

# GOOD NEWS FOR YOU

By Bill Minick

This is a true story. Some call it the greatest story ever told.

Many thousands of years ago, God created the heavens and the earth. Then he created Man and Woman. The first man He called Adam, and the first woman He called Eve. God loved Adam and Eve and gave them a beautiful garden in which to live. They had everything they needed and everything was very good. Many wonderful plants grew in the garden and Adam and Eve enjoyed the fruit very much. But there was one tree, which had fruit that God did not want Adam and Eve to eat. It was the tree called The Knowledge of Good and Evil. And so God told them not to eat of it, or they would die.

Now God has an enemy called Satan, or the devil. We do not know where Satan came from but he has been around since before the time of Adam and Eve. He is a spirit. That means you cannot see him, but he is very real. Well, he came to Eve and told her that she should eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it would make her wise like God. Eve saw that the fruit looked good and she thought it would taste good. She also liked to think she could be wise like God, so she let Satan talk her into eating the fruit. Then she gave some to Adam, and he also ate it.

When God saw what they had done, he was very angry and disappointed. Since they had done what God told them not to do, they had to be punished. When someone does what God tells him or her not to do that is called *sin*. Adam and Eve were the first *sinners* who lived upon the earth. God had said that if they sinned, they would have to die. To die means to be *separated* or *lose life*. In the garden there was also a tree, which Adam and Eve had been eating of, called *The Tree of Life*. If they could have stayed in the garden, they could have eaten of that tree and lived forever. But God told them if they sinned, they would die. So God had to put them out of the garden, so they could not continue eating of the tree of life and keep on living. From that time on their life span was limited. They lived many years after that, but they finally died.

Since to die means to be *separated* or *cut off* Adam and Eve really died on the day they ate the forbidden (taboo) fruit. This is because they were separated or cut off from God. God no longer *walked and talked* with them as he had in the garden. This is the worst thing that can happen. God is where **Life** comes from. But God cannot let sinners live with Him. The really bad thing is that we have **all sinned**. We have all done things that God does not want us to do. So, we must *all die*. What can we do? Is there a way out for us? Must we all be separated from God forever?

What we have told you so far is mostly bad news. The rest of the story is **Good News!**

Remember, we said God loved man when He made him. Well, He still does. He still loves every person on earth, even though we have all sinned. So God decided to make it possible for us to be punished for our sin and still live with Him forever. If the punishment is being separated from God, how is it possible for us to be punished and still get to be with God forever? If it were left up to us, it would not be possible. But with God, all things are possible.

By God's great love and power He has found a way for us to live with Him. He calls that *salvation*, or *being saved*.

God wants us to be saved, but He also wants us to understand what a great and powerful God He is. He also wants us to know what a loving and merciful God He is. So He spent hundreds and hundreds of years getting man ready for the coming of the One who could save us. He chose a man named Abraham and told him that those who would come from his family would be a great nation. God also told him that there would be one member of his future family who would bring blessings (happiness) to all the people of the earth.

Abraham's descendants later were called *Israelites* after a grandson name *Israel*. They were also called *Jews*. God chose these people to teach us many things about His goodness and how very bad sin is. He never intended that these would be the only people He loved. He has always loved every person of every nation and color. Then, when the time was just right, He gave all people the way to be saved.

The most wonderful thing you will ever know is that God loved the world (all people) so much He gave His only Son. God gave His Son so every person who believes in Him would not be lost, but have life forever. What does it mean, "God gave His Son?" To understand this, there is something you need to know about the one true God: He is God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. That does not mean that He is three Gods; He is one God. But He chooses to let Himself be known to us as a Father, a Son and a Holy Spirit—each united but with a separate work to do. This may be hard to understand, but we believe it because God said it is true.

Now God decided because He loved us so much, He would make it possible for us to be with Him forever even though we are sinners. He decided he would send His Son to the earth and have Him live a perfect life **for us**; and that He would be punished for our sins **for us**; he would die **for us**; and he would be raised from the dead **for us**. In other words, I cannot live a perfect life so Jesus Christ, God's Son, lived it for me. I cannot pay a big enough price to make up for my sins, so Jesus paid it for me by being nailed to a cross. For one awful moment, Jesus was separated from the Father, dying for my sins. And since I do not have the power to raise myself from the dead, God raised Jesus from the dead for me.

And now, praise God, He tells me how I can share in Jesus' life, death and resurrection (being raised from the dead). The **Good News** is that by believing in (trusting) Jesus as the Son of God who died for me, I can be in Jesus. By being in Jesus Christ (Christ means the anointed or king), I share in the blessings of what He did for me. I can have **forgiveness** (removal) of my sins. And if my sins are removed, there is no longer any reason why I cannot be with God forever. And though my body dies, if I am in Jesus, I share the power that raised Him from the dead—and someday God will raise me from the dead.

So how do I show God that I really believe in, or trust, Jesus as His Son? First, I cannot believe in someone of whom I know nothing. I must hear the good news of His life—how obedient, kind and good He was. I must know of His mighty works—how He healed the sick, helped the helpless, loved both the rich and the poor, and how He raised the dead. I must know of His Godness—the fact that He was actually God in the flesh—that God loved us so much He actually gave Himself for our salvation. I must know of His will—what kind of life He wants me to live and how He wants me to express my trust in Him.

When that is known, He wants me to make up my mind to do what He wants me to do and make Him the **Lord** of my life. That is called repentance. He wants me to love Him and trust Him so much that I will not be afraid to tell anyone that I am His follower (disciple). And He wants me to tell the whole world how much I trust Him by being buried with Him in water (called *baptism*). The reason for this is it is the way of being buried with Him, dying with Him, and being raised with Him to a new life. We are baptized into Christ. From that time, you belong to Him. You become a part of His people (the church), and you are the brother or sister of every person who has accepted this good news. Because you belong to him—because He is your Lord (ruler)-you will live for Him, praise God through Him, and tell others the **Good News** that has set you free from sin!

(My dear friend, the above is from the Old and New Testaments. These make up a collection of books called the Bible. The Holy Spirit guided many men to write these books for the good of all mankind. Please read the story of God's love for you and follow His Son, Jesus Christ, so you may live forever with Him. We especially call your attention to these books of the Bible and their chapters and verses: Old Testament, the book of Genesis, chapters 1 through 3; chapter 12:1-3; chapter 25:19-28; and chapter 46:5-7. In Exodus, chapters 1 through 3; and chapters 13 through 15.

In the New Testament, read I Corinthians 10:1-13; the entire book of Mark; Acts, chapters 1 and 2; Romans, chapters 1 through 6; Galatians 3:1-29; I Corinthians 15:1-58; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Thessalonians 1:5-10.

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