

## ***184 Good news, Mk III***

The good news is that God loves us so much that he has been working throughout history to try to get humans to live together in love – with one another and with God – but it's a slow process.

God's main strategy was to start with one man, Abraham, 4000 years ago – “I want to bless the people of the whole world through you, and you will become a great nation.” Through the Jews, God built a set of Scriptures (Old Testament) that contained the seeds of the next part of the plan.

Sadly, through the centuries, the Jews did some terrible things to the peoples around them, and they did some terrible things to the Jews – par for the course in those days, I suppose. All the time, God was struggling to get us to live together in love.

Then 2000 years ago God came to earth as a tiny, vulnerable human baby, and this person grew up to be a very special person, who was to change the whole course of human history.

Jesus lived as an ordinary carpenter for 30 years then began to travel around, preaching about what ‘his Father’ God is like; and his life demonstrated that love. He taught that we each need to have a fundamental change of heart, deciding to do things God's way.

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

But the ruling religious elite hated him because he called them out for what many of them were: religious hypocrites. So they worked together with the political elite and had Jesus judicially tortured, publicly humiliated and murdered.

Some days later, word began to spread that Jesus had come back to life, and he had been seen walking around the area, cooking food and eating with his friends. Jesus' Jewish followers then suddenly realised that their Scriptures contained dozens of prophecies that Jesus had fulfilled.

The good news spread rapidly, as his followers proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the King – not a popular idea among the Roman rulers! Many were tortured and killed, but 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 the Christ had overcome, once and for all, the spiritual forces of wickedness at work in the world.

Jesus' followers continued to spread the good news (or ‘gospel’) that, as Jesus had taught, God loves all people of all races and languages, and wants us to establish a wonderful new community (the kingdom of God), to care for all people and to challenge evil in all its forms.

Over the past 2000 years, God's plan has had its ups and down – some very down, sadly – but God's kingdom community has always insisted that what really ‘works’ is selfless service. Yes, there will still be suffering in life, but God can bring real wonderful transformation.

And the overall goal is that, as God promises, one day all wrongs will be righted, all suffering ended and there will be just one perfect, loving community, enjoying being with God for ever.

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