

## The Coming of Human Beings

Do you remember the Time Line of Life? At the end of the time line was a narrow red line and a picture of a human being. You also saw the red line on the Black Strip. This red line showed the length of time that human beings have been on the earth. Human beings appeared on the earth after many other living creatures had come before them. Seaweeds and other plants had flourished in the seas. Tiny creatures had filled the oceans and purified their waters. Later, these creatures became larger, developed shells, then bones and spinal cords. Some plants and animals moved onto the land. Animals became better at taking care of their young. Plants used the sun, water, and minerals from the soil to grow their fruits and seeds. Human beings could only come when the earth was ready for them. There was food for them to find, thick carpets of grass for them to walk upon, and under the ground were vast stores of minerals that they would one day learn to use. Today I want to tell you more about human beings, the kind of life on the earth that is just like you and me.

The world of the first human beings was filled with giant cave lions and cave bears. In that ancient world, the first people found many different kinds of plants growing. Those first humans came into the world without sharp teeth that could be used for defense. They had no sharp claws that would help them to climb trees out of reach of danger, to dig for roots to eat and to catch other creatures for food. They had no way of knowing which fruits were good to eat, and which were poisonous.

Animals are born with this sort of knowledge. Each kind of animal finds and eats the food that suits it. Each type of animal is able to protect itself in its own way. Lions eat meat, not grass, and they use their teeth and claws to protect themselves. Deer eat grass. They could never eat meat! And they can run very quickly to avoid the creatures that hunt them. Each animal has its own way of life, and each knows automatically what to do. Each was especially adapted to live in a certain type of environment. The lion needed grassy plains - it could never survive in the ice and snow of the frigid north. The deer were at home on the forests. Imagine a deer trying to live its life in a river! It just wouldn't work!

The first human beings were not born knowing what to eat, or how to protect themselves. They were not particularly suited for any particular area of the earth. Human beings were quite like other animals in other ways. They were mammals, which meant that they had hair, gave birth to live babies and nursed them with milk afterwards. But they were also very different from the animals in some important ways. Because of these differences, the first people survived in the world that they found.

The first human beings walked on two feet, and this freed their hands so that they could work with them, making things, and caring for their children and playing. Imagine how difficult it would be if this weren't so. How could you hold a pencil, or carry anything that you needed, if you had to use your hands and your feet in order to walk!

Look at your hand. Your thumb is a wonderful thing! It can cross your palm to reach your fingers. (demonstrate the opposable thumb as you speak) You can pick up the most delicate of shells with just your thumb and forefinger because of this, or you can squeeze your hands tightly around the branch

of a tree, and suspend yourself in the air! No other creature can do the things that humans can do with their hands. What animal can thread a needle, drive a car safely through the city, or paint a beautiful picture? Only human beings, who have those wonderful hands, can do such things!

Another important gift that the first human beings had was a larger, more complex brain. With this brain, human beings could think about things. Their intelligence led them to wonder about all that they saw around them. They wondered why the rain fell, and what the stars were. They wondered about the great rumbling of thunder in the sky, and they wondered what caused the sun to rise in the sky, then fall and disappear into the night. Human beings could think about what happened in the past, and they could think about what might happen in the future. Right now, you might be thinking about what I just said, or perhaps you are wondering what I'm going to say next! The minds of the first people, just like yours and mine, were able to imagine answers to the questions they asked themselves, and they were able to find many ways of discovering the reasons for things.

This ability to think, to wonder and imagine was what enabled human beings to invent language, so that they could tell each other what they were thinking. It was how numbers, mathematics, and geometry came to be. Art and music were created by the first humans, too. It is thanks to them that we have statues and paintings to enjoy, and songs to sing, for the first humans taught each other to do these things, and that knowledge has been passed on to us.

The first humans were not suited for any particular part of the earth. You may think that this must have been a terrible thing, and perhaps you are partly right, because this meant that they couldn't just live somewhere without any trouble. But this turned out to be a great gift, too. You see, because they had their minds with which to think and imagine, and because they had hands with which to work, human beings could say when the weather got cold and the snow began to fall: "I'm cold! I need some sort of covering for my body, to keep me warm like the lion's fur keeps it warm. Some sort of a shelter, like the nest of the squirrel would also keep out the snow and the cold!"

And so, human beings invented clothing and houses. They didn't need bodies that were especially adapted to a particular place in the world. Instead they used what they found around them to adapt the environment to themselves! In this way, human beings spread across the world, and found ways to live in the plains of the lion, the forest of the deer, and the icy lands of the seals. The human beings of those times were able to imagine things that had never been, and then they were able to make them, just as the human beings of today use their imaginations to think of new things, and then use their hands to make them. You can imagine, for example, a bowl that you want to make from clay, and then you are able to make it. The ability to imagine something new, and then make it, is a power that the very first human beings also had, and it is what enabled them to survive in their world.

Human beings had one other gift. This was the most precious gift of all, and it is what truly made them human beings. Human beings were able to love.

Human beings can love their mother and their father, their sisters, brothers, uncles and aunts. They can love their friends. Human beings love the many people close to them. Humans can also love and care about others they have never met! Think of the child who is hungry in another state, or of people in trouble in another country. They may find that help comes from someone that they didn't even know! It could be you or I, or some other person far away, who heard about their problems, and cared, and did something to help.

The story of human beings began a long time ago on the earth. It is an exciting story, which has chapters that contain the cave lions and cave bears. Other chapters tell about the first people to reach new parts of the earth, and their dangerous journeys over great plains of ice, or raging oceans, or burning deserts. On these voyages into new places that no one had visited before went fathers and mothers, children just like you, and babies, held carefully in their mother's arms.

As different groups of people traveled all over the world, they told of their adventures and their lives by the light of their fires. In the flickering light of the flames, the storyteller would first tell one story, and then another, and the children drank in every word. One day, they would tell the same stories to their children, and perhaps they would add another chapter, telling of their own lives.

Some of these first people left beautiful paintings and carvings for those that followed them. These too told their story. It is a story that we can still understand today, as we find these messages in forgotten caves, and on the sides of ancient boulders.

Other groups of people wrote down the story of their lives. On clay tablets that have been buried in the ruins of deserted cities, and on crumbling scrolls made of papyrus reeds, we are able to read of the lives of ancient kings, and of the adventures of the great heroes of those times. In our minds, we are able to hear the words of people who passed from the earth thousands of years ago.

In the story of human beings you will meet knights in armor, queens in castles, the musicians who wrote the beautiful music that we enjoy today, and the men and women who have made journeys into space. There is an enormous amount to find out about what has been happening since human beings appeared on the earth.

This is the first story that we have had about human beings, but it is not the last! Another day we'll talk more about the first human beings to live on the earth. They lived a very long time ago, but they were just like us. They had a mind with which they could think and imagine, and they had hands with which they could work, and they could love, just like you and I.