Genesis - Commentaries by Grandma Smith

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, Who Shut the Door?

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Maybe you have heard the story of Noah and the boatload of animals. The whole story is so wonderful and so different from the picture-book tales that you see in bookstores.

You have probably heard that Noah built an ark. He built it exactly the shape and size that God had planned. It was not painted red and blue or yellow and green, but it was covered all over with black tar to make it waterproof. It was more important for this very special boat to be waterproof than to be pretty.

The ark had one door - a front door. There was no back door. And here's a puzzle for you to think about as we tell you this story. Who shut the door?

It is not hard to picture the door wide open and large enough for a pair of elephants to go through. So it was certainly big enough for anybody who wanted to go in, not just to explore but to stay. There was no sign that said "No Trespassing," and there was no cashier to take money. The open door was an invitation to "COME IN!"

Why would anyone want to go into the ark? Because God had Noah build it to save people from a big flood that He was going to send as punishment for their sinfulness. He has provided a different kind of ark for you and me. Our sinfulness deserves punishment too, but God sent His Son Jesus to bear the punishment for sin on the cross as the substitute for anyone who will accept Him as his or her very own Savior. Jesus said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

All the animals went inside the ark, and there was food for them inside too. Then Noah and all his family went in, eight of them, but the door wasn't closed yet. It stayed open for seven more days, with the opportunity for all the people to come into the ark and be safe from the coming flood.

Wasn't it kind of God to keep the door open for seven more days? Noah had warned the people that God said He was going to send a flood, and anyone outside of the ark would be drowned. God kept the door open for any who might accept the opportunity to go in and be safe from the coming judgment. But nobody else went in . . . they didn't believe God.

God has given us a warning of coming judgment for our sins. Just as He had Noah build the ark as a place of safety from the flood, He sent His Son Jesus into the world to make a place of safety for sinners from the coming judgment for their sins. The door of salvation is open right now, waiting for you to come in. God does not tell us how long it will remain open - maybe just seven more days or maybe seven more minutes! When it's God's time, He will shut the door and leave you outside if you do not come in now while it is still open.

Who shut the door of the ark? God did. The Bible doesn't tell us that the door was ever opened again until after the flood was over. When God shuts a door, it remains shut until He opens it.

Then it rained for forty days, and the water bubbled up from underground too. There never was such a flood before and never has been since. Even the mountains were covered with water. When God sends judgment, there is no way out!

The ark was not built like most boats, with a pointed prow at the front. It just floated safely - the higher the water, the higher it floated. No leaks and no drips. It was three floors high, and Noah and his family probably lived on the third floor, because there was a window for them up there, just as God had planned.

After a whole year, they felt the ark resting on a mountaintop. There were two ravens in the ark, and Noah sent one of them out, but it flew away and never came back. Then Noah sent out a dove, but it flew back again because the floodwaters were still too high -the ark was the only place it could rest. Noah took the dove inside the ark again.

Then a week later he sent the dove out again, and this time it came back with an olive leaf in its beak! That was a good sign that the trees were beginning to leaf out again. Maybe you've seen a picture of a dove with a leaf in its beak, and now you know the story.

A third time Noah sent the dove out, and this time it found a place to live in the fresh green trees and did not come back again. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and saw that the ground was dry. Very good news! It is always good news when you trust what God says. Now the eight people inside and all the animals were free to come out of the ark and live on the clean earth.

God is giving you an opportunity to be washed clean from all your sins through the death of Jesus. Have you accepted His loving offer to be saved from the punishment you deserve? Have you come through His open door? If not, He warns, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46).

Think About God's Word!

1. What did the dove bring back with it?

2. Who can close your bedroom door? Who is the door to God's family? You'll find an answer at the beginning of John 10.

Project: Can you give examples of more arks in the Bible? You'll find one of them in Exodus 2.

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 1, What Happened to Enoch?

It was a very long time ago, maybe 5000 years, when Jared and his wife welcomed their first little boy into the world. They called him Enoch.

It was a busy world for a little boy to grow up in. There were not only farmers and cattle ranchers, there were also metal workers who crafted in brass and iron and taught their skills to others. And it was a world full of music, with harps and flutes. The people had enough cleverness to build a city where they could share their skills and pleasures.

I am not sure what part the boy Enoch had in all this. There were very old men living in his day. One of them was Adam, the only man in the world who never was a little boy. Another one was Adam's son Seth, who had certainly heard from his parents the story of the Garden of Eden and the forbidden fruit. These stories had surely been passed on to Enoch, and since the first man was still alive, they would not be told as twisted tales. Adam was Enoch's great, great, great, great grandfather who lived to be 950 years old.

Enoch grew to be a man of 65, and then he and his wife had a little son whom they named Methuselah.

Enoch was a father now, and he had found something far more important to live for than all the busyness and pleasure of the world around him. Enoch walked with God, and He led Enoch to do his daily duties and to train his son to call upon God too. Walking with God was not a now-and-then matter in Enoch's life; it was daily life to him.

Enoch had many more sons and daughters after that, and he lived for 300 more years. And in all that time he walked with God so closely that God was able to tell him one of His wonderful secrets. These secrets are all recorded in the Bible now, so that God has nothing new to tell. I wonder if you have taken time to read and remember what God has written in His wonderful book.

Enoch foretold God's wonderful news nearly 5000 years ago. It has not happened yet, but it most certainly will come true. Remember, God's knowledge is so perfect that He can speak of the future as if it were happening right now! This was His secret He told to Enoch: "Behold, the Lord [comes] with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15).

There must have been a lot of wickedness around Enoch in his day, but the Lord told Enoch that He is coming in a future day, not alone, but with those who belong to Him. When He comes, He will deliver deserved judgment upon ungodly sinners. And in all these thousands of years since, God has not changed His plan!

Nothing in the wicked world around Enoch changed his attitude; he simply walked with God, and God brought a wonderful change to his life. God took him out of the world to be with Himself ! Enoch did not die, and there was no funeral and no burial. God tells it like this in the Bible: "He [Enoch] was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24).

Have you heard that this is going to happen to those of us who are believers too? The day is coming very soon when we who belong to the Lord Jesus will be called to His home, and, just like Enoch, there will be no funerals and no burials for us. There is no place on earth where the body of Jesus lies buried, because He is alive and in heaven. And there will be no place on earth for the bodies of living believers either. Even those believers who have already died will leave empty graves behind.

This God was Enoch's God, and He is our God too. He is not a God of our imagination, but the same One who gave His only Son to die for us. This same God who is holy and true wants your company today and forever in heaven. Will you walk with God and learn His secrets too?

Do you remember Methuselah, the son of Enoch? He lived 969 years and died the very same year that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed all the unbelievers. Let no one tell you that God does not care. His loving welcome is as true as His terrible anger against sin. We have a God who cares!

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man [comes] at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40).

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, Another Story of Jacob

The last story was about Jacob, the man who went to sleep using a stone for a pillow and dreamed about a ladder reaching up to heaven. Here is another story about the same man, but he is not so young as he was when he had that dream. He is married now and has one daughter and many sons.

Jacob had been very mean to his twin brother Esau when they were younger, and now he was afraid of Esau. Jacob was planning to go back home again with his large family, and he was very rich in herds of cattle, sheep and goats, which he would also take home. However, the news reached him that Esau was coming to meet him.

A bad conscience makes anybody afraid. If you are afraid to meet your brother after you have done something wrong to him, how will you ever meet God? Maybe you can forget it for a while, but when you meet God, you will find the record of all your sins is there! What will you do?

God knows how you feel, and He cares. When Jesus was on the cross in total darkness, God punished Him for my sins - all of them - even the ones I have forgotten. And when Jesus said, "It is finished," the necessary punishment for my sins was completed and gone forever, and I can meet Him with joy . . . not with fear. But what about you? Did Jesus bear the punishment for your sins? Can you join us in thanking Him now and forever for taking the punishment that we deserved?

Jacob, who was worried about meeting Esau, sent his family on ahead while he stayed alone by the brook that night. That's where the Angel of God met him and wrestled with him. The struggle lasted all night, for Jacob was determined to win and not to give up.

Then the Angel touched Jacob’s hip, and suddenly it was out of joint. If the Angel had power to do that, He could have done a great deal more, but God’s way is perfect. His will is to bless and not to destroy.

Let me go, said the Angel. It’s almost sunrise.

Jacob was crippled now, but he was ready to ask for what only God could give. Are you ready too? Are you ready to give up and ask instead of arguing? Are you ready to receive God’s blessing instead of fighting for your own way?

I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me, said Jacob.

What is your name? said the Angel.

God knows your name very well. God is asking right now if you will tell Him that your name is “sinner.” Will you tell Him? “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). If you will tell Him right now that you are a sinner, then He is ready to save you. That’s what Jesus came to earth to do!

Jacob told the Angel of God that his name was Jacob, and immediately the Angel gave him a new name - “Israel.” This new name means “prince,” and it covered up the old, deceitful name of “Jacob.” What a nice new name.

Did you know that if you are born into God’s family, you have a new name too? You won’t know what it is until you are in heaven with the Lord Jesus.

Then Jacob asked the Angel of God, What is Thy name? But he never got a clear answer, perhaps because God has many names, and each one of them fits our need and yet is far beyond our thoughts. One of His names is “Wonderful,” and He is wonderful today and for all eternity!

Jacob got the blessing that he wanted from the Angel of God, and so he was the winner in the wrestling. He was also a cripple for the rest of his life, but in his old age he worshipped God, leaning on the top of his staff. You can be a winner too, and God will give you more than you ever thought of asking for. If your life ends in true worship, your eternity will be joyful worship too. “Thanks be to God, which giv-eth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Think About God’s Word!

1. What did Jacob’s new name “Israel” mean?

2. Do you have any nicknames? What special meaning do they have? Will you receive the new name mentioned in Revelation 2:17?

Project: How many names and titles of God can you name? Start your list by reading Isaiah 9:6.

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, Story of Jacob's Ladder, The

“Go,” said Jacob’s mother. “Go,” said Jacob’s father. They both loved him dearly, but Jacob’s twin brother did not love him at all. In fact, he was angry enough to kill him, so it seemed best that Jacob should go away for a while to save his life.

His brother Esau had reason to be angry. Esau was the firstborn, so he had the right to the blessing - a double share of his father’s possessions - but Jacob had stolen Esau’s blessing by selfishness and lies. Now the right to the blessing was gone, gone forever, and Esau could not get it back. The blessing was now Jacob’s.

You have a right to blessing from God too, just because you were born into the world. Satan can’t steal it from you unless you give it to him or throw it away. “God so loved the world” - that includes you, doesn’t it? God loved you so much that He gave His only Son for you, and He is telling you about it right now. Don’t throw His message away!

Jacob wanted Esau’s blessing of the double share, and he chose crooked ways to get it. But this was not necessary. God knows what to do. God is ready to give you a better blessing than you ever thought of asking for. Don’t throw it away. Jesus died for sinners like you, and He wants to give you not only forgiveness for your sins, but a home with Himself in heaven forever - a home where only God’s children are welcome to come. You know you are a sinner, so what is your answer to the Savior of sinners?

Jacob went away to find his uncle Laban, but it was a very long, tiring journey on foot. Night came, and he found a spot to lie down on the ground and used a stone under his head for a pillow. In his sleep he had a very wonderful dream.

In his dream, Jacob saw a ladder so high that it reached right up to heaven. On that ladder were angels, going up from earth to heaven and down again. Did you notice that they started at the bottom and went up? Is that a surprise? We think of angels as heavenly beings, but they must have been down on earth already. Perhaps they had been appointed by God to guard Jacob on his journey, and in his dream Jacob was allowed a glimpse of them, although they were really there all the time.

He woke up and remembered the dream, but not with joy. In fear he said, “How dreadful is this place! this is . . . the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

Why should that frighten him? Wouldn’t you like to go to heaven? The truth is this: If your sins are not forgiven, you would not be happy in heaven, and the real presence of God would be terrifying to you.

That morning Jacob tried to make a bargain with God. He promised God that if He would take care of him and bring him home again, he would give Him ten percent of his wages!

But that money would not take away his sins and bring God’s blessing. And there is nothing you can do - nothing to take away your sins - but let Jesus save you. He gave His life’s blood for you, and there is nothing more for you to do but to accept His gift. A million dollars cannot buy

it. Jesus has paid the price, and you can be justified freely by His grace: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Look to Jesus right now and take His free forgiveness and thank Him for it. You may not have another chance. Don’t throw away your blessing!

I think Jacob trusted himself rather than God that day. However, he remembered his dream, and he set up his pillow-stone for a memorial before he went on his way.

Think About God’s Word!

1. What did Jacob promise to give God to receive blessing?

2. Do you try to earn someone’s love and kindness by being good? Can you do that with God? What verses support your answer?

Project: What blessings has a Christian already received? Can they be lost? Start your search in Ephesians 1.

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, Sarah Laughed

There are two kinds of laughing. One is the happy kind that you can share with others, because they are sure to be happy about it too. The other kind is because you don’t believe what somebody says, and you think it is all ridiculous.

Which kind was Sarah’s laugh? Listen to her story and maybe you can tell. It might even be both kinds. Read on and see.

Abraham and Sarah had been married a long time. In fact, he was 99 years old and Sarah was 90. That is old enough to be great grandparents! But they weren’t even parents or grandparents, because they had no children and were too old to have any.

If God is wise and powerful enough to plan that our parents should have children before they are old, then God can work beyond His plans if He chooses, and nobody can stop Him! “With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). God told Abraham that he would have a son in his old age, and Abraham believed God.

Do you? Don’t argue about it or try to understand how it could be true. When we don’t understand, God says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Where is Sarah? God asked. Abraham answered, In the tent. You see, Abraham was a traveler with no land of his own, and so they lived in a tent, and Sarah was at home there.

God gave Abraham and Sarah a promise: I will return to you according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Sarah was listening in the tent door, and she heard God’s promise too. I don’t think she made a sound, but inside her heart she laughed. I’m too old! she thought.

Do you think God doesn’t know how old you are? Maybe you are 5 or 15 or 100. God knows everyone’s age, and nothing can change His promise - even if you laugh at it! In fact, Sarah didn’t laugh out loud, and God still knew she laughed!

Why did Sarah laugh? asked God. Now Sarah was afraid, and she tried to cover it up with a lie. I didn’t laugh, she said. But God answered her, No, but you did laugh.

Laughing at God’s promise can’t change it. He will certainly do as He has said, whether it is heaven or hell for you. Confessing is better than covering up. Tell Him now that you have sinned, and you will find that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Sarah’s precious little baby boy did come to her, just as God had said. So now was the time for happy laughter. In fact, she called his name Isaac, which means “laughter.” And all her friends shared the happy news that a son was born to Abraham and Sarah when it was humanly impossible!

Sarah’s faith was not very strong, but it was faith in the right Person. Where is your faith? Are you trusting in the God who has given His only Son for you? Or is it in your religion or in your own hopes and plans? Maybe your own plans seem right, but the end of that way is eternal death. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). The end of God’s promises is everlasting life: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that be-liev-eth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Think About God’s Word!

1. What two kinds of laughing did Sarah do?

2. Have you ever denied doing something you didn’t think the other person could prove you’d done? What is a verse that tells what God thinks of such an action?

3. Does God laugh? In what ways? What Bible verses can you give to support your answer? You can start your search in Psalm 2.