

Jimmy Goes to Sunday School

By Ward Ricker

Episode 1 - Creation

Jimmy looked around as he entered the strange building. "So this is a church building?" he asked his friend Aaron, who had invited him to come with him this Sunday morning.

"Yes," answered Aaron. "Isn't it neat? My family comes here every Sunday to learn about god."

"To learn about god?"

"Yes."

"Every Sunday?"

Yes."

"There must be a lot to learn about god."

"Oh yes. Wait until you meet our Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Peabody. She's neat, and she knows lots about god."

"Okay," responded Jimmy, who followed Aaron to the basement of the church where the Sunday School classrooms were. He continued following as Aaron walked through a door into one of the rooms.

"Good morning, Aaron," a smiling Mrs. Peabody said and then added, "Oh, you've brought a friend with you today. How nice." Then turning to Jimmy she asked, "So what's your name?"

"James," Jimmy responded, "but my friends call me Jimmy."

"Oh, James," Mrs. Peabody responded. "That's a good Bible name."

"It is?" Jimmy asked.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Peabody. "One of the writers of the Bible was named James. But we'll call you 'Jimmy' if you like."

"Thank you," responded Jimmy.

Aaron and Jimmy sat in the middle of the front of two rows of seats arranged in arcs so that all the kids could see the teacher in the front. There were two empty seats on either side of them. In the back row sat two girls at one end and a boy at the other, with three empty seats between them.

"How many more will be coming?" Jimmy asked.

"I think this is all," Aaron said. "Attendance has been low lately."

"Good morning," Mrs. Peabody then greeted the class.

"Good morning," Aaron greeted her back, along with a couple of the kids in the back row.

"We have a very special guest with us today. His name is James, a good Bible name, you know. But he likes to go by 'Jimmy'. Say 'hi' to Jimmy everyone."

"Hi, Jimmy," they responded almost all together.

Jimmy looked back at the two girls, as the shorter one giggled slightly.

"Today," Mrs. Peabody continued, "we are going all the way back to the beginning. We are going to learn about how god created the earth."

Jimmy looked at her a little funny. His dad had said something about the earth forming from dust and gases scattered in the universe; he had never said anything about god. He didn't interrupt the teacher, though, and let her continue.

"In the beginning," Mrs. Peabody continued, "the Bible tells us that god created the heavens and the earth."

Jimmy wondered why his mom or dad had never mentioned that, but, again, he let her continue.

"He did this in six days," Mrs. Peabody continued. "At first, the earth was just a large, dark, round lump with nothing on it, so on the very first day god created light so that it wouldn't be so dark."

Jimmy wondered what god created the earth and the light from, but he let her continue.

"And that was the first day," Mrs. Peabody announced.

"That's all," thought Jimmy. "Not very exciting," but he let her continue.

"Then on the second day," Mrs. Peabody continued, "god created a firmament."

"Well, that is a strange word," Jimmy thought. "I wonder what the heck that was." He leaned forward in his seat.

"That means, Mrs. Peabody explained, "that he created a space above the ground, between the earth and the sky."

"I guess she must mean the atmosphere," thought Jimmy. He had learned that word last week in school.

"Then, the next day, the third day," Mrs. Peabody continued, "god created dry ground. You see, the whole earth had been covered with water, but god pulled back the ocean and pushed up the ground to rise up above it. Then he planted all the plants that you see: daisies, ferns, dandelions, squash and cucumber plants..."

"Yuck! Squash!" Jimmy thought, but still kept quiet.

"...and all kinds of trees and plants of all types," Mrs. Peabody continued. "And that was the end of the third day."

Jimmy thought that was quite a lot to do in one day, so he decided he would make sure he had understood correctly. He raised his hand, like he had learned to do in school.

"Yes, Jimmy," Mrs. Peabody recognized him. "Do you have a question?"

"Well, that just seems like an awful lot to do in one day. My dad says there are many, many thousands of different plants out there. Could he really create them all in one day?"

"Well yes, Jimmy," Mrs. Peabody responded. "That's because god is omnipotent."

"Another fancy word," Jimmy thought, but before he could think any more about it, Mrs. Peabody explained, "That means he is all-powerful. God can do anything!"

"Anything?" Jimmy asked. It was more an expression of surprise than a question, but Mrs. Peabody wasted no time in responding again.

"Yes, god can do anything. He is omnipotent. That's why we call him 'god'. There isn't anything that he cannot do."

"That's quite a claim," Jimmy thought. "There has got to be something that he can't do." He wondered if god could make a rock so big that he himself couldn't move it, not realizing that many had already asked that question before. He didn't say anything more, though, and let Mrs. Peabody continue.

"Then the fourth day came," she said, "and god decided to make the sun and the moon and all the stars in the sky. He made the sun to shine brightly during the day, and then moon to shine dimly at night, and all the stars to twinkle in the night sky."

Well, this didn't seem at all right to Jimmy, so he raised his hand again.

"Yes, Jimmy," Mrs. Peabody said.

"Well, my daddy says that all those stars out in the sky are actually suns like ours that are so far away that they just look like a dot, and that those suns all have planets like earth going around them," he said when she called on him.

"That's right, Jimmy. Isn't god's creation amazing?" Mrs. Peabody asked.

Instead of answering he continued his question. "Well, if all those stars have planets around them, did he take six days to create all those also? How could he have continued making the earth if he had to stop and create all those other planets?"

Mrs. Peabody looked a little uncomfortable, but after a moment she responded, "Well, Jimmy, we aren't told all the details of how god did it. Maybe, since those worlds weren't so special, he just created them all in one day. The earth took longer because it was his special creation."

“Oh,” Jimmy responded and continued listening.

“So, that was the end of the fourth day,” Mrs. Peabody continued. “Then on the fifth day god started creating animals. He created all the birds that fly in the sky and all the fish that swim in the ocean.”

Jimmy wondered about the birds, like ostriches, that don’t fly, and the things like whales in the ocean that his daddy said weren’t really fish, but he didn’t think that was important enough to interrupt her to ask about.

“Then came the sixth day,” said Mrs. Peabody. “This is when it got really exciting. God created all the land animals on the sixth day: the lion and the tiger, the cow and the moose, and the deer and the antelope.”

“And the rats and the lice,” one of the girls in the back added, but Jimmy didn’t turn in time to see which one said it.

“Ah, yes,” Mrs. Peabody admitted after a slight pause. “The rats and the lice, too.” Then after another slight pause, she brightened and said, “But then, at the very end, god created something very special. He created something in his own image. Does anyone know what that was?”

Aaron raised his hand immediately, but then teacher called on the boy in the back row who also raised his hand. “Yes, Larry.”

“Us,” the boy said.

“Yes,” Mrs. Peabody affirmed. “He created us—human beings.”

“Well, if god looks anything like Larry,” the girl that had giggled earlier said with a laugh, “he must be very funny looking!”

The other girl also started laughing, and Larry stuck his tongue out at the two of them.

“Now, now,” Mrs. Peabody scolded, “that wasn’t a very nice thing to say about god or about Larry.”

The other kids quieted down, and Mrs. Peabody continued. “So for his last creation god took some dirt from the ground and shaped it into a man. Then he breathed his own breath into it, and it became a living human being.”

Well, this didn’t set quite right with little Jimmy either, so he raised his hand again and stated, “My dad says that human beings came from other animals a long time ago. He didn’t say that they were created from the dirt.”

“Oh, you’re talking about evolution, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody quickly responded. “Evolution is just a theory that has been made up by men to try to take credit away from god’s creation. It’s not really how things happened.”

“So evolution is just a theory, and we were really created by god from the dirt?” Jimmy asked.

“That’s right, Jimmy. Evolution is just an idea made up by men who don’t want to believe in god.”

“So evolution is just a theory, but what you’re telling us is fact?”

“Yes, Jimmy.”

“So how do we know that what you’re teaching us is fact and evolution isn’t?”

“Because the Bible tells us so, Jimmy. It’s right here in god’s word.” Mrs. Peabody held up her copy of the Bible.

“Well, how do you know that the Bible is correct?” Jimmy answered.

“Well, you are just full of questions, aren’t you Jimmy?” Mrs. Peabody responded.

“Yes. My father says that is good. He tells me that there was once an old man named Voltaire who said, ‘Judge of a man by his questions, rather than by his answers’.”

“Oh, yes. Voltaire!” Mrs. Peabody responded, starting to look a bit exasperated. After a pause she then continued, “Well, here we do things a little different than Voltaire. Here we like it when children listen to what we are telling them and don’t ask too many questions.”

"You don't like curiosity?" Jimmy asked.

Seeming a little more exasperated, Mrs. Peabody stammered, "Well, curiosity is good. At least it is when it is directed the right way, it can be. But, here in Sunday School, we like to keep your curiosity directed at the things of god, and not at things like evolution."

"I see," said Jimmy.

"So let's continue on to the next part of our story for today," Mrs. Peabody then announced.

"God created the man and placed him in a beautiful garden. Does anyone know the name of the man or the garden that god had created?"

Aaron raised his hand again, and Mrs. Peabody called on him.

"Adam, in the Garden of Eden."

"That's right, Aaron. His name was Adam," she continued, "and god placed him in a beautiful garden called Eden that he had created just for him, and god brought to Adam all the different animals that he had created, and Adam named them all."

Jimmy raised his hand again.

"Yes, Jimmy. You have another question?" she asked ever more exasperatedly.

"He named all of them?"

"Yes, Jimmy. The Bible says that Adam named all the animals."

"So he named the ants and the earwigs?"

"Yes, Jimmy. He named the ants and the earwigs."

"And he named the whales in the ocean?"

"Yes, Jimmy, he must have named the whales, too. Probably the garden was near the ocean and god walked down with him to have him name them."

"And he named the lobsters and clams, too?"

"Yes, Jimmy, I already told you. Adam named all the animals."

"So how could Adam see the lobsters and the clams way down on the bottom of the ocean?"

"Well, I'm not sure, Jimmy," Mrs. Peabody answered, getting obviously rather frustrated.

"Maybe god reached down and brought up one of each so that Adam could name them. We don't know for sure. The Bible only tells us so much. It doesn't give every detail."

"And Adam named all the dinosaurs?" Jimmy pressed onward.

"Yes, Jimmy. Adam named the dinosaurs, too."

"Even T. Rex? That must have been very dangerous."

"Yes, Jimmy. Even T. Rex. Now let us continue. After god brought all the animals to Adam, and Adam had named them all, he realized that none of them provided a suitable mate for Adam?"

"Mate?" Jimmy asked.

"Companion, Jimmy. *Companion!*" Continuing on, she said, "So god caused Adam to go to sleep, and, while he was sleeping, god took one of his ribs, pulled it out and formed another human being from the rib—this time, a woman, who could be a mate, that is, a companion, for Adam. And Adam called her name 'Eve'."

"Well, why did god have to do that? Why couldn't he just make another one from the dirt like before," Jimmy, ever so curious, asked.

Mrs. Peabody was getting very flustered at this point, and Jimmy could sense that she was angry as she responded, "I don't know, Jimmy. We aren't told why. It's just the way he did it. Do you really have to ask so many questions?"

"I'm sorry," Jimmy said. "I just want to understand as well as I possibly can."

"Well, just listen, Jimmy," Mrs. Peabody said, almost yelling, "and I'm sure you will come to understand."

"Yes, ma'am," Jimmy responded.

“So,” Mrs. Peabody continued, regaining her composure, “those were the six days of god’s creation: light on the first day, the firmament on the second day, dry land and plants on the third, sun, moon and stars on the fourth, sea and air animals on the fifth, and land animals and Adam and Eve on the sixth. And does anyone know what god did on the seventh day?”

One of the two girls raised her hand, and Mrs. Peabody called on her.

“Nothing,” the girl said.

“That’s right,” Mrs. Peabody said, “God rested on the seventh day, and proclaimed it a day of rest—a special, holy day. That’s why we go to church on Sundays, instead of working.”

“But Sunday is the first day of the week,” one of the girls said.

“Well, yes, that is true, but that requires a long explanation which we don’t have time for, so we will talk about that another day. I want to get back to finish our story right now.”

Jimmy had another concern, however. “So all of that last stuff happened on the sixth day?” he enquired. “All the land animals, the creation of Adam and Eve and the naming of the animals?”

“Yes, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody responded, trying to keep a smile, “all that on the sixth day. Isn’t god amazing?”

“Well, yes, but my dad says there are thousands and thousands of animals. Some are mammals, some are reptiles, and some are what he calls ‘invertebrate’ animals, whatever that is. He says there are something like a million kinds of insects alone. Even if god created them all on that day, how could Adam have found time to name all of those in one day? He must have named them very fast!”

“Yes, Jimmy, very fast,” Mrs. Peabody acknowledged and hurried on to the last part of her story. “So Adam and Eve lived in this beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden that god had made especially for them. It was full of lots of beautiful trees with lots of delicious fruit that they could eat at their leisure, without having to work at all. God took care of them, so they didn’t need anything at all. However, there was one tree in the garden that was called the ‘Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil’, and god told Adam and Eve not to eat from that tree or they would die.”

Jimmy thought that that was a very harsh penalty to die just from eating a piece of fruit. He also wondered why god would put such a tree there, if the garden was such a wonderful place to be. He was going to ask Mrs. Peabody if god put it there for a trap, but he saw that Mrs. Peabody didn’t like kids asking too many questions, and he had been asking a lot of questions, so he didn’t say anything.

“Then one day,” Mrs. Peabody continued, “Eve was walking through the garden and a big snake slithered up to her and said, ‘Oh, Miss Eve, I see you’re walking by that tree of knowledge of good and evil that god said not to eat from.’”

“A talking snake!” Jimmy thought. “What a cool story!”

“When the snake asked Eve why she wasn’t supposed to eat from that tree,” Mrs. Peabody continued, “Eve told it that if she did she would die. The snake though, lied to Eve and tempted her, saying, ‘No, you won’t die if you eat that fruit. Instead, you will become as wise as god himself.’ So Eve reached up and took a piece of the fruit and saw that it looked good, so she ate a piece of it. Adam then came by, and she convinced him that it was good fruit, so he ate some of it, too.”

Now the idea of a cool snake was starting to wear off, so Jimmy, unable to contain his curiosity, asked, “So snakes were able to talk back then?”

“Oh no, Jimmy. Not all snakes. It was only this snake. It could only talk because it was really the devil tempting Eve, not the snake itself.”

This struck Jimmy as very strange. “So this snake could talk because it was really the devil?”

“Yes, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody smiled back, thinking she had answered him well.

“And this is what the Bible says, that the talking snake was the devil?”

“Well, the Bible doesn’t say so directly, but that’s who it was.”

“You mean the devil had been causing trouble before this in the garden?”

“Well, no. The devil isn’t mentioned specifically in this part of the Bible, Jimmy, but we know who it is who tempts people to do wrong. That is the devil, Jimmy.”

“Oh,” Jimmy responded.

Mrs. Peabody continued on. “After they ate the fruit, Adam and Eve looked at each other and immediately felt embarrassed, because they were both naked, so they found some fig leaves and sewed them together to cover themselves.”

“They didn’t know they were naked before that. How could they not know they were naked?” Jimmy asked.

“They knew they were naked, Jimmy. They just didn’t know that it was wrong. That’s why the tree was called the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Before they ate from the tree and had this knowledge, they didn’t know that it was evil.”

“So they were doing evil, but they didn’t know it, and that was okay with god,” Jimmy said.

“Well, not exactly, I mean, sort of, I mean, well ...,” Mrs. Peabody flustered. “Okay, look. We haven’t got much time left to finish the story, so we have to hurry along.” Continuing she said, “So, god came by later on, but Adam and Eve hid from god because they realized that they were naked. When god called out, ‘Where are you?’ they admitted they were hiding because they knew they were naked, whereupon god asked them, ‘So have you eaten from the tree that I told you not to eat from?’

Jimmy started to ask, “So god didn’t know? Doesn’t god know everything?” but Mrs. Peabody cut him off and said, “I wish I had time to answer every question you have, Jimmy, but we really have to hurry to finish.”

“Really?” Jimmy said. Jimmy had a way of knowing when grownups were lying.

Rushing on, Mrs. Peabody explained, “Adam admitted that they had eaten the fruit, but pointed to Eve and said, ‘This woman that you made as my ma... companion... ate first and then tempted me to do so’. God then looked at the woman and asked, ‘Why did you do this?’ and the woman said, ‘The snake tempted me to do it.’ God then said to the snake, ‘Because you have done this, you will crawl on your belly all your life and eat the dust of the ground,’ and that’s why snakes crawl, rather than walk on the ground. Then god turned to Adam and Eve and said, ‘Because you ate from the tree that I told you not to eat from, I will no longer provide you a nice garden to eat from. From now on you will have to work hard for your food and contend with all the thorns and thistles that grow up from the ground.’”

Jimmy started to ask, “If it was really the devil, why did god curse the snake...?” but then the buzzer went off, signaling the end of Sunday School. Jimmy could see a sigh of relief on Mrs. Peabody’s face as she shewed them out of the room and said, “We have to go now and get ready for regular church.”