

What is the "Good News"?

Let me share the "Good News" with you. When Jesus was on earth the bible says that he went about teaching and preaching.

*And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. (Matthew 4:23)**

The bible says that Jesus was proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom." The word *gospel* means *good news*. When Jesus was on the earth he told people the good news. Not just any good news. THE good news about the Kingdom of God.

I want to share with you the *good news* of how Jesus came to rescue us from our sins and restore us back to fellowship with God. The bible has a much teach us about this. I have sought to summarise the bible's teaching, so what you have below is *the gospel in a nut shell!*

* See the end of this document for a description of the Codes like "Matthew 4:23"

God Created Us

Suggested Background Reading: Genesis chapters 1, 2 and 3

In the first book of the bible, Genesis, we read how God created this whole world. He filled it with plants and animals. On the final day of his creative work He created Adam, the first human.

Write out these verses:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

God Created Us For Fellowship

When God created Adam, He saw that Adam needed companionship, so he formed Eve, the first woman, out of Adam's rib.

Adam was different from the rest of creation, for God did something unique when He created him. He "breathed into" him. In other words He not only gave Adam physical life, He gave him spiritual life. So not only could Adam and Eve enjoy each other's company - they could fellowship with God.

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

In fact the bible says in Gen. 3:8 that God came to Adam in the garden in the cool of the day. I believe this was a common occurrence. Each evening God would come into the garden and fellowship with Adam and Eve.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8)

God desires to fellowship with you. He wants to have a close relationship with you.

God will surely do this for you, for He always does just what He says, and He is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Corinthians 1:9)

Paradise Lost

God desires to fellowship with you. He wants to have a close relationship with you. But something happened in the garden which resulted in the spiritual part of Adam dying. His fellowship with God was no longer the same. Sin had entered in.

God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden named Eden. They were free to eat freely from every tree in the garden except for one - the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told them that if they ate from the forbidden tree then they would surely die.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

Our universe was not God's only act of creation. Though we are given few details, we do know that God also created angels who served Him. One of those angels, Lucifer, was one of the chief angels in heaven. He was incredibly beautiful. Pride entered his heart and he sought to usurp God. He was cast down from his position along with his angel followers. Eventually they will be cast into a Lake of Fire which has been prepared for them. In the meantime they seek to frustrate the purposes of God as they still work in complete rebellion towards God. Lucifer is also known as Satan, or the devil. His angel followers are called demons.

Lucifer, in the form of a serpent, appeared to Eve in the garden and told her that God was lying to her. He said that instead of dying, eating the forbidden fruit would actually make her like God. Believing the devil's lie that God was actually holding out on them - they ignored God's warnings and decided that when it came to deciding what was good or bad that they would make those decisions for themselves. So Eve and then Adam ate the forbidden fruit.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

Immediately, there was a change. Sin (rebellion against God) had entered into the human race. Adam and Eve (and their descendants) had died spiritually. The world would never be the same.

As a result of Adam and Eve's original sin, every person born since has been born *in sin*. That's right, all of us have been born in sin. We have a nature which seeks to look out for ourselves and has a leaning towards sin. But we can't point the finger at Adam and blame him for all our problems because not only are we born in sin (as a result of Adam) but we ARE sinners (due to our own actions). There is not a person alive who can say that they have totally obeyed God 100% in all their actions and attitudes.

For I was born a sinner-- yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

Therefore, we are all headed for hell. Remember I said earlier that there was a place prepared for the devil and all his angels, the Lake of Fire. Well, because of our own rebellion and sin, God will cast us into the Lake of Fire as well. This is not what God wants. We have chosen to rebel against God and therefore we have chosen (even if many are not aware of it) to follow the devil's path - which ends in hell.

As a result of Adam and Eve's sin God sent them out of the garden and blocked their re-entry. From then on Adam had to work hard as he cultivated the land.

FURTHER READING: If you would like, you could look up these bible references which all talk about the things discussed in this study. Romans 6:23, Hebrews 9:27, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:10-15.

Paradise Re-gained

Suggested Background Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Before Adam and Eve were sent out God told them that there would come a day when one of the woman's descendants (her seed) would crush the head of Lucifer. God had a plan so that our fellowship with Him could be restored.

How can a perfect, holy and loving God restore mankind? His holiness will not allow our sin to be simply swept under the carpet. God's justice will not allow Him to say "You are forgiven" and pretend that the rebellion never occurred, yet His love will not allow Him to reject His creation.

The bible tells us that there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.

And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:22)

Therefore, in order for God to restore us, someone would need to give their life as a sacrifice. But who? Would the shedding of my blood be sufficient to cover my own sins, much less the sins of everyone else? What was required was a perfect, sinless man who would give his own life so that others could be cleansed. But where could such a man be found? God's answer: He sent His own Son. Jesus was not conceived by the normal union of a man and woman, instead the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in the virgin Mary's womb - Jesus did not inherit sin from Adam! Secondly, Jesus lived a perfect life - He had no sin of His own!

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

Why would God send His own Son to die for us? Why would the all powerful God allow His own Son to be mocked, spat upon, beat up and eventually crucified by mankind? Why would He be willing for His Son to humble Himself and become a man, and then die as a shamed convict (crucifixion was for criminals)? Why would He allow His beloved Son to be killed by those who had rebelled against Himself. Why? Because of His great love for us.

These verses summarise it perfectly. Read them carefully and allow the truth of what God did to impact you.

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favour that you have been saved!) (Ephesians 2:4-5)

He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2Corinthians 5:21)

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God-- all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God. (Romans 5:8-11)

The Grave Could Not Hold Him

Suggested Background Reading: Luke Chapter 24

How could we be sure that God's plan was successful? Was Jesus able to take our sins upon Himself? Was He able to deal with the sin nature given to us by Adam?

The power of Sin and Death was conquered by Jesus. The proof - Jesus rose from the dead. Death and Hell could not keep Him. Jesus rose from the dead - never to die again. He was taken up to heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father.

Read this bible passage from 1Corinthians:

"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Fifty years after Jesus' death and resurrection He appeared to the apostle John and said this:

"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades (Hell). (Revelation 1:17-18)

What is Our Response?

Jesus died for everyone's sin - does that mean that everyone is now restored in their fellowship with God? Are all men now headed to heaven? Are all now rescued from sin and are no longer destined for hell? No. Not all will go to heaven. Not because Jesus sacrifice was not sufficient. Not because God doesn't desire all to be saved. Paul said in his first letter to Titus that "God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"¹

Then why will not all be saved? Because in order to be saved we must do three things:

1. Believe it - You must believe in what God has done. You must believe that you are a sinner and that Jesus has paid the price for your sin.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

¹ 1Tit 2:4

2. Choose Jesus - You must make the definite decision that you are going to trust in Jesus and rely upon Him and Him alone. You are choosing Jesus as both your Saviour and your Lord. There is no other way to be saved.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (John 14:6)

3. Act upon it - You cannot have faith hidden in your heart. Faith must be expressed in your actions. One of the key areas of expression of faith is in your conversation. You must speak out the faith in your heart.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom 10:9-10)

FOOTNOTE: What Are Those Funny Code Things?

In these notes you will see many references such as "Matt 4:23" or "2Tim. 3:16." Whenever we refer to something that is written in the Bible, we use this reference system to show us the exact location of that quote. Let me take a moment to explain how they work - they are really quite simple.

The bible is actually a collection of writings, each of which is called a "book". There are 66 books in the bible. Some are as short as only one page - others as long as 100 pages. The books are divided into two groups: The Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament has 39 books and covers from the creation of the world up until the time before Jesus was born. The life of Jesus and the beginnings of the church are covered in the 27 books of the New Testament.

Each of the books in the bible has a name. For example, there is a book written by one of Jesus' disciples called Matthew which contains the story of Jesus' life on earth. When you hear a preacher say, "Let's turn to the book of Matthew," he is telling us to turn in our bibles to the part written by Matthew (which by the way is the 40th book in the bible, the first book in the New Testament). Sometimes the book name is abbreviated (eg. Matt. or Mt.).

To help in referring to a particular portion of a book, each book was divided into chapters (Matthew is divided into 28 chapters) and the chapters were then divided into verses (Matthew chapter 4 is divided into 25 verses).

When you want to look up a reference such as John 3:16 (or it may be abbreviated to Jn 3:16) You need to find the book of John, then turn to the third chapter and then finally the 16th verse in that chapter.

ie. John 3:16 = John 3: 16
 Book Chapter Verse

To find the book of John, turn to the beginning of your bible where you will find an index with all of the books of the bible and their page numbers. You may want to put a book mark in this index as you will find it really helpful. Don't be intimidated by how quickly others are able to turn to a reference in the bible, we all started just like you relying on the index to find anything. Eventually you will learn the order of the books by memory but for now just use the index. And when you are using your phone or tablet to look up references in the bible, you can jump straight to the passage which makes it easier.

If you don't yet own a bible, please contact us and we will give you a bible or if you want to purchase a bible we could arrange someone to go with you to a Christian Bookstore. Because the original bible was written in ancient Hebrew and Greek every bible is actually a translation into English. There are dozens of translations available today. I suggest that you get a version such as the New Living Bible as it is quite easy to read - especially if reading the bible is new for you.