

Gifts for the Tabernacle

Story 73

Building the Tabernacle

**CHAPTER 8: The Long Way Home:
Wandering in the Wilderness 59**

Story 74

The Levites Become Priests

Story 75

Leaving Mount Sinai

Story 76

Miriam's Leprosy

Story 77

Twelve Spies in Canaan

Story 78

Forty Years of Wandering

Story 79

Korah's Rebellion

Story 80

Aaron's Rod

Story 81

More Water Problems

Story 82

Edom Says No

Story 83

Healing from a Bronze Snake

Story 84

A Talking Donkey

Story 85

The Daughters of Zelophehad

Story 86

Moses Appoints Joshua to Succeed Him

Story 87

Moses and Joshua Meet with God

Story 88

Moses' Death and Burial

**CHAPTER 9: Winning the Land:
The Time of the Conquest until
the Time of the Judges 71**

Story 89

Preparing to Enter the Promised Land

Story 90

Spies Visit Jericho

Story 91

Crossing the Jordan River

Story 92

The Captain of the Lord's Army

Story 93

The Battle for Jericho

Story 94

Achan Brings Disaster to Israel

Story 95

The Second Battle for Ai

Story 96

The Gibeonites Trick Joshua

Story 97

The Sun and Moon Stand Still

Story 98

The Conquest of Canaan

**CHAPTER 10: The Time of the
Judges 79**

Story 99

Ehud, the Left-Handed Warrior

Story 100

Victory with a Tent Stake

Story 101

God Calls Gideon

Story 102

Gideon's Little Army

Story 103

Jephthah's Foolish Vow

Story 104
Samson's Birth

Story 105
The Strongest—and Weakest—Man Alive

Story 106
Samson's Foolish Choices

Story 107
Samson Kills Three Thousand Philistines

Story 108
Ruth and Naomi

Story 109
Ruth in the Fields of Boaz

Story 110
Ruth and Boaz

CHAPTER 11: Israel Begs for a King: Samuel and Saul 91

Story 111
Hannah Begs God for a Son

Story 112
God Speaks to Samuel

Story 113
The Philistines Capture the Ark

Story 114
The Philistines Return the Ark

Story 115
The Philistines Flee from God's Thunder

Story 116
Saul Becomes Israel's First King

Story 117
Saul Conquers the Ammonites

Story 118
Saul Sacrifices Wrongfully

Story 119
Jonathan's Bravery at Micmash

Story 120
Saul's Foolish Vow

Story 121
Saul Keeps Forbidden Spoils

Story 122
David the Shepherd Boy

Story 123
David Plays His Harp for Saul

Story 124
David Fights Goliath

Story 125
Best Friends: David and Jonathan

Story 126
Saul Is Jealous of David

Story 127
Saul Tries to Kill David

Story 128
A Three-Arrow Warning

Story 129
David Hides from Saul

Story 130
Saul Kills God's Priests

Story 131
David and Jonathan Renew Their
Friendship

Story 132
The Ziphites Betray David

Story 133
David Spares Saul at En-gedi

Story 134
Abigail Helps David

Story 135
David Spares a Sleeping Saul

Story 136
David Lives with the Philistines

Story 137
Saul Visits the Medium of Endor

Story 138
David Destroys the Amalekites

Story 139
Saul Dies on the Battlefield

CHAPTER 12: The Golden Kingdom: David's Reign 113

Story 140
David Learns of Saul's Death

Story 141

David Becomes King of Judah

Story 142

David Becomes King of All Israel

Story 143

David Captures Jerusalem

Story 144

David Fights the Philistines with
the Sound of Wind in the Trees

Story 145

David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

Story 146

God's Promise to David

Story 147

David Shows Kindness to Mephibosheth

Story 148

Hanun Insults David's Ambassadors

Story 149

David and Bathsheba

Story 150

Absalom Rebels

Story 151

Shimei Insults David

Story 152

Absalom's Wicked Advisors

Story 153

Absalom's Defeat and Death

Story 154

Sheba's Rebellion

Story 155

A Costly Census

**CHAPTER 13: Riches and Poverty:
Solomon's Wealth and Excess 129**

Story 156

Solomon Becomes King

Story 157

David's Last Words

Story 158

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Story 159

Solomon's Wisdom Is Tested

Story 160

Solomon Builds the Temple

Story 161

The Temple Is Dedicated

Story 162

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

Story 163

Solomon Turns Away from God

Story 164

Solomon's Death

**CHAPTER 14: Tarnished Gold:
The Divided Kingdom 139**

Story 165

Rehoboam Rejects Tax Reform

**CHAPTER 15: Wasted Opportunity:
From the Division to Israel's
Captivity 143**

Story 166

Jeroboam's Golden Calves

Story 167

Ahab Becomes King of Israel

Story 168

Elijah Is Fed by Ravens

Story 169

Elijah Helps a Widow of Zarephath

Story 170

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

Story 171

A Quiet Voice on the Mountain

Story 172

Elijah Calls Elisha

Story 173

Ahab Steals Naboth's Vineyard

Story 174

Ahab's Last Battle

Story 175

Elijah Goes to Heaven in a Whirlwind

Story 176
Elisha Helps a Poor Widow

Story 177
A Room for Elisha

Story 178
Elisha Raises a Boy from the Dead

Story 179
Naaman Is Healed of Leprosy

Story 180
Elisha's Greedy Servant

Story 181
Elisha's Servant Sees an Angel Army

Story 182
The Syrian Army Is Blinded

Story 183
Four Lepers Refuse Wealth

Story 184
Elisha Anoints Jehu King

Story 185
Jehu Kills Jezebel

Story 186
Joash Becomes King of Judah

Story 187
Joash Repairs the Temple

Story 188
Jonah and the Great Fish

Story 189
Jonah Preaches at Nineveh

Story 190
King Uzziah Becomes a Leper

Story 191
God Calls Isaiah as a Prophet to Judah

CHAPTER 16: Everything Falls Apart: Israel's Captivity 169

Story 192
An Angel Army Destroys the Assyrians

Story 193
The Lord Extends Hezekiah's Life

Story 194
Josiah Becomes King of Judah

Story 195
God Calls Jeremiah as a Prophet

Story 196
Jehoiakim Burns Jeremiah's Scroll

Story 197
Jeremiah Is Put into a Cistern

Story 198
Judah's Last Days

CHAPTER 17: Life in a Strange Land: The Exile and Return 181

Story 199
Daniel Refuses the King's Food

Story 200
Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Story 201
The Fiery Furnace

Story 202
The Handwriting on the Wall

Story 203
Daniel in the Lions' Den

Story 204
Return of the First Exiles

Story 205
The Temple Rebuilding Begins

Story 206
Esther Becomes Queen

Story 207
Mordecai Overhears a Treasonous Plot

Story 208
Haman Tricks the King

Story 209
Haman's Defeat

Story 210
Ezra Returns to Jerusalem

Story 211
Nehemiah Goes Home

Story 212
Nehemiah Inspects the Walls

Story 213

Nehemiah Rebuilds Jerusalem's Walls

Story 214

Ezra Reads the Law of God

Story 215

Jerusalem's Walls Are Dedicated

**CHAPTER 18: Years of Silence:
Between the Old and New
Testaments 197**

**CHAPTER 19: Before Bethlehem:
The Story before Jesus' Birth 201**

**CHAPTER 20: The Genealogy
of Jesus 205**

**CHAPTER 21: The Preparation
for Jesus' Birth 209**

Story 216

Gabriel Visits Zechariah

Story 217

Gabriel Visits Mary

Story 218

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Story 219

John the Baptist Is Born

Story 220

An Angel Speaks to Joseph

**CHAPTER 22: The Birth
and Childhood of Jesus 213**

Story 221

Jesus Is Born

Story 222

An Angel Announces Jesus' Birth

Story 223

Shepherds Visit the Baby Jesus

Story 224

Simeon and Anna

Story 225

Wise Men Bring Gifts to Jesus

Story 226

Joseph and Mary Take Jesus to Egypt

Story 227

Herod Slaughters the Baby Boys of
Bethlehem

Story 228

Jesus Grows Up in Nazareth

Story 229

Jesus Teaches the Teachers in the Temple

**CHAPTER 23: John the Baptist
Announces the Messiah 219**

Story 230

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

Story 231

Jesus Is Baptized

Story 232

Jesus Is Tempted

Story 233

Jesus Is the Lamb of God

**CHAPTER 24: Jesus' Early Ministry
in Galilee 223**

Story 234

Jesus' First Disciples

Story 235

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

Story 236

Jesus Chases Merchants from the Temple

Story 237

Jesus Talks with Nicodemus

Story 238

The Woman at the Well

**CHAPTER 25: Jesus' First
Miracles 229**

Story 239

Jesus Heals a Nobleman's Son

Story 240

Jesus Teaches at the Synagogue

Story 241

The Great Catch of Fish

Story 242

Jesus Calls Four Disciples

Story 243

A Man with an Unclean Spirit

Story 244

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law

Story 245

Jesus Preaches throughout Galilee

Story 246

Jesus Heals a Leper

Story 247

A Paralyzed Man Comes through the Roof

Story 248

Jesus Calls Matthew

Story 249

Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda

Story 250

Jesus' Disciples Pick Grain on the Sabbath

Story 251

Jesus Heals a Withered Hand

**CHAPTER 26: The Apostles
and the Sermon on the Mount 239**

Story 252

Jesus Chooses Twelve Apostles

Story 253

The Sermon on the Mount

**CHAPTER 27: Jesus' Second
Ministry in Galilee 243**

Story 254

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

Story 255

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son

Story 256

A Woman Anoints Jesus' Feet

**CHAPTER 28: Jesus Tells Parables
in Galilee 249**

Story 257

The Parable of the Sower

**CHAPTER 29: More Miracles
of Jesus 253**

Story 258

Jesus Stills a Storm

Story 259

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Man

Story 260

Jesus Raises Jairus's Daughter

Story 261

Jesus Sends Out the Disciples

Story 262

John the Baptist Is Beheaded

Story 263

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand Plus

Story 264

Jesus Walks on Water

Story 265

Jesus Heals at Gennesaret

**CHAPTER 30: Jesus Reaches Out
to Gentiles: Beyond Galilee and
Home Again 263**

Story 266

Jesus Speaks with a Foreign Woman

Story 267

Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man

Story 268

Jesus Feeds Four Thousand

Story 269

Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida

Story 270

Peter Identifies Jesus as the Messiah

Story 271

Jesus Is Transfigured

Story 272

The Disciples Fail at Healing

Story 273

Money from a Fish's Mouth

Story 274

Who Will Be Greatest?

Story 275

The Parable of the Two Debtors

**CHAPTER 31: At the Festival of
Tabernacles 271**

Story 276

Jesus Heals at the Pool of Siloam

Story 277

Jesus Is the Good Shepherd

**CHAPTER 32: Jesus' Ministry
in Judea 277**

Story 278

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two

Story 279

The Good Samaritan

Story 280

Jesus Visits Mary and Martha

Story 281

Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray

Story 282

The Parable of the Rich Fool

**CHAPTER 33: Jesus' Ministry:
Jerusalem, Perea, and Bethany 283**

Story 283

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

Story 284

The Lost Sheep

Story 285

The Lost Coin

Story 286

The Prodigal Son

Story 287

Jesus Raises Lazarus

**CHAPTER 34: Jesus Goes toward
Jerusalem 293**

Story 288

Jesus Heals Ten Lepers

Story 289

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Story 290

Jesus Blesses the Children

Story 291

Jesus and the Rich Young Man

Story 292

The Laborers in the Vineyard

Story 293

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

Story 294

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Story 295

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

Story 296

Jesus Talks about Caesar's Coin

Story 297

A Poor Widow's Two Coins

**CHAPTER 35: Jesus in the Shadow
of the Cross 305**

Story 298

The Ten Bridesmaids

Story 299

The Parable of the Talents

Story 300

Mary of Bethany Anoints Jesus' Feet

Story 301

Judas Bargains to Betray Jesus

**CHAPTER 36: The Last Supper
and the Garden of Gethsemane 311**

Story 302

The Last Supper

Story 303

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

**CHAPTER 37: Jesus' Trials,
Crucifixion, and Burial 315**

Story 304

Judas Betrays Jesus

Story 305

Jesus before the Sanhedrin

Story 306

Peter Denies Jesus

Story 307

Judas Hangs Himself

Story 308

Jesus before Pilate

Story 309

Jesus before Herod Antipas

Story 310

Pilate Condemns Jesus

Story 311

Jesus Is Beaten

Story 312

Jesus Carries His Cross

Story 313

Jesus Is Crucified

Story 314

Joseph and Nicodemus Bury Jesus

CHAPTER 38: Jesus' Resurrection: Appearances and Ascension 325

Story 315

Women Visit Jesus' Tomb

Story 316

Mary Magdalene Meets Jesus

Story 317

Peter and John Visit Jesus' Tomb

Story 318

Jesus on the Road to Emmaus

Story 319

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

Story 320

Jesus Puts Thomas's Doubts to Rest

Story 321

A Fishing Miracle

Story 322

The Great Commission

Story 323

Jesus' Ascension

CHAPTER 39: The Early Church 333

Story 324

Matthias Succeeds Judas Iscariot

Story 325

Pentecost

Story 326

Peter and John before the Council

Story 327

Ananias and Sapphira

Story 328

The Apostles Are Jailed

Story 329

The First Deacons

Story 330

The Stoning of Stephen

Story 331

Saul Persecutes the Christians

Story 332

Philip Goes to Samaria

Story 333

Philip and the Ethiopian Treasurer

CHAPTER 40: Saul Becomes a Christian 343

Story 334

Saul Is Converted

Story 335

Saul Escapes in a Basket

CHAPTER 41: Peter's Ministry and Miracles 347

Story 336

Peter Heals Aeneas

Story 337

Peter Raises Dorcas

Story 338

Cornelius Is Converted

Story 339

James Is Killed, and Peter Is Rescued

Story 340
Herod Agrippa Dies

CHAPTER 42: Paul's First Missionary Journey 355

Story 341
Saul Becomes Paul

Story 342
Paul Is Stoned

CHAPTER 43: Paul's Second Missionary Journey 363

Story 343
Paul and Barnabas Separate

Story 344
Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Part 1

Story 345
A Man from Macedonia

Story 346
Paul Heals a Slave Girl

Story 347
Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Part 2

Story 348
Paul Preaches on Mars Hill

Story 349
Priscilla and Aquila

Story 350
Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Part 3

CHAPTER 44: Paul's Third Missionary Journey 371

Story 351
Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Story 352
The Seven Sons of Sceva

Story 353
The Silversmith Riot

Story 354
Eutychus Falls to His Death

Story 355
The Prophecy of Agabus

Story 356
Paul Returns to Jerusalem

CHAPTER 45: Paul's Arrest and Trials 379

Story 357
Paul's Arrest at the Temple

Story 358
A Warning from Paul's Nephew

Story 359
Paul before Governor Felix

Story 360
Paul Appeals to Caesar

Story 361
Paul before King Agrippa

CHAPTER 46: Paul's Journey to Rome and Shipwreck 385

Story 362
Paul Is Shipwrecked

Story 363
Paul's Adventures on Malta

Story 364
Paul under House Arrest in Rome

Story 365
Onesimus and Philemon

CHAPTER 47: After Paul's House Arrest in Rome 395

CHAPTER 48: Other New Testament Letters 397

CHAPTER 49: Beyond Time: A Look at the Future in the Book of Revelation 399

Introduction

If you are a parent or teacher, this book is for you. It is not intended to be used as a storybook with children but rather to guide you who guide children, to help you see the entire Bible narrative as it happened chronologically, and to show you how the great Bible stories fit into that overarching story of stories.

Parents and teachers worldwide have told and retold the most significant Bible stories to their children, but many have never seen these stories in the context of the overall panorama of the Bible. How does each story fit into the total Bible text, arranged *historically* rather than “through the Bible”? You will be surprised as you see this total panorama of the Bible Story in history unfold.

In this book, we identify 365 of the most significant Bible stories—stories that appear most often in Bible storybooks, Sunday school curriculum, and other Christian-education resources. The 365 stories are located in the context of the total Bible narrative, *as it happened historically*.

Why is this important? Because the chronological unfolding of the Bible narrative often provides unusual commentary on an event. For example, teachers and parents may wonder why King Artaxerxes was so favorable to Nehemiah, not only giving him permission to return to the land, but sending vast resources with him. Seeing this event in history gives the answer—Artaxerxes was the stepson of Queen Esther, who likely had great influence on him as he grew up. Remember, the book of Nehemiah comes *before* the book of Esther in the Bible, so looking at Bible stories as they appear in the Bible itself would make it appear that Nehemiah lived before Esther, not after. Seeing the stories historically shows them in correct order and thus reveals exciting new insights.

I know you will find many other new and exciting discoveries as you read through this book. It is my prayer that this book will enrich you and your teaching or parenting.

V. Gilbert Beers

Before Creation

THE SETTING

Characters:

God the Father; God the Son; God the Holy Spirit; angels; morning stars; Satan

Time Period:

The time of mystery before creation

Dates:

Before time began, so there were no dates.

Where the Big Story Can Be Found:

Genesis 21:33; Deuteronomy 33:27; Job 38:4-7; Psalm 102:24, 26; Proverbs 8:22-26; Isaiah 14:12-15; 66:2; Ezekiel 43:7; Matthew 8:11; John 1:1-4; 10:30; Acts 7:49; 1 Timothy 3:6; Hebrews 1:13; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 22:16

THE BIG STORY

The Big Story of God's plan of the ages began aeons before creation. God was there, as he always has been, planning for the creation of the universe, including our world, and planning for us to fit within his Creation.

His plan included people such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Nehemiah, and all the other great people in the Bible. It also included people whose names are lost to us. Some were heroic people. But their names did not make it into Bible history. God's plan also included you and your child.

God's plan included the birth of his Son, Jesus, at Bethlehem, as well as Jesus' life on earth and his death and resurrection. It included the growth of the early church, the Dark Ages, the Reformation, and the modern age we live in. His story includes all of our stories and beyond, through all future endless ages.

"In the beginning" actually had no beginning, for God existed long before the creation story of Genesis 1. How long ago was that? Some think the creation of the world occurred at least twelve billion years ago. Others speak of many more billions of years. Are they right? How can we even know? Either way, God already existed twelve billion years ago and billions of billions of years ago, even though he had not yet created our universe. The Bible teaches us that God had already existed for endless aeons of time before "the beginning" mentioned in Genesis 1:1, for he has always existed—even for billions of billions of years.

Angels were there at creation, too, celebrating from the ramparts of heaven. So were the "morning stars," probably angelic or Christlike beings described in the Scriptures. They, too, celebrated God's creation and the wonderful plans he was designing for you and me. Even before the creation of the world, Satan was there also and already frustrated at God's plans for you and me. He longed to take action in his frustrations and destroy whatever he could. When did God create the angels and the morning stars? We don't know. We only know that he was there first. Did God create Satan? The Bible says Satan was created as an angel, but he rebelled against God and became evil personified.

10

Before Bethlehem

The Story before Jesus' Birth

THE SETTING

Characters:

Jesus Christ (God the Son, the second person of the Trinity)

Time Period:

From aeons before creation until Jesus was born in Bethlehem

Dates:

From eternity past until 5 or 6 BC

Where the Big Story Can Be Found:

John 1:1-18

THE BIG STORY

The Christmas story began thousands of years before Bethlehem. To understand the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and the stories about his life on earth and his sacrifice on the cross, we must go back thousands of years to the creation of the universe. The triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—was already there, creating everything that was ever made. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had been there for aeons before creation, planning every snowflake, every flower, every animal, and every human being who would ever live.

God the Son, whom we have come to know as Jesus through his physical birth on earth, has always existed. He was, and is, God—God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. The life of Jesus on earth was but a very small chapter in the everlasting life of God the Son, from eternity past through eternity yet to come.

GOD THE SON—THE CREATOR

The apostle John, the man who knew Jesus better than any other human being, wrote a Gospel about Jesus, affirming that he truly was, and still is, the Son of God, the Messiah. John opens his Gospel with the remarkable words, “In the beginning the Word [Jesus] already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it” (John 1:1-5).

JESUS’ LIFE ON EARTH— PLANNED BEFORE CREATION

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He is eternal. In John 8:58, we read Jesus’ words, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!” In Jesus’ prayer to the Father recorded in John 17:5, he says, “Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.” God’s plans for the incarnation of Jesus, life of Jesus on earth, death of Jesus on the cross, and resurrection and ascension of Jesus were all in place long before the dawn of creation.

THE FORCE THAT HOLDS THE UNIVERSE TOGETHER

Not only were the plans for all of this in place before creation, but God the Son was personally there at creation, bringing all things into existence, and he continues to hold all creation together. Colossians 1:15-17 affirms this: “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is

supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.”

THE CHRIST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In a very real sense, the entire Old Testament is the prelude to Jesus' birth at Bethlehem. Every person and every event fit into the remarkable story of all stories, leading to his coming as a baby at just the right time.

The prophecies in the Old Testament point to Jesus' coming. The priestly system points to Jesus, the great High Priest who was to come. The sacrificial system points to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was the sacrifice for our sins.

The pinnacle of history is the Crucifixion. Jesus came to Bethlehem for three purposes: (1) to die on the cross for our sins, his preeminent purpose; (2) to leave us a record of his miracles, teachings, and personal love so that we might believe in him and live for him; and (3) to gather and train those who would lead in building his church after he returned to heaven. Revelation 13:8 tells us of “the Lamb [Jesus] who was slaughtered.” His crucifixion and all that led to it were in God's eternal plan long before creation.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

There was an appointed time for the Son to come to earth and an appointed time for him to die on the cross. The Scriptures describe these divine appointments this way: “When the right time came, God sent his Son” (Galatians 4:4). Some versions say, “In the fullness of time,” that is, when time was fully ripe or fully prepared for his coming—not a moment too early, and not a moment too late.

The Genealogy of Jesus

THE SETTING

Characters:

Jesus; Joseph (adopted father of Jesus); Luke (author of the Gospel of Luke); Mary (mother of Jesus); Matthew (author of the Gospel of Matthew)

Time Period:

The entire Old Testament period from Adam to Jesus

Dates:

From an unknown date until 5 or 6 BC

Where the Big Story Can Be Found:

Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38

THE BIG STORY

CREDENTIALS FOR JESUS' LEGAL FATHER

Most of us are startled to see the story of Jesus begin with a long genealogy (see Matthew 1:1-17) rather than with an account of his birth. The record in Matthew is a long list of the ancestors of Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, not the bloodline coming through Mary. Since Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, he was giving credibility to Jesus' ancestry through his legal father, Joseph, and showing that his ancestry was tied to Abraham. His Jewish audience would recognize and accept a lineage from Abraham. It was not

necessary for them to go back beyond Abraham for that “fatherly” set of credentials.

THE BLOODLINE OF JESUS

The genealogy in Luke 3:23-38 is likely Mary’s genealogy. The record in Matthew says that Joseph’s father was Jacob. Here it says Heli, who was likely Mary’s father and Joseph’s father-in-law. Why didn’t Luke just say that? Perhaps because giving a long genealogy of a mother wasn’t exactly the thing to do at that time.

If this is Mary’s genealogy, and Bible scholars accept it as such, these ancestors are in the bloodline of Jesus’ body, the body he sacrificed on the cross.

A FLAWED FAMILY

If you expect Mary’s genealogy to be made up of perfect people who never sinned, forget it. Jesus’ body, the body he sacrificed for our sins, came from a long list of sinful people. The Bible message is clear: These are people just like you and me—flawed, sinful people.

Abraham heads the list of flawed people. He was a godly man, to be sure. But he also lied to Pharaoh, deceiving him with the idea that Sarah was his sister, not his wife. He repeated this same deception with the Philistine king, Abimelech. Abraham and his wife Sarah lacked the faith to believe that God would give them a son through Sarah, so both contrived to have that son through Sarah’s Egyptian maid Hagar. This was a clear lack of faith in God’s promises, and it brought untold grief to the family.

Jacob was a godly man, without doubt. But we see him deceiving his brother, Esau, and his aged and blind father, Isaac, even telling him that he was Esau.

The story of the birth of Perez, son of Judah, is shocking, even by today’s standards. Judah didn’t know that the woman he had spent time with was really his daughter-in-law Tamar. He left his personal seal, cord, and walking stick with her. Later, when he learned that his daughter-in-law was pregnant, he threatened to kill

her. Then she showed him his belongings. He was without doubt the father of her child, so he left her alone (see Genesis 38).

Obed, King David's grandfather, was the son of the Moabite widow Ruth. There was nothing wrong with Ruth's life. She was about as pure as anyone. But she was Moabite, a descendant of Lot and his older daughter, who got her father drunk one night so she could have sex with him and have a baby (see Genesis 19:30-38). That baby was Moab, Ruth's ancestor and also King David's ancestor. Historically the Moabites were enemies of the Israelites. Through Ruth, David was part Moabite, as were all of his descendants, including Jesus.

King David was a godly man and built a golden kingdom. Usually he led a godly life, even writing many of our Psalms. But everyone knows the story of David and Bathsheba, how he seduced her, then had her husband murdered so he could marry her. The great King Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba. David and Solomon and Bathsheba are all in the bloodline of Jesus.

All of this is to say that the physical blood of Jesus Christ, given for our sins, came from flawed, sinful people in Mary's bloodline. When you think about this, you realize how wise God is to have planned it this way. We would be very uncomfortable if all these people were perfect and we were not.

About the Author

V. Gilbert Beers has written more than 150 books, of which more than one hundred are for children, including *The Toddlers Bible*, *My Bedtime Anytime Storybook*, *The One Year Bible for Children*, and *Tell Me the Story of Jesus*. His books have appeared more than one hundred times on best-seller lists. More than eighty-seven of his books have been published in thirty-four languages.

He also helped develop nine specialty Bibles, including *The Life Application Bible* and the *TouchPoint Bible*. His most recent works are the eight-volume *Family Bible Library* (Southwestern) and *Character Building from THE LIFE OF JESUS*, published in Singapore by Campus Crusade, Asia.

An avid photographer, Gil has published more than twenty-five hundred photos with more than twenty publishers, especially as book covers. More than twenty thousand of his photos appear on the Internet site www.visualbiblealive.com, a free image service.

Gil has two earned doctorates, a PhD in communications from Northwestern University and a ThD from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in Biblical Studies and Archaeology*, *Contemporary Authors*, and several other compilations of leadership biographies.

Happily married for fifty-nine years, Gil and his wife, Arlie, have five children (one deceased) and eleven grandchildren. Gil's passion in life is to help people of all ages love the Bible and become godly people in Christ Jesus. He says, "If we can help people *love to learn* the Bible, they will then *learn to love* the Bible."