

The Bible as Literature
Part 2 (of 4 parts):

"And It Came to Pass": The Bible as God's Storybook

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According to a rabbinic saying, God made people because He loves stories. Henry R. Luce, founder of *Time* magazine, commenting on his magazine's interest in personalities, quipped, "*Time* didn't start this emphasis on stories about people; the Bible did." One of the most universal human impulses can be summed up in the familiar four-word plea, "Tell me a story." The Bible constantly satisfies this human longing for stories. Once when I wondered which passage to choose for the midweek Bible study, my son commented, "Choose a story, not a poem."

Scholarly interest in biblical narrative has never been higher than it currently is. In fact the literary approach to the Bible is almost synonymous with a narrative approach. Narratology is a thriving enterprise that cuts across disciplinary lines.

The Narrative Shape of the Bible as a Whole

One of the attractions a narrative approach to the Bible offers is its way of seeing the Bible as a whole. Educational research has established that the biggest variable in a learner's ability to assimilate data is the presence or absence of a unifying framework within which to place individual items. Viewing the Bible as a story provides such a framework for the Bible as a whole.

To demonstrate that the big pattern in the Bible is a narrative pattern, all one need do is consider the things that make up a story. The soul of a story, said Aristotle, is plot. This is a way of saying

that the most essential ingredient of a story, without which it could not exist, is a sequence of events. The essence of plot, in turn, is a conflict around which the whole action revolves.

Above all else, the Bible is a series of events, with many interspersed passages that interpret the events. From beginning to end, moreover, the Bible is arranged around a central plot conflict between good and evil in a way that a newspaper, a history book, a book of sermons, or a systematic theology never is. In terms of its overall organization, the Bible obeys the dynamics of narrative by its reliance on a central plot made up of individual episodes.

Stories, moreover, consist of interaction among characters. Such interaction is different from the usual forms of historical writing, such as the chronicle of events, character profiles, and catalogs of accomplishments. The Bible has the nature of a story, since it is full of interaction among characters. Dialogue is prominent in the Bible. The Bible is filled with voices speaking and replying. In fact the incidence of direct quotation of speeches in the Bible stood without parallel until the modern novel was born.

Another feature of stories is that they focus on the choices of the characters. There is a corresponding element of suspense, surprise, and discovery in a story. The rhythm of a story rests on three questions: How did it start? What happened next (and next ...)? How did it turn out? This narrative logic is partly what accounts for the sway that stories hold over people's attention.

The Bible, like other stories, is about human choices. In the Bible people's difficulties did not arise from the hostility of the external world, which only provides the *occasion* for people to choose for or against God. People's moral and spiritual choices in history are the heart of the matter. Chesterton once commented on the narrative quality of the Christian faith:

Christianity concentrates on the man at the crossroads.... The true philosophy is concerned with the instant. Will a man take this road or that?-that is the only thing to think about.... The instant is really awful: and it is because our religion has intensely felt the instant that it ... is full of *danger*, like a boy's book: it is at an immortal crisis.¹

Another feature of stories is that they consist of events that fit together with unity, coherence, and shapeliness. According to Aristotle, a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. On this score, too, the Bible as a whole makes up a story. Its beginning is literally the beginning-God's creation of the world and His placing of Adam and Eve in the garden. The middle is the universal history of the

¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908; reprint, Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1959), p. 136.

human race. And the end is literally the end-the end of history. Wilder has written that "God is an active and purposeful God and his action with and for men has a beginning, a middle and an end like any good story."²

The overall shapeliness of the Bible is impressive. It is a U-shaped cycle that moves from the beginning to the end of time. It begins with two people in a garden and ends with a multitude that no one can number in a city. In the words of Frye, "The Bible as a whole presents a gigantic cycle from creation to apocalypse."³ By ending where it did not begin, the Bible follows a basic principle of stories. The element of progression is strong as the story line of the Bible is followed, especially in moving from the Old Testament to the New.

Stories are unified around a central protagonist, and so is the Bible. The characterization of God is the main concern of the Bible, and it is pursued from beginning to end. All other characters and events interact with this great Protagonist. The story of the Bible is the story of God's acts in history. It is the story of salvation history-of how God entered history to save individuals and (in the Old Testament) to save a nation from physical and spiritual destruction.

Stories are full of the concrete experiences of everyday life. Storytellers are never content with abstract propositions. Their impulse is to *show*, not merely to *tell about* an event. Stories help readers relive an experience in the order in which the events happened and as vividly as possible. Stories incarnate their meaning in concrete form. In the words of fiction writer Flannery O'Connor, a storyteller speaks "*with* character and action, not *about* character and action."⁴

The Bible, then, should be regarded as a story because it consists of the very things people associate with stories. These include plot conflict, interaction among characters, emphasis on human choice, a unified and coherent pattern of events that ends where it did not begin, a central protagonist, and the incarnation of meaning in concrete settings, characters, and events. The narrative quality of the Bible is rooted in the character of God, for God is above all the God who acts.

What are the implications of the narrative shape of the Bible as a whole? Primarily it gives the best possible organizing framework for individual parts of the Bible. The average layperson's grasp of how individual parts of the Bible fit together is almost nonexistent. The most customary ways by which people try to orga-

² Amos Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 56.

³ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 316.

⁴ Flannery O'Connor, *Mastery and Manners*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1957), p. 76.

nize the Bible are by the categories of systematic theology and of history. Both of these, however, have been overrated by scholars as organizing frameworks for the Bible as a whole. The reason theology does not help the average person organize the entire Bible is that it cuts against the grain of how the Bible itself is structured. The Bible is not arranged as a topical outline.

Nor is most of the Bible organized as one expects history to be organized. This is not to question that the events recorded in the Bible are historically accurate. But these historical events are presented in narrative form, not as the accumulation of information like that found in modern history books. Many Old Testament survey courses lead the student away from the biblical text to the constructs of the discipline of history. Even more emphatically, they distance the events of the Bible, treating them as having no relevance today.

Literary narrative, by contrast, has a universal quality to it. It tells not simply what *happened* but what *happens*-what is true for all people in all places at all times. In this regard preachers intuitively tend to take a literary approach, while academic biblical scholars cling to the historical model. The tendency of academic biblical scholarship, as distinct from a more devotional approach to the Bible, has been to seal off the Bible in its ancient setting. To guard against possible misunderstanding, let me say again that my literary approach does not lead me to question that the events recorded in the Bible actually occurred. The question is how one can most profitably talk about the stories of the Bible in preaching and teaching. In terms of how the Bible actually presents history, it resembles the chapters in a novel more than chapters in a history book. Yet it differs from a novel in being factual rather than fictional.

Methodology for Interacting with Bible Narratives

In considering the dynamics of the individual stories in the Bible, the aim is to provide a minimal grammar for handling these stories. For those who want more detail, several books provide good models.⁵

As a backdrop, consider how stories are typically handled from the pulpit and in Bible studies. The unity that is found in the passage is ordinarily a conceptual or theological unity. Expositors ap-

⁵ A plausible starting place for examples and further sources of narrative analysis are the following books by the present writer: *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984); *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987); and *Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987).

proach a narrative passage as though it were an essay. That is, they assume that the writer is presenting a thesis with supporting evidence. The sermon takes a similar form. The expositor goes to the story with theological or moral categories in mind and quickly sees a sermon outline taking shape. The resulting sermon has a thesis and three or four subordinate generalizations. Details in the story are then adduced as supporting data for the generalizations.

All this misunderstands how stories communicate their truth. Storytellers have a story to tell. They do not construct their stories out of ideas, though ideas are indirectly embodied in their stories. The basic ingredients of stories-and the corresponding terms with which they should be discussed-are setting, characters, and plot or action. First on the expositor's agenda should be to relive the story. The theological or moral principles should be asserted later.

Settings are the forgotten element in many people's analysis of stories. Yet they will repay all the attention given them. Settings are physical, temporal, and cultural. They serve two main functions in stories. They are always part of the action in a story, providing a fit container for the actions and characters and allowing the story to come alive in the reader's imagination. Often a setting takes on symbolic importance as well, becoming an important part of the meaning of a story. In the story of Lot, for example, Sodom is a moral monstrosity, and God's turning the city into a wasteland is itself the meaning of the story-God's judgment against sin. Analyzing the function of settings in the stories of the Bible will almost always add immensely to one's understanding.

Characters are the second thing to note in a story, and here the record of most expositors is rather good. Biblical characters are known in a variety of ways: by what the storyteller says about them, by other characters' responses to them, by their words and thoughts, by what they say about themselves, and above all by their actions. The key to interacting with the characters in biblical narrative is to look on them as real--life people and therefore to get to know them as fully as possible.

A principle of literary narrative is that characters in a story are in some sense universal. They are representative of humanity generally and carry a burden of meaning larger than themselves. On the basis of what happened to them, Bible readers and preachers can generalize about people in general, including themselves.

At the level of plot, discussions of biblical narrative usually show the most deficiency. To begin, stories are built around one or more plot conflicts. Nearly everything in stories is slanted around these central conflicts. The conflict can be physical conflict, conflict between people, or moral/spiritual conflict. A plot conflict has a beginning, a discernible development, and a final resolution. Not to

approach the unity of a story in terms of plot conflict is self-defeating. Plot conflict is simply how most stories are constructed.

A plot is also constructed as a cause-effect sequence in which one event leads to the next. A story differs in this regard from journalistic reportage, where a summary of the most important information appears first, with other details added by a principle of accumulation. A story, by contrast, takes us through an action in the order in which it unfolded. This means that any successful teaching of a biblical story requires that the action be presented in its successive phases, observing the ongoing progression and coherence of the action. This progressive unifying element is utterly lost if an expositor simply reaches into a story for details that support a conceptual outline.

In the ongoing progression of the plot conflicts(s), the reader goes through the action with a central character known as the protagonist. Arrayed against him or her are the antagonists. Viewing the action from this perspective gives the analysis a focus that it otherwise lacks. Common narrative strategies are to show the protagonist in situations of testing and situations that require choice. A discrepancy between what readers know to be true and ignorance on the part of characters in a story is known as irony.

Having interacted with the story in the terms noted, an expositor must move from story to meaning. Since stories embody their meanings indirectly, this requires active interpretation. It is useful to divide the interpretive process into two phases. The first is to determine what the story is about, and the second is to identify what the story says about that experience or topic. A simple rule of interpretation is to assume that every story is in some sense an example story and therefore to ask what the story is an example of. The narrative world that a storyteller creates by his or her selectivity of details is a picture of the world as the writer understands it, and of what is right and wrong in that world. It should also be remembered that storytelling is an affective art. That is, a story conveys much of its meaning by getting a reader to feel positively or negatively toward characters and events.

Listening to sermons, surveying Bible study materials, and even reading specialized literary commentary have demonstrated over and over how rarely people use foundational narrative concepts when analyzing the stories of the Bible. One cannot relive a biblical story without employing the standard tools of narrative analysis.

The practical application of all this is that the exposition of the stories of the Bible needs to be informed by literary analysis. People need to hear more about plot conflict and characterization and the function of settings in a story than they customarily hear. They need to see stories laid out into their successive episodes or dramatic scenes. They need to see the unity of stories identified in

such narrative terms as testing and choice and initiation and quest. They need to see theological statements arise from the analysis of stories instead of being imposed on them. And they need to see theological meanings derived from stories as a whole instead of the usual practice of moralizing about the specific details in a story.

Nothing has been said this far in this article about such matters as narrator, implied author, implied audience, the narrator's point of view, signifier, actant, sender, receiver, and similar terms that fall into an approach that can loosely be called the rhetorical approach to biblical narrative. Such concepts have little use.

Specialized literary analysis of biblical narrative is currently governed by the myth of complexity. It assumes that the stories of the Bible are enormously complex and are best discussed by critical tools that are extremely detailed. Such a myth of complexity, however, is to be rejected. The literature of the Bible is subtle and artistically crafted but essentially simple. It is folk literature with oral roots. Talking about the Bible's literature does not require intricate tools and theories. It does, however, require literary tools.

Distinctive Features of Biblical Narrative

The preceding pages have explored the dynamics of biblical narrative and in effect have discussed what the stories of the Bible share with stories in general. This should be balanced with a discussion of some things that are distinctive to biblical narrative. The territory about to be covered is essential to understanding biblical narrative but no more essential than what has already been said. This statement intends to counter the widespread false assumption that the Bible is somehow better and truer when it differs from stories generally. Its validity is often wrongly made to depend on its uniqueness. People would get more out of the Bible and handle it better as teachers and preachers if they would carry over to the reading of the Bible more of what they know about other books.

The most distinctive feature of biblical narrative is the mingling of three impulses or modes. They are the historical, the theological, and the literary (the impulse to embody human experience in an artistic form). Usually one of these dominates a passage, though not to the exclusion of the others. The more literary the treatment of an event is, the more a literary approach will yield. But even in these cases the stories of the Bible invite historical and theological approaches as well as a literary approach in a way that stories in general do not. Obviously then the plea for literary criticism of biblical narrative does not imply the sufficiency of such an approach by itself.

From the time that Erich Auerbach wrote his classic comparison of storytelling technique in Homer and in Genesis, it has been a com-

monplace in literary criticism that the stories of the Bible are told in a spare, unembellished style.⁶ To quote Auerbach's well-known summary, biblical narrative includes

the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity, the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent; thoughts and feelings remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspense ... remains mysterious and "fraught with background."⁷

The effect of this unembellished storytelling technique is that the stories "require subtle investigation and interpretation."⁸ With so few details included, readers need to get maximum mileage out of everything the writer puts before them.

Clarity and mystery thus mingle as one moves through these stories. For the most part the storytellers of the Bible narrate but do not explain what happened. Rarely do they add explicit commentary to their presentation. What they tell is reliable, but they leave much unsaid. In the formula of one literary scholar, when the storytellers of the Bible add explanation to their presentation, they tell the truth, but not necessarily the whole truth about an event or character.⁹ The result is that it is easy to grasp the basic action in a biblical story, but difficult to interpret all of its meaning or human dynamics.

The fact that biblical narrative requires an abundance of active interpretation becomes clearer when one observes the way in which dramatized scenes are usually the central element in a Bible story. Storytellers can use as many as four different modes. In *direct narrative* they simply report events, telling in their own voice what happened. In *dramatic narrative* they dramatize a scene as though it were in a play, quoting the speeches or dialogue of characters. In *description* writers describe the details of setting or character, while *commentary* consists of explanations by storytellers. Overwhelmingly, biblical stories emphasize the dramatized scene. Biblical imagination is strongly dramatic. Drama, in turn, is the most objective of literary genres. It simply presents characters and leaves it up to the audience to come to the right conclusions. Once again the stories of the Bible call for interpretation.

⁶ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 3-23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹ Meier Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 43.

This effect is reinforced by the prevailing brevity of the narrative units. This preference for the brief unit is characteristic of other biblical genres as well. It means that extended delineation of personality is not included in biblical narrative, though a composite portrait may be produced by combining the fragments. In reading, "the great figures move in somewhat remote fashion, their characters illuminated as it were from the side by flashes of magnanimity, pity, anger; heroism, deceit, covetousness; suffering and the frequent cry of despair."¹⁰

The stories of the Bible also combine two types of narrative often thought of as opposites. One is the impulse toward realism. The stories of the Bible are rooted in actual history. They often include passages that read more like diaries or journalistic reports than ordinary stories. They tell about the failings of characters as well as their virtues. They also focus on common experience and characters of average social standing in a way that other ancient literature does not.

But the stories of the Bible also possess the qualities of a type of story that is in many ways the exact opposite of realism and that literary scholars call romance. This is the type of story that delights in the extraordinary and miraculous. Such stories are filled with mystery, the supernatural, and the heroic. They are replete with adventure, battle, capture and rescue, surprise, the exotic and marvelous, poetic justice (good characters rewarded and bad ones punished), and happy endings in which the underdog wins, the villain gets just punishment, the slave girl marries the king, the dead come back to life. It is no wonder that the stories of the Bible appeal to children. Nor is it surprising that they merge in a child's imagination with romance stories. I recall an occasion when my daughter, then age five, recommended I select for a Bible study "the story of Gideon, and his knights, and their fiery swords."

The stories of the Bible thus combine the two tendencies of narrative that have most appealed to the human race. They are factually realistic and romantically marvelous. They bring together two impulses that the human race is always trying to join—reason and imagination, fact and mystery. The stories of the Bible appeal to that part of humanity that is firmly planted on the earth and to that part of humanity that soars to the heavens.

Another fusion of polarities occurs with the way in which the stories of the Bible call for both a naive and a sophisticated literary response. They are both adult stories and children's stories. On one

¹⁰ T. R. Henn, *The Bible as Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 31.

side they are "folk" stories-brief, realistic, vivid, uncomplicated in plot line. They are stories that elicit intuitive responses from children. Looking back, I find that my childhood responses to such things as dramatic irony or poetic justice or characterization were usually the right ones, even though I lacked the literary terminology to name them.

But the stories of the Bible also call for a sophisticated response. Part of this is the ability to deal with what are today called adult themes-violence, sex, deceit, death, the subtleties of tension in personal relations, and the ambiguous mixture of good and evil in people's character and actions. Bible stories often carry a surface meaning that no one can miss, combined with difficult issues that require interpretive skill to notice and unravel. In a sense the Bible is ready to meet its readers, whether children or adults, at whatever level their own background of experience and literary ability allows them to meet it. This is true not only of the content of Bible stories but also of their artistry. For people whose literary capacity has been awakened, there is as much excellence of literary technique to relish in the stories of the Bible as in other literature.

Some additional distinctives of biblical narrative may be noted. Patterns of repetition are numerous and intricate.¹¹ Irony is a leading ingredient.¹² Physical descriptions of characters are understated and sparse. Biblical storytellers frequently work with elemental dichotomies such as good and evil, light and darkness, God and people, the earthly and the heavenly or spiritual. The simplicity of these stories is paradoxically also majestic. Most distinctive of all is the regularity with which God is a character in the stories.

If the stories of the Bible are like other stories, they are also different from them. Even at a literary level, readers of the Bible are continuously aware that this is a special book. If it reenacts familiar narrative conventions, it also transcends them and sometimes refutes them.

The Narrative Quality of Christian Life and Doctrine

The high proportion of stories in the Bible suggests that narrative is inherent in the Christian faith itself. Wilder once wrote

¹¹ Patterns of repetition in biblical narrative have become a prominent topic in recent criticism. Specimen studies include Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 88-113; and Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), pp. 24-50.

¹² Two superb studies of irony in biblical narrative are those by Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), and Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985).

that "the narrative mode is uniquely important in Christianity.... A Christian can confess his faith where he is ... by telling a story or a series of stories."¹³ If a believer wants to tell about his own Christian faith, he has to tell a story about how his faith began, where it has led him, what he has done on the basis of it, what God has done for him, and so forth. Here indeed is the basis for an amorphous but flourishing phenomenon known as narrative theology.

Life itself has a narrative quality to it, inasmuch as it consists of the same ingredients as stories—settings, characters, and action. The Christian faith highlights the narrative quality of life. It begins with the premise that every person is the protagonist in his or her own life story. Like literary protagonists, each person is put into situations that test him or her and require choices.

The world has the qualities of narrative as well. It is a world in which a great conflict is raging between good and evil, God and Satan. It is a time-bound world in which things never stand still. Progression in time characterizes life stories, with an accompanying potential for change and development, progress and regress. Suspense and discovery accompany the unfolding of this story, along with growth in understanding as one looks back and reads his own story.

Stories have pattern and design, and in this way also believers' lives have a narrative quality. Their lives have the beginning-middle-ending shape of a story. They are progressing toward a goal. In fact Christians have already read the last chapter of their story, even though they have to wait to read the intervening chapters. The last chapter resembles romance stories, since it includes the appearance of a hero who kills a dragon, marries the bride, celebrates the wedding with a feast, and lives happily ever after in a palace glittering with jewels.

Stories have an author who stands outside the story and controls it. Stories bear the imprint of their author and express that author's values. The Christian's life is a story told by God.

The Christian's story is built around familiar archetypes or master images. It is a rescue story (Col. 1:13-14). It is also a quest story, having heaven as the eventual goal of the quest (John 14:2-3; Heb. 11:16) and personal holiness as a daily goal (Matt. 5:48). The dragon-slaying motif of much of romance literature is also present in this story: "put to death . . . evil desire" (Col. 3:5, RSV). Equally prominent are the motifs of testing (1 Pet. 4:12) and transformation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Viewing the Christian life in narrative terms helps believers organize it and understand it better. It can make believers better

¹³ Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel*, p. 56.

readers of their own life stories. Their lives in the world consist of two things—the profession they make and the story they are in the process of telling by their actions. Their profession is what they say outwardly to the world. The story each Christian tells is more private and hidden from view, but it is a truer indication of who he or she really is. Christians prove their allegiances less by what they say than by the story they create with their choices and actions in life. The story is the basis for the decisions Christians make—decisions that often baffle others who know only their profession.

The grand edifice of Christian theology is similarly not only a list of doctrines but also a story. The Apostles' Creed, for example, is not simply a collection of ideas but also a story about what God has done. Likewise baptism and communion also tell a story about redemption in Christ.

Systematic theology should be supplemented with narrative theology. Viewing one's beliefs as a story underscores the need to act as well as to believe. It makes Christians participants in the grand drama of redemption, not simply the recipients of a doctrinal system. Even ethics is more than a list of commands and principles. It is a story of choosing good and rejecting evil—of acting virtuously in the face of life's choices the way the hero of a story acts.

To summarize, both the Bible and the Christian faith based on it have the quality of a story. Teachers and preachers need to do justice to this narrative quality. Doing so begins with a commitment to teach and preach from the narrative parts of the Bible. It extends beyond that to the way in which the doctrinal content of the faith is pictured—not simply as a list of beliefs but also as a story of what God has done and what His followers are called to do in response.

Respecting the narrative quality of the Bible can affect how teachers and preachers of the Bible view their tasks. The metaphors by which they perform those tasks have a subtle influence on how they approach them. The dominant metaphor continues to be one in which they view themselves as lecturers imparting information. It has been the burden of this article to suggest that they should also view themselves as telling God's story. The stories of the Bible should be treated not only as histories of what happened but also as metaphors of the human condition generally. And when teachers apply these stories to their own lives and to their audience, they need to avoid customary abstractness and to ask how the principles of the faith will actually become part of the life story people are all in the process of creating.

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It is a book about God telling people that their biggest problem is failing to believe that God loves everyone in the very most inclusive way. "Eve picked the fruit and ate some. And Adam ate some, too. And a terrible lie came into the world. It would never leave. It would live on in every human heart, whispering to every one of God's children: "God doesn't love me." Did you spot the tricks? First, this interpretation of Genesis 3 is a fabrication. The passage says nothing about this supposed lie entering every human heart. That's the whole subversive point. The Jesus Storybook Bible is a work of systematic theology and it is a system that is blatantly anti-biblical. Its core theme is found in Jonah's story: "They have run far away from me. Each story from The Jesus Storybook Bible comes to life through animation and is presented in DVD format or digital download. Curriculum Kit. This kit contains 44 lessons with activities, notes for teachers, memory verses, handouts and more. There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. This is heady theology, often missed in adult preaching and teaching, but fully realized in an age appropriate and attractive form that will delight children and often (at least for me) leave the grown up reader in tears. More wondrously, she has avoided the moralism and legalism that so often characterizes Christian educational materials for children. Awesome God Bible StoryBook. 511 likes. Click "Suggest to Friends" above and invite your friends to DiscipleLand's Fan Page. Spread the word! These beautifully illustrated story booklets cover the main events of Jesus coming to earth as a baby. Sold in packs of 10. Great for families, events giveaways, or your upcoming Christmas program! "And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." I Kings 18:1, KJV "Now it happened after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." (New American Standard Bible). "Behold" just means, "Look!" or "Look here!" John 1:29 in the King James says, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of t