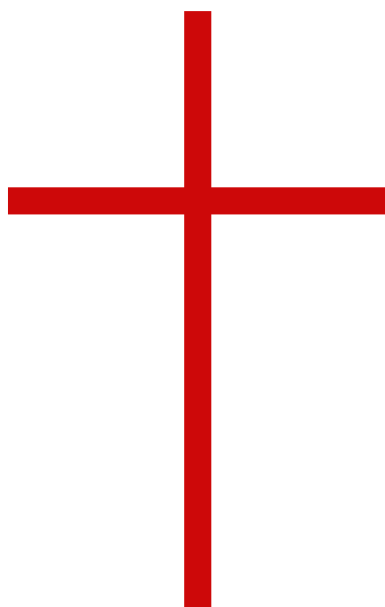


AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL

The
Good
News

JESSE HAYWOOD



The Good News

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ISBN 123-1-12345-123-1

Printed in the United States of America

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“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

JOHN 3:16

I. GOD THE CREATOR

Stop and think about the universe. From what we know, the universe stretches 93 billion light-years across. There's something like two trillion galaxies. Our sun is so large that a million Earths could fit inside it. It's just one normal sized star among hundreds of billions of stars in the Milky Way galaxy.

On the flip side, our eyeball is so complex it leaves many scientists puzzled. Go even further, into one cell, and you see something like a little miniature city, with its own power plants, waste system, communication networks, and a library of information so detailed that the DNA in a single human cell, if uncoiled, would stretch six feet long.

And all of this was spoken into existence by God. He is not contained within it. He is not impressed by it. He made it. And he holds all of it together by the word of his power. The God of the Bible did not just get this thing started and walk away. No, he is an infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful Creator who is personally involved in all of it. The only appropriate response to this is to fall on your face in awe of Him.

*In the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth.*

GENESIS 1:1

SOMETHING CAN'T COME FROM NOTHING

Everything that begins to exist had to have a cause. The universe began to exist. Science can prove this. Everything we see had a beginning. Therefore, the universe has a cause. Logically, that cause had to itself be uncaused, timeless, spaceless, and immensely powerful. That cause is God.

WHERE THERE'S A BLUEPRINT, THERE'S A BUILDER

If you stumble onto a building in the middle of a field, you would never assume it happened to be built by chance. It's complexity points to a builder. The universe is billions of times more intricate and complex than a building. Design on this scale points to a designer. That designer is God.

And yet this infinite and powerful God did something amazing: he made us in his own image. Of all creation, only people carry his likeness. That means you. You were made in God's image. You were made not merely to exist, but to know Him. That restless longing at the center of every human heart, that hunger for meaning, for love, for something that lasts... that is the echo of your Maker calling you to Himself.

II. MAN THE SINNER

If that is who God is and who we were made to be, then the story of humanity is one big tragedy. We were made for Him, but we walked away. That rebellion is what the Bible calls sin, and its consequences spread like the most contagious and deadly disease ever.

Sin broke four relationships at once. Our relationship with God, with ourselves, with one another, and with creation. Severed, fractured, corrupted, and cursed. Everywhere you see pain, loneliness, injustice, and death, you are seeing the consequences of this original sin.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

ROMANS 3:23

Not some have sinned. All. Every person to ever exist, including you. This is not a comfortable thing to hear, but it is necessary. If you were dying with a deadly disease, wouldn't you want to know? Well, you are. And what is this deadly disease, sin, going to cost you?

“For the wages of sin is death...”

ROMANS 6:23a

This may seem like overkill, but it's not. Imagine if you were to assault a stranger. You would face criminal charges. Now, let's say you assault a police officer. The penalty would be greater. Now, let's say you assault an elected official like the President of the U.S.A. The consequences are even worse. Why? Because the severity of a crime is measured by the authority of the one wronged. Now, add God into the equation. Every sin is assault on his perfect and holy character. Every sin is cosmic treason against the King of the universe, the one who holds all authority over everything. The wage, therefore, is eternal death. It is not arbitrary. It is just.

Now, let's say you are standing trial for treason, facing execution. You tell the judge, "But I've been kind. I gave money to the poor. I go to church and pray. I've [fill in the blank]." What do you think the judge would do? Laugh in your face! And then he would carry out the sentence. Because if he did not, he would not be a good judge. Justice requires that crimes be answered. God is a perfect judge. If we expect an earthly ruler to execute justice, what makes us think God should do the opposite? God will not wink at sin. It must be punished.

III. CHRIST THE SAVIOR

Here is where everything changes. In comes the good news. We stated that the wages of sin is death, but that verse isn't complete. It continues...

"... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

ROMANS 6:23b

You are standing in that courtroom, guilty before the judge. The sentence is death. And then, from the back of the room someone stands up. It is the judges own Son. And he shouts, "I will take the sentence! I will pay for their crimes! Let them go free."

That is the gospel. That is what Jesus has done. But why? Why would he do that? Because of love.

"But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ dies for us."

ROMANS 5:8

He was stripped, mocked, spat on, beaten to a pulp, and crowned with thorns. He was made to carry his own cross, on which they threw him down and drove nails through his wrists and feet. He hung on that Roman cross for hours, barely able to breathe. On that cross he was bearing not only physical agony, but the full wrath of God against sin. Our sin. Every lie, every act of cruelty, every hidden darkness in your life. It was all laid on him. That death was what we deserved. He took it in our place.

But death could not hold him. For he was greater than the darkness.

“For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

The author of those verses understood what was at stake. Just a few verses later he wrote, *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless.”* The resurrection is not a footnote to Christianity, it is the foundation. Remove it, and the whole thing falls apart. Everything rises or falls on whether the resurrection of Jesus actually happened.

So did it? The historical record gives compelling reasons to believe it did.

THE EMPTY TOMB

Jesus was publicly executed and buried in a known tomb. Three days later, the tomb was empty, and no one in Jerusalem, not even his enemies, ever produced a body to silence the disciples' claims. If the body existed, it would have been displayed. The silence speaks the truth.

THE EYEWITNESSES

Paul, writing within twenty years of the crucifixion, records that the risen Jesus appeared to Peter, to the twelve apostles, and to more than five hundred people at one time, many of whom were still alive and could be questioned. This is not the language of legend; it is the language of eyewitness testimony.

THE DISCIPLES WHO DIED FOR IT

When Jesus was arrested, his followers scattered in fear. Within weeks, those same men were boldly proclaiming his resurrection in the very city where he was killed, and most of them died for it. People do not willingly die for what they know to be a lie. Their transformed lives are powerful evidence they had truly seen the risen Christ.

THE SKEPTICS WHO BELIEVED

Paul was a violent persecutor of the early church. James, the brother of Jesus, was a skeptic during his ministry. Both became pillars of the church. Both died as martyrs. The only explanation that makes sense of their dramatic reversals is the one they themselves gave: they encountered the risen Jesus.

The evidence is pretty straightforward, but you may not be ready to settle it today. That's fine. But consider it honestly. The tomb was truly empty, hundreds of witnesses claimed to see him alive, and men who had every reason to deny it died rather than recant their faith in him. Something happened. The resurrection is the only explanation that makes sense. So, ask yourself, what if it's true? And if it is, what does that mean for you?

The resurrection was God's verdict on the cross: **paid in full**. The debt was settled. The penalty was absorbed. Christ walked out of the grave as proof, and the world has never been the same.

“Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

ACTS 17:30-31

IV. YOUR RESPONSE

God has acted. Now he asks something of you. He doesn't want a performance, or a resumé of good deeds. He wants a response of the heart. Your heart.

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved... For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

ROMANS 10:9, 13

This is not self-improvement. It's not behavior modification. It's not adding a little religion to your life. This is about trust. The kind of trust that transfers the weight of your life onto the only one who can handle it: Jesus.

"For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — not from works, so that no one can boast."

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Salvation is a gift. You cannot earn it. You do not deserve it. You can only receive it, by faith. Will you?

3 STEPS TO RESPOND

1

Acknowledge that you have sinned and that you cannot save yourself.

2

Believe that Jesus died in your place and rose from the dead.

3

Trust Him and surrender your life completely to Jesus as Lord.

A PRAYER TO BEGIN

“God, I’m yours.”

Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and that I cannot save myself. I believe that you died in my place and rose from the dead. I turn from my sin and I trust you. My life is forever yours. Amen.

Romans 10:13 - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

V. THE RESULTS

When you place your trust in Christ, something irreversible happens. The verdict changes. The relationship is restored, never to be broken again. Now that you are in His hands, He will never let you go. And what you receive from this relationship is nothing short of extraordinary.

ROMANS 5:1

Justification & Peace

"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Your relationship with God is restored.

ROMANS 8:1

No Condemnation

"There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." The courtroom is closed. Your debt was paid. You are free forever.

ROMANS 8:38-39

Unbreakable Love

"Neither death nor life... nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

JOHN 11:25-26

Eternal Life

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live." You will spend an eternity with Jesus Christ.

VI. LIVE TRANSFORMED

Salvation is not the finish line, it's the start. Your new life has just begun. You have been changed from the inside out. The Bible says you have been born again. And that transformation works its way through every part of your life.

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

ROMANS 12:1-2

A living sacrifice gives everything. Not out of obligation, but in response to the mercy already received. The first step you should take to symbolize this new transformation is baptism.

"For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ."

GALATIANS 3:27

Then, you must constantly resist what pulls you back into your old life:

- Resisting the lies of the enemy about God, your identity, and how the world works.
- Turning from the patterns and habits that draw you away from God.
- Putting away relationships that pull you toward the person you used to be.

And it requires embracing what renews your mind:

- The Word of God - listening, reading, and meditating on Scripture regularly.
- Prayer - talking honestly with God about your life and the world around you.
- Biblical Community - the local church now becomes your family.

“But that is not how you came to know Christ, assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.”

EPHESIANS 4:20-24

VII. LIVE ON MISSION

You have received the greatest news in human history. You are not meant to keep it to yourself. The world is sick, and you have the remedy. You must get this medicine of the soul into the hands of as many sick people as possible.

Jesus did not call his followers to a private faith. He gave them a mission. It's a mission that reaches every corner of the earth and every generation of history. That mission now belongs to you.

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20

By the authority of Jesus, you are sent. Into your family. Into your workplace. Into your neighborhood. Into the world. Not with a religious formula to follow, but with the good news of a Person. You are sent with the news that Jesus died for our sins and that he rose from the dead. The world needs this news.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

ROMANS 1:16

The Good News is a short introduction to the gospel. The gospel is the message that the God who made everything also loves us, and did something about the fact that we have walked away from him.

These pages walk through seven ideas: God the creator, the problem of sin, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, how a person must respond to that message, what we receive as a result, and then how we can live transformed lives that are sent on mission into the world.

Whether you are exploring Christianity for the first time, have some skepticism towards its claims, or you are returning to something you once knew, this booklet was written for you.

In these pages you will find good news.
Take up, read, and live.



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 **REASON FOR HOPE**