



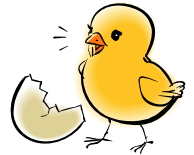
World Kids

Fun for kids! true stories!



PAL Project Number 10 - March 2009

March in our part of **Texas** is an exciting month! At the beginning of this past week the temperature was a gorgeous 80°F (about 25°C) and it seemed certain that summer was here. But within 24 hours the temperature had dropped to 38°F (about 3°C) and the cold rain for the next few days was just like winter again! It reminds me how easy it is to be fooled if we just judge by one day or one situation! But as I go out today (in the cold rain!) to feed the animals on our little farm, I see that the fruit trees are in blossom and many other trees are getting fresh green leaves after being bare for months; there are wild flowers amongst the grass and I can even see some small potato plants and seedlings starting to appear in the rows that we dug and planted just a few weeks ago. When I arrive at the goat pen, I am greeted by the **THREE** sets of twin baby goats that were born recently, and any day now we will have baby chicks hatching! So even though it may still **FEEL** like winter, I **KNOW** that Spring is really here!

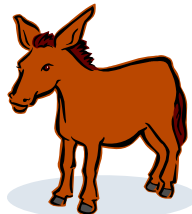


But around the world the seasons vary - those of you in the Southern Hemisphere are now in harvest time and getting ready for the winter. Our friends in **Africa** and parts of **South America** near the Equator do not have summer and winter seasons, yet they still have certain times in the year known as planting season and harvest season. If farmers and gardeners do not take notice of these two important seasons, they may work very hard planting and caring for crops yet never grow **ANYTHING** successfully that they can eat!! In Biblical times nearly everyone was involved in farming (even children), or at least everyone was very aware of the seasons because the fruit and vegetables were only available at certain times of the year as there was no refrigeration or way to preserve them. Here is a quiz that you might enjoy:

BIBLICAL FARMER QUIZ

Many important characters in the Bible were actually farmers. See if you can match up each Bible character with the correct picture showing what kind of farmer he was, **AND** the corresponding scripture verse!

DAVID



1. donkey

JOB



2. wheat

JACOB



3. pigs

PRODIGAL SON



4. sheep

ELISHA



5. fig trees

GIDEON



6. goats

BOAZ



7. camels

SAUL



8. barley

AMOS



9. oxen

Judges 6:11

Amos 7:14

1 Samuel 9:3

Ruth 3:2

Genesis 30:32

Job 1:3

Luke 15:15

1 Kings 19:19

1 Samuel 16:11

In many countries around the world even today, many children have to help in the fields or take care of the animals instead of going to school, or have to work long hours each day after returning home from school. We can understand that many poor families need their children to help work in the family fields, but sadly the fact is that many young children are forced to work far from home on big commercial farms, and the little money they earn is sent back to help provide for the others in their family! Often they are exposed to harmful pesticides (chemicals that kill insects) and dangerous machinery, and have to carry backbreaking loads, which make the work very dangerous. In **Ecuador** almost 80% of children in rural areas work in agriculture - either on family farms on the high mountain slopes, or in commercial farms. In the **Philippines** it is reported that almost 25 million children are involved in child labor throughout the country, mostly in agriculture, but also in deep sea fishing, mining and packing drugs! In **Afghanistan**, after years of war, although the schools have improved recently, still many children work each day either herding goats or working in the poppy fields to produce the drugs that are still the major source of income for many families.



Even though laws have been passed around the world to stop such terrible child labor practices, still many international companies have made no changes. A lot of the cotton used in Western countries comes from **India**, where a report in 2003 from the state of Andhra Pradesh said that 60% of those working in cottonseed production were children as opposed to 90% the previous year - although the difference was probably due to a severe drought rather than changes in the labor laws! Children worked 12-14 hours a day and earned 50 cents!! Chocolate and cocoa are enjoyed by nearly everyone in Europe and the USA, and 4 out of the 6 largest producing countries of cocoa are in West Africa, including the **Ivory Coast** and **Ghana**. A report in 2002 stated that an estimated 284,000 children are working on cocoa farms in hazardous tasks such as using machetes and applying pesticides and insecticides without the necessary protective equipment. Cacao pods must be cut from high branches with long-handled machetes, split open, and their beans scooped out. Children who are involved in the worst labor abuses come from nearby countries such as **Mali** and **Togo** where the poverty is even greater and so parents send their children to work and send back the money. But often once away from home these poor children are forced to work like slaves for almost nothing!



Did you know that 400 pods of cacao are needed to make just one pound of chocolate?



Because so many people all around the world are familiar with farming, they can easily understand many of the parables and illustrations that Jesus used in his teachings. Can you think of some of his famous parables? There are the stories of the Sower, the Fig Tree, the Lost Sheep and many more. Jesus also told us about when he will return to the earth to take all who serve him back to live in Heaven forever with him. He said that NO-ONE knows the exact day or hour, but we should make sure we are ready and always serving God faithfully. In **Mark 13:28-30** Jesus tells us that just as we see the signs of trees budding (and other signs of spring) and know that summer is coming soon, if we read and believe the scriptures, we will recognize the season approaching when Jesus will return. He describes clearly to us what things will happen all around the world - wars, famines (when crops fail and there is no food), diseases and earthquakes.....But also there will be much wickedness; children will rebel against their parents; many people will say they are the one who can solve the problems and save the world (but they are lying); and many Christians will be persecuted, beaten and killed for following Jesus. Some of these things have happened already, but just as with spring coming in Texas, when ALL the signs are there, we can know the time is very near. We do not have to be afraid, because Jesus promised us he is coming to take care of us - but we had better be ready and we need to tell others all about Jesus too! Pray and see what YOU can do!

'Til next time,

Your friend, Shirley

Answers: 1. Saul - 1 Samuel 9:3; 2. Gideon - Judges 6:11; 3. Prodigal Son - Luke 15:15; 4. David - 1 Samuel 16:11; 5. Amos - Amos 7:14; 6. Jacob - Genesis 30:32; 7. Job - Job 1:3; 8. Boaz - Ruth 3:2; 9. Elisha - 1 Kings 19:19

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