

Good Tidings Of Great Joy

The Message of Jesus Christ Our Savior and the Kingdom of God

**FEAR NOT: FOR. BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY,
WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE**

TWO thousand years ago, angels announced the birth of Jesus with the words above. Have you ever asked yourself what these words really mean? How can the birth of Jesus two thousand years ago be good tidings of great joy to ALL PEOPLE when the majority of mankind presently, as well as in the past have never even heard of the savior?

Jesus commissioned his followers to go forth and preach the gospel. "Gospel" is a word that means "good news", but strangely, the 'gospel' which most professed Christians preach can only mean bad news for the majority of mankind. Not only are we born into a world full of hate, violence, prejudice, evil, and death, but we are also taught that at the end of the struggle, most will face an even greater woe; that of eternal torment in a hell of fire.



THE WAGES OF SIN DEATH - NOT ETERNAL TORMENT

The bad news my friend, is not hell. Contrary to popular religious thought in our day, the idea that God will mercilessly torment millions for all eternity *is nowhere to be found in the Bible*. No, the bad news is that you are *dying*. You may look in the mirror today full of youth and beauty, but as sure as the sun rises and sets, you are fading; gradually, ever so slightly, everyday. Not only this, but everyone, and everything you love, or ever have loved is also dying. Your material possessions will not last no matter how much care you take to preserve them. They will eventually fall apart. But much worse, we cannot even hold on to those we love. One day they are with us, laughing, sharing our joys and sorrows, and the next they are cruelly taken from us.

You can shut your eyes to it, but one day we must face the reality that someday we will die and leave behind everything and everyone we loved. When death calls, we must forfeit everything we knew life to be.

Why are we dying? Why do we and those we love so much have to die?

God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, to live forever in joy, peace, and happiness. Man was not made to die. God intended then, and indeed still does intend for men and women to live forever, but God also gave them a choice. God gave Adam and Eve the choice between life his way, the perfect law of love, or the way of Satan; lust, selfishness, and greed. God instructed the man and woman about what he expected of them, and warned them clearly about what would happen if they chose not to obey:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Gen 2:16-17



That first human couple disobeyed their creator and the death sentence was passed upon them. The man and woman were forced from the garden of Eden away from the tree of life which God had lovingly provided to sustain their existence. From that moment they began to fade, and eventually died.

You have probably heard it said that "we are all God's children". It may come as a shock for you to learn that we really aren't. God directly created the first man and woman, and as such they were his children. You and I however were not created so. Every man, woman, and child on this planet are descended from that first fallen couple in the Garden of Eden. God is ultimately the author of life, but we are children of Adam and Eve. Like a disease we have inherited their fallen nature, as well as their death sentence.

Because the entire human race sprang from our fallen original parents, God has reckoned the entire race as dead. It would seem as though we are a race of men and women which are born only to die.

However, imagine for a moment that you were just diagnosed with a very serious terminal illness. You know you are going to die, and all seems bleak and hopeless. Then imagine that you meet a doctor who tells you that he can not only cure your illness, but will do so free of charge provided you follow his instructions and agree to remain in his care. Would it not be the utmost folly to reject such an offer?

God himself has provided the cure for death and opened the way to eternal life. Would it not be foolish to not take a moment and learn of God's offer of eternal life?

THE GOOD NEWS - FOR GOD SO LOVED...

But God LOVED. God loved us so much that he has already provided for our salvation and recovery from death. The fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden did not take God by surprise. With the death sentence God also foretold that someday the seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) would crush Satan and release mankind from the bondage of death and corruption:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Gen 3:15

For four thousand years Adam's children had been dying, when an announcement was made by angels to lowly shepherds:

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem marked the fulfillment of the promise that one day God would send a savior to break mankind's bondage to sin and death. Because Adam had sold his entire race of children into sin corruption and death, mankind was in need of a ransom.

God sent his own beloved Son into the world to be a ransom for Adam's fallen race of children. Because the sin of one man, Adam, sold our race into bondage, God provided one perfect life in his own Son to buy back for us what Adam had lost. No child of Adam could ever redeem the race; God required a perfect human life as a corresponding price for that which Adam had given up.

Because Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin, he was, for the first time since Adam, a true son of God; one who could live a life of perfect obedience to his God and Father, and thus provide the corresponding ransom price for that which Adam had lost.

The Savior, our ransom and our redeemer, was born.

A KINGDOM IS ANNOUNCED

At the age of 30, Jesus began his public ministry with this announcement:

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matt 4:17

Have you ever stopped to consider what this kingdom was? The Old Testament prophets had all foretold of this glorious kingdom age which the savior would usher in when he finally came.

The prophet Isaiah described the kingdom with these words:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. Isa 35:5-7

And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Isa 29:18-19

The kingdom was to be God's instrument in restoring mankind and the earth to the perfection which Adam and Eve had lost. Jesus was the the divinely appointed king of the kingdom. The kingdom was first offered to God's chosen people, the Jewish nation. Jesus was sent to preach exclusively to them and offer them first the Kingdom which was to spread to the uttermost parts of the earth.



The Jewish nation, however, was not prepared for Christ's message. The leaders of the Jewish nation expected the messiah to bring them freedom from political oppression, but they did not expect the message of moral obligation to God's sovereignty which Jesus preached. The leaders resented Jesus' moral demands which he made on them as a condition for inheriting the kingdom. They felt that by simply being Jews, they had a right to that kingdom, but Jesus taught otherwise.

Resentment, jealousy and pride got the best of the Jewish national leaders. When Jesus was only 33 years old they had him put to death by crucifixion. They had rejected God's king.

But like the sin of our first parents, Israel's rejection of their King and Messiah did not catch God by surprise. In fact, Jesus taught his faithful disciples that his rejection must occur to fulfill prophecy. As foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa 53:3-6

Jesus was put to death. Having lived a perfect life he died to provide the ransom for the human race and to satisfy God's demand for divine justice. *He died to buy back life for every man, woman, and child of the human race.*

Death however could not hold Jesus in the tomb. Having lived a perfect life, satisfying the demands of divine justice, and tasting death for every man, the grave no longer had any legal right to hold him. After three days and nights in the tomb God resurrected him. But upon his resurrection Jesus was no longer a *mortal* man subject to die once more. Instead he came forth glorious and immortal; the firstborn from the dead into immortality, never to die again.



THE KINGDOM NOW

But what was to become of the promised earthly kingdom which had been prophesied; the time in which God would restore both mankind and the balance of nature to perfection? Because the Jewish leaders refused to submit to Christ's authority, Jesus told them:

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Matt 21:43

But he also told his faithful apostles shortly before he died:

Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:28-30

The promise to inherit the coming kingdom was taken from Israel and given to those who would willingly sacrifice their own self righteousness and submit to Christ's righteousness. The entire work of the present Gospel age has been to seek out and instruct those who are to obtain the Kingdom at Christ's return; that is, obtain the right to reign with Christ. The "church" was instituted for this very purpose. Those who hear of Christ in our present age and exercise faith in his ransom sacrifice for us, are called upon to inherit his kingdom; to obtain a position of co-rulership with Christ when he sets up his earthly kingdom at his return. Much of the New Testament has been written for our instruction in order to prepare for that time.

Salvation in its most basic sense means to not lose one's life; to be rescued from sin death, and the grave and brought back to a state of perfection which Adam and Eve lost. Because of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, he holds out salvation to anyone who will ultimately cry out to him in repentance for mercy, accepting him as Lord and Savior.

However, the present work of the Gospel age holds out an even greater hope. We are called to be co-heirs in Christ's kingdom and to obtain a resurrection to immortality. This goes beyond salvation and is offered to those who are willing to live a life of self-sacrifice and walk in the "narrow way". Jesus himself said:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Luke 13:24

And as the apostle Paul stated:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Rom 8:16-17

EARTH'S NIGHT OF SIN TO TERMINATE

IN A MORNING OF JOY



It is a serious error of modern Christendom to teach that the opportunity for salvation terminates with the end of the current age. It is equally incorrect to teach that the fate of every human being is sealed at the moment of their death. It may come as a shock to many, but God is not presently trying to "save the world", nor has he yet been at any time in the past.

Ever since that fateful day when our original parents partook of that forbidden tree and plunged all of humanity into despair and ruin, God has been working out his plan of redemption to recover mankind from sin and the grave. God began by choosing one man (Abraham), and then one nation (Israel) through which the promised savior would come.

Since the coming of the savior and his ascension to heaven, God has been choosing only those who will reign in the Kingdom at his second advent. At no time in the past has the message of "good tidings of great joy" been preached to all. This work remains for a future time. As the apostle Paul stated:

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for ALL, to be testified in due time. 1 Tim 2:5-6

Contrary to popular belief, the second coming of Jesus does not mark the end of the world. It does however mark the end of the current age in which sin and death have reigned for so long. Jesus is coming back to take his bride (those who by a life of self sacrifice and obedience have earned the right to reign with him) and set up his kingdom. He and his faithful bride will reign over and judge all humanity. It is during this period that that the truth of the ransom, and the 'good tidings of great joy' will be preached to all .

The "good news" is that because of the work of our Savior, under his reign, every fallen child of Adam will eventually regain the fellowship with God and the perfection which Adam lost for them. By the merit of Christ's ransom in which he bought back life for humanity, even those who have died in ignorance will be resurrected from the grave; and by judgment and instruction, ultimately all will be saved and come to life in Jesus Christ. It is during these glorious ages to come that God then goes about the business of converting the world. Isaiah tells us:

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Isa 11:9

However we must make no mistake about the seriousness of sin and our attitude toward the message of the Gospel now. Sin has consequences in this life, and in the age to come. We will all be made to give an account of our lives to God and will be judged according to those choices we have made in this lifetime. Those who hear of these Glad Tidings now, yet reject the message will be much more accountable to God and judged more severely, having spurned the message about Jesus Christ and the offer for eternal life. God is certainly merciful and loving, but

we must understand clearly that those who treat God's offer of eternal life with contempt do so at their own peril.

To hear the life giving message about Jesus Christ and his kingdom is a tremendous privilege. God calls people to attain to immortality as Jesus himself has. God calls us to a life of righteousness and obedience and to aspire to be co-heirs and co-rulers in his kingdom. Can you think of anything more valuable? Can you think of any prospect more thrilling? What in this life could ever be worth gaining if we lose such an opportunity? My friend, God wishes to bestow upon you the greatest gift he could ever give; do not spurn His love.

God purposes to give every man, woman, and child eternal life. Many in this lifetime have never even heard of God's gift of eternal life. As we noted, Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection has secured this life for all of Adam's children. However, the choice on the part of each still remains; If anyone willfully rejects God's gift after having received a resurrection from the dead, and a full knowledge of the truth, they will be judged accordingly being thus excluded from the blessings of the coming glorious age of God's righteousness, the age of the ages. Hear the words of Jesus:

For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? Matt 16:26

A TRULY JOYOUS MESSAGE

Good tidings of great joy? Absolutely! Not only has God provided the ransom which will allow every man to be released from death and the grave, but in buying back what Adam lost he has also guaranteed that all things - *even you* - whether by His grace and mercy, or His judgments will be reconciled back to himself.



Too good to be true? Not if you believe in a God who loves his creation infinitely more than a parent loves their own children.

Friend, take a moment to pause and consider what great things the Lord has done for us.

If this message has stirred your heart to believe this message of glad tidings, why not pray to God and ask forgiveness for your sins, trust in the work which Jesus has accomplished in our behalf, then diligently seek out His will for your life. If you have any questions we would like to be of help in any way possible. Please let us know.

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