

## ***181 Good news?***

The good news is that God loves us so much that he was willing to take the risk of coming to earth as a tiny, vulnerable human baby – a claim unlike any other world religion.

Jesus lived an ordinary life as a carpenter for 30 years before starting to travel around, preaching about what ‘his Father’ God is like; by his life and example, he demonstrated God’s love.

The common people, especially the social outcasts of the day, loved him and followed him around, hanging on his every word. As they trusted him, many of them found their lives changed: some received physical healing, and others received forgiveness for things they had done wrong.

Jesus taught them that God loved them, accepted them and wanted them to turn and face God, and rebuild their relationship with God.

But the ruling religious elite hated him because he called them out for what they really were, hypocrites, laying religious burdens on people that they themselves were not willing to shoulder. So they worked together with the political elite and had Jesus judicially tortured, publicly humiliated and murdered.

Some days later, word spread that Jesus had come back to life, and had been seen walking around the area, cooking food and eating with his friends.

Jesus’ Jewish followers saw that, in their religious books (what we now call the Old Testament), there were dozens and dozens of things written that they began to realise were prophecies, which Jesus had fulfilled in his life, death and teachings.

This good news spread rapidly, throughout the known world, and many of the followers of ‘The Way’, as it was then called, were themselves tortured and killed. They still maintained that Jesus had indeed come back to life, and that, by allowing himself to be killed by the evil of humankind, Jesus had overcome, once and for all, the spiritual forces of wickedness at work in the world.

Followers of The Way continued to spread the good news (or ‘gospel’) that, as Jesus had said, God loves all people of all races and languages, and wants us all to come into a wonderful new spiritual community with God (the kingdom of God) and wants us to care for the creation.

Now, if we always want our own way in any relationship – especially a relationship with God – it simply won’t work! But if we’re willing to trust God and do things God’s way (God’s pretty savvy about what works in life and what doesn’t!), then we can live a life full of joy now, and then, when we die, come into an even more wonderful relationship with God.

Sadly, there will still be suffering in life, but God can enable us, despite the suffering, to maintain our love for him and for others – and even to love those who may abuse us. This is truly good news of a life worth living, in which we can love and serve God, and love and serve one another.