THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

VOLUME I
THE OLD TESTAMENT

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

Your Time Has Come

Get ready for an adventure.
Open your mind and stretch your imagination. Soon we'll travel back in time to trace the origins of the universe and of the human race. Through the power of a Book unlike any other book, we can journey to a distant age, all the way back to the first age.
By the time this voyage is complete, you'll arrive back home in the present day. But what you learn along the way will help you understand better your unique place in today's world. And it will allow you to look forward, with hope and wonder, to the world to come.

Your ancestors before you, those who lived in the days of old, once sat by firelight as they studied and learned from this Book. It's filled with tales of adventure, betrayal, vengeance, war, love, heroism, and hope. As you embark on this journey, you'll come to know men and women of great holiness, and some of great wickedness as well. You'll encounter angels and demons, kings
and queens, warriors and prophets—and everyday people like yourself, all with a story to tell.

Your time has come to learn this story. It’s your turn now. You must take this Book, the one we call the Bible, and learn everything there is to know about it. Think of it as a flaming torch that has been carried through the long, dark nights of human history, a torch that has now been passed to you. Take it, steady it, and move forward with its knowledge and wisdom, so that one day you can pass it on to the ones who follow you.

But before you take up this torch, burning with the power of God’s Word, it’s important to understand why our heavenly Father gave it to us.

The Book of Nature
God created us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world, so that we can be happy with Him forever in the world to come. The better we know Him, the more we’ll love Him; and the more we love Him, the more eager we’ll be to do His holy will.

For this reason, the most important lessons we must learn are those that help us to know more and more about God.

We can learn many things about God from the world around us. The radiant stars, moon, and sun that light the sky, the fragrant forests and pastures, dotted with blossoms; the towering mountains and vast deserts—all these were made by God. They are beautiful, so they tell us that the God who made them is beautiful.

The mighty rivers flow, and the great waterfalls come crashing down. The ocean tides rise and fall, and no one can resist them. Storms come thundering with lightning and gale winds. All these are powerful, so they tell us that the God who made them is powerful.

Our families and friends are kind and good to us. They watch over us lovingly and take care of our needs. So they show us that the God who made them is loving and caring.

In all these ways, the world tells us about our God. Since He’s the One who created it, we might think of Him as an Author, and the world as His Book. Just as an author writes words on a page, so God writes with His divine Hand on the sky, the land, the sea, and the people of our world. Each morning when we open our eyes, we’re able to read from this “Book of Nature” that He’s written.

Even so, we need more than this “book” all around us to understand who God is and how He wants us to live. That’s because we aren’t always able to read correctly the wonderful lessons that are found in the Book of Nature. The things of this world are so beautiful and powerful and good that we may be tempted to think of them more of than we do of the God who made them. We may end up loving them more than we love God.

But there’s another reason as well why we need more than the Book of Nature to learn about God. We find that many important things about God and His will for us aren’t written in that book. Some truths are above and beyond nature, and we call these supernatural.

God knows these truths because He is all-wise and knows all things. He wants to share them with us. Why? If we learn these supernatural truths, we’ll know how to love and serve Him in a nobler way. And that will make us far happier than we could ever be if we had to depend on the Book of Nature alone.

Why We Have the Bible
For this reason, God gave us another book, which we call the Bible. It helps us make sense of the lessons that are written in the Book of Nature, as well as many other
things that otherwise we could never know or understand about God, ourselves, and the world around us.

Children can't understand everything that adults can, but even the wisest adult can never understand certain things in the mind of God. They are simply too far beyond us, too complex, too vast, for us to grasp. So we must trust in Him when He tells us that something is true.

How can we trust that everything God says is true? Because He knows all things, and He cannot lie. The truths that we can't fully understand, even after God has told them to us, we call mysteries.

The Bible was written by men who were chosen by God especially for that purpose. These men wrote down what God wanted them to write, and nothing else. He guided them so they would not make a mistake. He brought to their memories the truths they had learned, and He placed thoughts in their minds that would never have come to them otherwise. The help that God gave to these sacred writers we call divine inspiration.

After Christ ascended into heaven, God inspired some of His apostles and disciples to write down many of the things He had said and done. God watched over them and guided them, making sure they would write all that He wanted them to write. After the last apostle died, no one ever had that special gift of divine inspiration again. By that time, God had revealed to us all the truths that are necessary for us to enter into the kingdom of heaven and to live with Him forever.

The Church that Christ founded guards the truths that He revealed. It's like a castle built to protect a great spring of life-giving water. When the spring is protected, the living water can flow out from it to all those who come to drink.

Christ promised to be with His Church—the King in His castle—until the end of time. Through this promise, we know that the Church cannot make a mistake when she tells us what we must believe and do if we wish to know, love, and serve God, both in this life and the next. Because the Church cannot make a mistake in these matters, we say she is infallible.

The Parts of the Bible

The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word "testament" means an agreement, or more exactly, a covenant. When two persons enter into a covenant, they promise to give themselves to each other in love and to be faithful in that love. Marriage is one clear example of what we mean by a covenant.

The forty-six books of the Old Testament tell us about the covenant between God and His people before Jesus came into the world. The Old Testament shows us again and again how God loved His covenant people faithfully, even when they broke the covenant and failed to love Him in return. These books tell how God promised us a Redeemer who would save us from our sins, and how He chose a certain nation, the Jews, to prepare the world for the Redeemer's coming.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books. It tells how God's promise was fulfilled in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and in the Church that He founded.

The Bible, then, is one large book, made up of seventy-three smaller ones.

The books in the Bible are not all alike. Some tell the story of things that happened in the past, called historical books. Others contain rules of conduct for how to live properly, called moral books. Others foretell things that will happen in the future, called prophetic books. Some of the books are even written in poetry.
The Story of the Bible will take you through the adventures of both Testaments, in two volumes. This first volume covers the Old Testament, and the second volume covers the New Testament.

Scripture and Tradition
We should note one last thing about the truths God has revealed. Even though Sacred Scripture—another name for the Bible—is essential for knowing about God, other truths that He wanted us to know were not written down there. Instead, they have come to us by word of mouth and by example, beginning with the preaching and practice of the Apostles. Since the time of Jesus, each generation has received these truths and handed them down to the next generation. We call this the Sacred Tradition.

We shouldn’t be surprised that the Bible can’t contain the entire teaching of the Sacred Tradition. Think only, for example, of the life of Our Lord, so full of wonderful teachings and deeds. In the Gospels, we read about many events from Jesus’ life. But at the end of the Gospel of John, we’re told that there were many other things Jesus said and did. If they all were written down, St. John insists, the whole world couldn’t hold the books that would have to be written.

PART ONE
How God Came To Promise Us A Redeemer

CHAPTER 1
In the Beginning

The Story of Creation
From all eternity—before time began—God existed. He always was, and He never had a beginning, just as He will never have an end. He is beyond time, just as the sun is beyond the earth. But just as the sun’s rays can enter our world, so God can enter our world ruled by time, while still remaining outside it.

God is infinitely perfect. There is nothing lacking in Him. He needs nothing. The three Divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are together one God, equal to one another in all things. They possess
within themselves everything that's necessary to be eternally happy.

All that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is powerful, and all that is good, is found in God. He doesn't have to look to anyone outside Himself for anything whatsoever. There is no truth that He doesn't know, no power that He doesn't possess, no happiness that He doesn't enjoy. He doesn't need anything or anyone besides Himself.

Because God is good, He wanted others to share in His happiness. That's why He created heaven and earth. He made them out of nothing, not because He needed them, but so that creatures could share in His happiness and glory.

Among the creatures that can have a share in God's happiness and glory are the angels. They are like God in that they have no physical body; they are pure spirit. Also like God, they have an intellect (the ability to think) and a free will (the ability to choose). Not all the angels are alike. It was God's will that some of them be closer to Him than others.

The Bible speaks of nine different kinds of angelic spirits, called choirs. There are angels, archangels, principalities, virtues, powers, dominions, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim. The most wonderful ranks of all these are the cherubim and seraphim, while the lowest are angels and archangels.

Yet even though the angels are considered the lowest class of angelic spirits, they are still vital to God's plan. He sends them on missions in our world. Among other roles, they are assigned to watch over human beings and protect them. These protectors are known as our guardian angels.

When God created the angels, they had a choice to make. If they were to enjoy the happiness of heaven, they had to love God more than they loved themselves. But God didn't force the angels to love Him. Because they had free will, they could choose to be God's friends or His enemies.

Some of the angels proudly refused to obey God and love Him more than they loved themselves. Because of their pride, they turned against God. The leader of these rebel angels was Lucifer, one of the highest angels that God had created.

God didn't spare the angels who had sinned. The Bible tells of a great battle in heaven. The archangel called Michael led the good angels to fight the bad angels, casting them out of heaven through the power God had given them. From that point on, Lucifer was known as Satan, or the Devil.

The good angels remain in the presence of God. For all eternity they will see Him face to face. They will love and praise Him, and be happy with Him forever. But the fallen angels will never see God. All hope of ever entering the kingdom of heaven was lost forever for those who rebelled against Him.

What happened to the angels is a lesson for us all. Just as God gave them free will, He has given us free will. And just as some of the angels used that free will to turn against God, we too have the ability to make such a choice. As we'll see, that's exactly what happened with the first parents of the whole human race. To know their story, and how the human race began, we now turn to the very first book of the Bible.

The Book of Genesis
The first book of the Old Testament, called Genesis, tells us how God made the world. It divides up the whole work of His creation into six days. However, the word "day," as used in the Bible, does not necessarily mean a period
of twenty-four hours. Each of the "days" of creation may have been a long, long time.

In a similar way, we sometimes say that something happened in George Washington's day, meaning the time period in which he lived. Or we may say that the day of people traveling in horse-drawn wagons has passed, meaning that no one travels that way any longer. In these instances, the word "day" takes on a different meaning from the one we're used to, just as it does in the first part of the Book of Genesis.

We must bear in mind that God didn't inspire the author of the Book of Genesis to tell us exactly how the world was made, how each canyon was dug and each mountain was raised. His purpose was to teach all people, everywhere and until the end of time, that all things were made by God, and without Him, there would be nothing.

Genesis tells the creation story much like a poem, with beautiful images revealing powerful truths when we think about them carefully. We'll quote the whole story here from the pages of the Bible so that you can ponder its meaning:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

'And God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

'And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

'And God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

'And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament
of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.' And it was so.

'And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

'And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

'And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

'And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.' And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

'Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created man in His image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

'And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

'And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so.

'And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.'

After this story, Genesis tells us more about how God made human beings in His own image and likeness. We read that He made the first man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life. In this way, the first man became a living being, someone who was like God because he could think and choose and love, just as God does.

Like the angels, however, the man would face the most important choice of all: Would he obey God—or disobey Him?
The Garden of Paradise and the Fall

God called the first man “Adam,” which means “Earthborn.” He made a wonderful garden called Eden, or Paradise, and gave it to Adam as his home. In this garden there were many kinds of trees, all of them beautiful and pleasing to the eye. Each of these trees grew delicious fruit.

The tree of life stood in the middle of Paradise, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said to Adam, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Then God brought to Adam all the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air, so that he could give them a name. And Adam called all the animals by their names.

But of all the animals of the earth, not one was worthy to be Adam’s companion. He needed someone like himself. So God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

Then God sent Adam into a deep sleep, and while he slept, God took one of his ribs and made a woman from it. When Adam awoke, God brought her to him.

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” Adam said; “she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” This is why, ever since then, a man leaves his father and mother to join himself to a wife; and the husband and wife become one, a new family. Adam called his wife “Eve,” which means “Mother of All the Living.”

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave wonderful gifts to their souls. He clothed their minds and hearts with a grace that would make them holy and pleasing in His sight. They received the ability to know, love, and serve Him for all eternity.

Adam and Eve were very happy together in Paradise. Everything around them was beautiful, and there was plenty of food of every kind. A beautiful river flowed through the middle of the garden, between the trees. Adam and Eve loved to walk through the garden, talking to each other and to God.

God told them that they and their children would always be happy if they would love Him with all their hearts and obey Him. They would never die.

While all this was happening, the powerful angel called Satan was watching. Since he had been cast out of
heaven after the great battle of angels, he envied Adam and Eve for their relationship with God. He saw how happy they were in Paradise, and how much God loved them. Satan made up his mind to try to lead Adam and Eve away from God.

One day he appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent. He spoke to Eve and asked her whether God had commanded her not to eat from any trees in the garden. Eve explained that they could eat the fruit from many trees in the garden, but they were to stay away from just one tree: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they didn’t, they would die.

“You will not die,” replied the serpent. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The serpent was trying to trick Eve, tempting her to think she could be like God by disobeying Him. When she heard these words, she forgot how happy she had been in Paradise and how good God had been to her. The fruit from the forbidden tree was beautiful to look at; she gazed on it as the serpent’s words echoed in her mind.

Eve wondered how wise she could become if she ate the fruit. So she took some from the tree, ate it, and brought some to Adam. She told him the strange story of the serpent, and then he ate of the fruit.

It didn’t take long for them both to realize what they had done, and how wrong it was to disobey God. They were ashamed and afraid, so they tried to hide from Him. But no one can hide from God.

The Lord found them and asked Adam, “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

Adam answered by trying to blame Eve for what he had done, since she had brought him the fruit. Then Eve tried to pass the blame on to the serpent, insisting that it had tricked her. But just as they couldn’t hide from God, they couldn’t run away from what they had done. God knew exactly what had happened.

A Punishment and a Promise
Next, God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

The last warning that God delivered to the serpent was the first promise of the Redeemer who would one day come. Much of what God said that day wouldn’t make sense until thousands of years later.

After turning from the serpent, God told Eve that He would multiply her pain in giving birth to children, and her husband would rule over her. Then he rebuked Adam for accepting his wife’s invitation to eat the forbidden fruit. Since Adam had gone against what God commanded, God told him that from then on, his labors would be difficult as he tried to provide food for his wife and himself.

In the end, they would both die, and their bodies would return to the soil from which they were made. “You are dust,” God said, “and to dust you shall return.”

Then God clothed Adam and Eve with clothes made from animal skins and cast them out of the garden of Paradise. To the east of the garden He stationed angels called cherubim, along with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life. He made it so they could never return to the garden they once called home.

Adam and Eve had believed the Devil when he lied to them, saying that if they disobeyed God and ate the
forbidden fruit, they would become as wise and knowing as God Himself. They had trusted Lucifer and their own desires instead of trusting God, and in doing so, they committed a great sin. So they destroyed their friendship with God, and heaven was closed to them.

We call their sin original sin. Because of it, Adam and Eve were no longer happy, their minds were disturbed, and their wills were weakened. Even their bodies were affected; they could suffer from illness and disease.

It became hard for them to know what was true and to do what was right. By their disobedience, their bodies and souls became disordered. They lost the original righteousness, the right ordering, that God had given them at their creation.

As a result, when they later had children, Adam and Eve couldn’t pass on to them what they themselves no longer possessed. Their children and their children’s children, until the end of the world, would lack original righteousness. All the human race to come would suffer for their sin.

Every child, then, comes into the world with the stain of original sin on his soul. The only exceptions are our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the sinless Son of God; and His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was preserved from this sin.

CHAPTER 2

The Descendants of Adam and Eve

Cain and Abel

God warned Adam and Eve that life would become difficult as a result of their sin, and they would have to work hard to obtain food and other necessities. They both found this to be true in the days after they left the Garden of Eden.

Eventually they had children, and they told their children the story of their happiness in Paradise. They explained how their happiness had been lost through their sin, and that they were very sorry they had disobeyed God.

Yet they didn’t lose courage or hope. God had cursed the serpent and promised that someone would crush his head. They told their children that, some day, God would save them from the effects of their sin.