

# *The* **Easter** STORYBOOK

**40** Bible Stories  
*Showing Who Jesus Is*

**Laura Richie**

*Illustrated by Ian Dale*

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To all the little ones who want to see Jesus  
(especially Josiah, Grace, Isaiah, and Elisha).

—Laura

To Mom and Dad,  
my first picture of God's love.

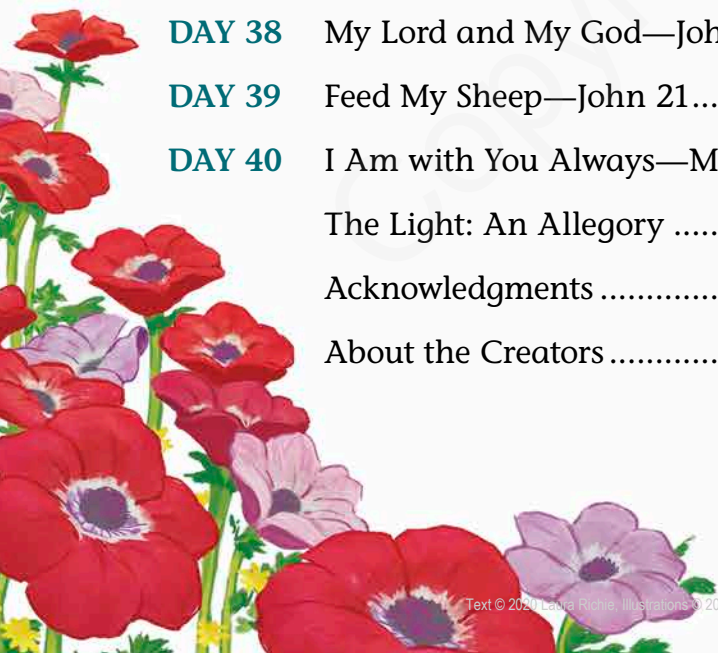
—Ian



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## FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

For years, I didn't understand Jesus. I saw God as someone who had a lot of rules I was expected to follow. If I obeyed the rules, I would be rewarded; if I disobeyed, I would be punished. I heard that Jesus had died for my sins so I could have a "relationship" with God, but no one could tell me what that really looked like or why I'd want it. I did want to go to heaven, so I prayed a prayer then began trying hard to be a "good Christian."

I was really good at following the rules. Don't drink, smoke, or do drugs. *Check.* Go to church. *Check.* Read your Bible and pray. *Check.* Save first kiss for wedding day. *Check.* Leave your family and home to follow God (as a missionary kid). *Check.*

Despite my impressive checklist, I had persistent, nagging doubts about being good enough. Two rules seemed extraordinarily difficult: to love God and to love people. How could I love someone who was always watching me then doling out rewards or punishments based on my thoughts and actions? I was trying so hard! But what if I still didn't measure up? And how was I supposed to love all the inconvenient, needy people in my life? They often stood directly in the way of me following the rules well!

One night, I finally confronted the terrifying reality that I could never be good enough, and it brought me to my knees. I cried. I cried hard. I knew in the depths of my being that I would never meet the standard. I could never truly love. All my work was in vain.

And then, for the first time, I saw Jesus.

He knew I couldn't be good enough on my own—that's exactly why He came! I finally understood that He came to rescue me out of my brokenness and into real life.

*The Easter Storybook* paints a picture of my beautiful Rescuer. Each story adds a stroke to the portrait of the God who came to restore what was broken and find what was lost, the God who promised to send us a Rescuer. The season leading up to Easter, the season of Lent, offers us a special time to pause each day and *remember*. Sit down as a family and remember who Jesus is and why He had to die, then celebrate His victory over evil and death! May you and your family see Jesus and delight in His beauty, love, and grace.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Richie". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letters of "L" and "R" being significantly larger and more decorative than the rest of the letters.

# The Promise

## An Introduction

Long ago, God created the world out of nothing.

The Creator made everything good; there was no evil, sadness, or death. The first man and woman lived in a garden full of everything they could ever need. They had perfect friendships with God, with each other, and with all of creation.

But a serpent crept into their beautiful garden, whispering lies. When they believed his lies and defied their good Creator, everything shattered. Their relationship with God and with each other was no longer perfect but broken.

But all was not lost.

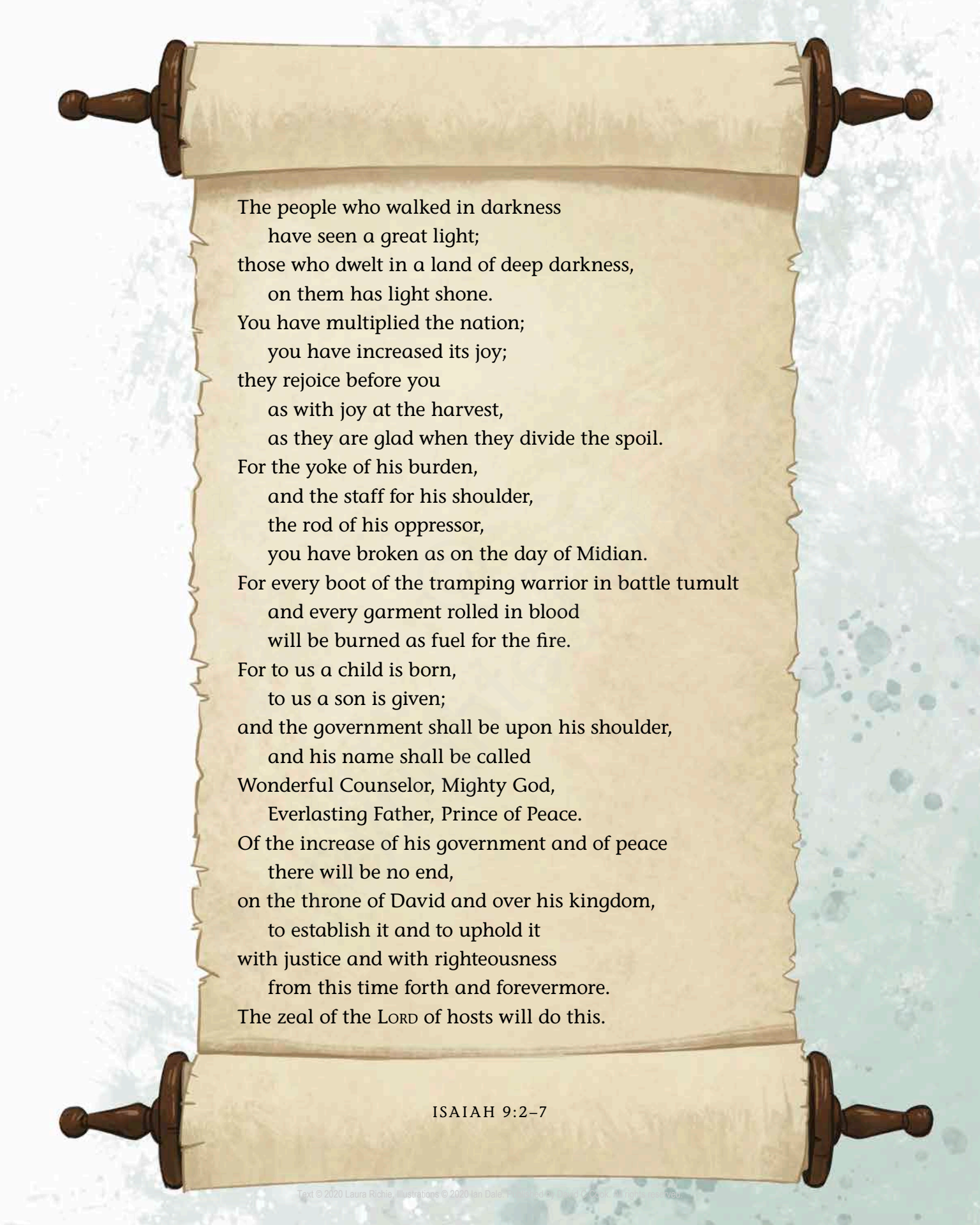
God spoke a promise. One day, He would send a Promised Son to crush the head of the serpent and end evil forever. One day, He would come and begin making all things good and new again.

People waited in hope through the dark centuries, longing for the Light. God saw that the people did not know how to love. But God loved His people! So He gave them a way to come close to God and to each other again. The people called this way *korban*, a Hebrew word that means “come close.” We call this *sacrifice*.

And God promised that one day a Rescuer would make a way for people to come close to God and each other forever. When this Rescuer, the Promised Son of God, came to earth, no one would need to offer sacrifices again. He would offer the best and perfect sacrifice for everyone.

Then, in the fullness of time, He came!

And that’s where our story begins.



The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone.  
You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.  
For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.  
For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

ISAIAH 9:2-7

# Jesus in the Temple

Luke 2

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,  
glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

JOHN 1:14

Right from the start, Jesus was not like other little Jewish boys. Angels filled the sky and shepherds praised God when He was born in Bethlehem to a Jewish family—to a young woman, Mary, and her husband, Joseph. Later, wise men traveled to honor the new King of Kings. They all told the good news of the birth of the Messiah—the Savior sent by God to rescue His people.

When Mary took her baby to the Temple for the first time, a prophet of God named Simeon was there. Simeon held the baby in his arms and praised God. “Lord, now I may leave this world in peace, for I have seen your salvation—a light for all people!”

As time passed, Jesus grew strong and was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was with Him. Like other Jewish families, Jesus and His parents traveled to Jerusalem every year to celebrate Passover, a time to remember when God rescued the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt.

When the festival ended, Jesus’ family and friends all started the long journey home. Suddenly, Mary and Joseph realized Jesus was not with their group. Mary was worried! Jesus was twelve years old, but this wasn’t like Him. Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem, searching for Jesus. Three days later, they finally found Him. Where was He? Sitting with the teachers in the Temple, listening and asking questions and teaching. Everyone who heard Jesus was amazed at His wisdom and understanding. How could a boy know so much about God and His law?

But Mary was upset. “Son, why have you treated us so? ... Your father and I have been searching for you!” (Luke 2:48).

Jesus said, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I would be here, in my Father’s house?” Then the boy, the Son of God, went with His family. It was time to leave the Temple for now, but Jesus would be back.

.....  
***Why did Jesus know so much about God? Who was the Messiah?***



# Beloved Son

Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1

*“You will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God.”*

LUKE 1:76–78

John, the son of Zechariah, had been born about the same time as Jesus. When he grew up, he became a prophet. Prophets spoke messages from God, and John had a very important message. He told everyone the Messiah was coming to rescue them from their sins.

Many people came to hear John’s message, and he baptized those who wanted to be clean and free from their sins, putting them under the waters of the Jordan River and pulling them back up again. John told everyone that people are broken and can’t love, but the Messiah was coming to help people love.

Jesus was more than a prophet—He was the Messiah. And when the time was right, Jesus went to see John. John saw Jesus coming and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

John believed.

Jesus asked John to baptize Him. John refused at first, because he knew Jesus was holy—He was all good with no bad. Jesus didn’t need to be baptized and cleaned from sin! But Jesus knew God’s plan that one day, Jesus would take all of our sin onto Himself. He would die in our place, like a lamb given as a sacrifice. John baptized and cleaned with water, but Jesus would make people new with God’s Spirit.

So John baptized Jesus. And when he did, the heavens were opened. John saw God’s Spirit come down to rest on Jesus like a dove. And he heard God’s voice say, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

Jesus, the Promised Son, came to make all things good and new again. He came to heal broken friendships and free us from sin. The Messiah came to help us love God, love each other, and love all of creation—because that’s what we were created to do.

.....  
***What does sin do? Sin breaks your friendship with God and with others.***

