

# The Good News

by Andrew Host

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**In the beginning, there was God.** It is impossible for human minds to understand, but although there was one God, he was three persons: Father, Son (or Word) and Holy Spirit. God, through his Word, created everything that has ever been created.

**Part of his creation was human beings.** They were made in the image of God. That is not to say that they physically looked like God. After all, God was entirely Spirit, without a physical earthly body. No, the part of humans which resembled God was the soul; with an ability to love and hate, feel emotion and reason.

Humans were also given the ability to love, similarly to (but nowhere near as purely) as the way God loves. In fact, humans were designed to look after the plants and animals of the earth, but primarily, they were designed to love God and love each other.

## Love

Here we must diverge, just for a moment, to discuss what this word "love" means. One of the failings of the English language, is its use of the same word to have several different meanings.

- There is love that family members have for one another. This is often a strong love that in some ways resembles God's love.
- There is love that couples have for one another during their courtship. This is normally not true love at all, but simply a physical attraction. However, it is often very strong, and can make couples act quite irrationally while they are "head over heels in love" with each other.
- Sometimes the word love is used simply to mean like very much. We've all heard expressions like, "I love chocolate," or "I love going to the cinema."
- Then there is God's love. This is a love that doesn't stop when love is not returned. This love continues, regardless of the consequences. It is wanting and providing the best for the other person. It has nothing to do with physical attraction or how you feel at the time. This sort of love results from a decision - a decision to love.

## Free Will

God's love can not be forced on anyone. If you force someone to love then it isn't really love. A marriage where one partner doesn't want to be there, doesn't work at all.

God wants us to voluntarily love him. And truly loving God means **doing**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

*All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.*

**John 1:1-3 (NRSV)**

*Then God said, "Let's make humans who are like us; and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds in the sky, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing on the earth."*

*So God created humans in his image, and he made them male and female.*

**Genesis 1:26-27**

what he tells us to do. After all, he loves us so completely, that anything he tells us to do is going to be for our benefit anyway.

## Sin

As it happened, the first humans of God's creation did not obey God. When God told them what he expected of them, he told them that if they didn't do what he wanted, that the consequence would be death. God does not change - he always keeps his promises, and so, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, death entered the world.

## Our Situation

This is a situation that we have inherited. From the moment we could decide between right and wrong behaviour, we have at many times in our lives, chosen wrongly. None of us wants to be told what to do, by other people or by God. So the perfect God, who can not tolerate rebellion, allows us to rebel. He never forces himself on us, and if we choose to reject him, he withdraws from us and lets us have our will. The problem is that all good things, including Heaven, come from God.

Some people think that they're good at heart, but we've all done wrong things, and because God is a God of justice, these wrongdoings must be punished.

## A Temporary Fix

Thousands of years ago, God chose a group of people to be his very special people. These people were descendants of Abraham, through the line of Isaac and Jacob.

God gave these people laws to live by for their benefit, and gave them rituals to perform so that their sins could be forgiven. These rituals involved the shedding of blood of certain animals. These rituals in themselves couldn't really provide forgiveness, but they pointed to a future time when the ultimate sacrifice would.

God revealed himself to these people in many amazing and powerful ways, and yet over and over again they rejected him; envious of the nations around them, they adopted their idolatrous religions and customs, behaving in ways that were

*"If you love me, you will keep doing what I tell you to do."*

**John 14:15**

*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*

**Romans 8:28 (NRSV)**

*God, who was called I AM, told the man, "You're allowed to eat as much as you like from every tree in the garden; but you're not allowed to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do eat it, then you'll die."*

**Genesis 2:16-17**

*For I, the I AM do not change.*

**Malachi 3:6**

*As the Bible says: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one."*

**Romans 3:10**

*The old system of priesthood based on family lines was cancelled because it didn't work. It was weak and useless for saving people.*

*It never made anyone really right with God. But now we have a far better hope, for Christ makes us acceptable to God, and now we may draw near to him.*

**Hebrews 7:18-19 (TLB)**

*We mustn't let our hearts become set against him, as the people of Israel did. They steeled themselves against his love and complained against him in the desert while he was testing them.*

*But God was patient with them forty years, though they tried his patience sorely; he kept right on doing his mighty miracles for them to see.*

*"But," God says, "I was very angry with them, for their hearts were always looking somewhere else instead of up to me, and they never found the paths I wanted them to follow."*

**Hebrews 3:8-10 (TLB)**

repugnant to God.

## Permanently Fixed

So the God of justice couldn't allow rebellious humans to come into his presence. But that same God is the God of love, who before the creation of the world, planned to bring people back to himself.

God entered this world - he became human. This man was called Jesus: 100% God and 100% man. He lived a perfect life, even though he was **subject to all the temptations** that other people experience.

He gained quite a following during his short life, but when the time of testing really came he was left all alone. His death on the cross was not like the Jewish sacrifices that needed to be repeated annually. This sacrifice obtained the forgiveness of all people, **once and for all**.

*But Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who has gone to heaven itself to help us; therefore let us never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses since he had the same temptations we do, though he never once gave way to them and sinned.*

**Hebrews 4:14-15 (TLB)**

***The old system of Jewish laws gave only a dim foretaste of the good things Christ would do for us. The sacrifices under the old system were repeated again and again, year after year, but even so they could never save those who lived under their rules. If they could have, one offering would have been enough; the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all and their feeling of guilt would be gone.***

*But just the opposite happened: those yearly sacrifices reminded them of their disobedience and guilt instead of relieving their minds. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats really to take away sins. That is why Christ said as he came into the world, "O God, the blood of bulls and goats cannot satisfy you, so you have made ready this body of mine for me to lay as a sacrifice upon your altar. You were not satisfied with the animal sacrifices, slain and burnt before you as offerings for sin.*

*Then I said, 'See, I have come to do your will, to lay down my life, just as the Scriptures said that I would.'*

*After Christ said this about not being satisfied with the various sacrifices and offerings required under the old system, he then added, "Here I am. I have come to give my life." He cancels the first system in favor of a far better one.*

*Under this new plan we have been forgiven and made clean by Christ's dying for us once and for all. Under the old agreement the priests stood before the altar day after day offering sacrifices that could never take away our sins.*

*But Christ gave himself to God for our sins as one sacrifice for all time and then sat down in the place of highest honor at God's right hand, waiting for his enemies to be laid under his feet. For by that one offering he made forever perfect in the sight of God all those whom he is making holy.*

*And the Holy Spirit testifies that this is so, for he has said,*

*"This is the agreement I will make with the people of Israel, though they broke their first agreement: I will write my laws into their minds so that they will always know my will, and I will put my laws in their hearts so that they will want to obey them."*

*And then he adds, "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds." Now, when sins have once been forever forgiven and forgotten, there is no need to offer more sacrifices to get rid of them. And so, dear brothers, now we may walk right into the very Holy of Holies, where God is, because of the blood of Jesus.*

**Hebrews 10:1-19 (TLB)**

## Resurrection

If Jesus had just died and that was the end, then there wouldn't be much point in being a Christian two thousand years later. But Jesus is not dead any more. Three days after he died, he **rose to life** (appearing to at least 500 people in the short time that he stayed on earth after his resurrection) and is now with God the Father, **interceding on our behalf**.

Having obtained that forgiveness for everyone, Jesus stands up for us when we approach God. When God looks at us, he sees the perfection of Jesus,

*...Christ died for our sins just as the Scriptures said he would, and that he was buried, and that three days afterwards he arose from the grave just as the prophets foretold. He was seen by Peter and later by the rest of "the Twelve." After that he was seen by more than five hundred Christian brothers at one time...*

**1 Corinthians 15:3-6**

*Who then will condemn us? Will Christ? No! For he is the one who died for us and came back to life again for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us there in heaven.*

**Romans 8:34 (TLB)**

because Jesus removed our sin forever. We are declared **not guilty!** We don't have to cower in fear in the presence of God. Thanks to Jesus we are now God's friends.

*When we were utterly helpless, with no way of escape, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners who had no use for him.*

*Even if we were good, we really wouldn't expect anyone to die for us, though, of course, that might be barely possible.*

*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

*And since by his blood he did all this for us as sinners, how much more will he do for us now that he has declared us not guilty? Now he will save us from all of God's wrath to come. And since, when we were his enemies, we were brought back to God by the death of his Son, what blessings he must have for us now that we are his friends and he is living within us!*

*Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God--all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins--making us friends of God.*

**Romans 5:6-11 (TLB)**

## Now is the Time

As we've already discussed, God never forces himself on anyone. But the gift of eternal life has been given, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You can't earn eternal life, just **accept the free gift.** Live God's way, after all, God knows what's best for us.

*The free gift of eternal salvation is now being offered to everyone; and along with this gift comes the realization that God wants us to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures and to live good, God-fearing lives day after day, looking forward to that wonderful time we've been expecting, when his glory shall be seen - the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.*

*He died under God's judgment against our sins so that he could rescue us from constant falling into sin and make us his very own people, with cleansed hearts and real enthusiasm for doing kind things for others.*

**Titus 2:11-14 (TLB)**

## What Now?

Our main purpose in life is to **Love God and to love everyone else** as much as we love ourselves, and his last command before he left the earth to be with the Father, was to **go and make disciples** of everyone over the whole earth.

*A lawyer, spoke up: "Sir, which is the most important command in the laws of Moses?"*

*Jesus replied, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: 'Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself.' All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others."*

**Matthew 22:35-40 (TLB)**

At that time, we were told that although Jesus was going back to the Father, we were not going to be left alone. **He promised to send the Holy Spirit** (who is as much God as Jesus and the Father), to live in us!

*He told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this--that I am with you always, even to the end of the world."*

**Matthew 28:18-20 (TLB)**

Additionally, Jesus said that he would return, not humbly as a baby, but in power and might and glory, to take with him those who belong to him. We also have the assurance that if we die before he returns, just as Jesus rose to life and now lives forever, **we will be resurrected** and given new perfect bodies, to live with him forever.

*Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them, as a fulfillment of the Father's promise...*

**Acts 1:4**

*The bodies we have now embarrass us, for they become sick and die; but they will be full of glory when we come back to life again. Yes, they are weak, dying bodies now, but when we live again they will be full of strength.*

**1 Corinthians 15:43 (TLB)**

**When Jesus returns,** it will be unexpectedly, just like a thief in the

*Jesus declares: "Yes, I am coming quickly!" Yes, may it happen! Come, Lord Jesus!*

**Revelation 22:20**

night, so be ready for him.

Now is the time to ask Jesus into your heart and live his way, letting him be Lord of your life.

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I don't claim to have all the answers, but if you want to discuss this further, please email me: [Email: andrew@andrewhost.com](mailto:andrew@andrewhost.com)