



What Is The Gospel?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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What is the gospel? Many religious people talk about the gospel; but, what is the gospel all about? Why is it even important for you to understand what the gospel is? Let's investigate how the Bible answers this question.

God's Good News

The Greek word translated "gospel" means "good news." Certainly, the message that is identified as the "gospel" is full of good news for mankind today! But, before we consider how the message of the gospel contains good news for us today, let's recognize the fact that this good news comes from God and centers around Jesus Christ.

It is from God. Paul wrote concerning his work of "ministering the gospel of God" in Romans 15:16. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul said that he not only imparted "the gospel of God" to the Thessalonians, but his own life also. 1 Timothy 1:11 says that the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" had been committed to Paul's trust. So, this gospel originates from God! It is His good news for mankind.

This good news centers around Jesus Christ and everything that God has accomplished through Him. Notice, then, that the Scriptures also make reference to this gospel as being the gospel of Christ. Romans 1:16 says that Paul was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:8 warns against being disobedient to the "gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, as you consider the fact that this good news originates with God and centers around what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ, appreciate the fact that God cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says that God "cannot lie." Hebrews 6:18 says that it is "impossible for God to lie." Therefore, since it is impossible for God to lie, we can have full confidence in this message of the gospel and the promises God makes through it! God's word is absolute truth. Jesus Christ said (as He prayed to His Heavenly Father), "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). This message of truth (the gospel) is found in the pages of God's revealed word (the Bible).

God's Good News About Salvation

What makes this particular message so very good? As we have just observed, this good news centers around Jesus Christ and everything God has accomplished through Him. Specifically, God has brought about the opportunity of salvation through His Son (Jesus Christ). Sin is the greatest problem mankind has ever faced – and Jesus Christ is God’s answer to that problem!

The message of the gospel details just how great a problem sin really is for us. Specifically, Romans 6:23 summarizes that the wages of sin is death. Now, appreciate the fact that sin is the violation of God’s law (1 John 3:4). So, anytime you do what God says must not be done or you fail to do what God says must be done, you sin. This sin earns you spiritual death (separation from God). Ultimately, if you die in your sin, you will experience everlasting spiritual death in Hell fire (Revelation 21:8). Furthermore, the Scriptures teach us that we cannot do anything to earn or deserve salvation from the sins we have committed (read Ephesians 2:1-10).

While we deserved to be forever separated from God because of our sins, the gospel tells us of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! For instance, Romans 6:23 not only tells us about the “wages” of our sin being death; but also says that the “gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The gospel, therefore, tells us about the love, grace, and mercy that God has shown to mankind in sending His only begotten Son to come to this earth, live as man, suffer, and die on the cross for the sins of the world – in order to provide the only sacrifice that was powerful enough to cover our sins and be reconciled to God (see Ephesians 2:1-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This love of God, then, makes it possible that we might “not perish” (in Hell) “but have everlasting life” (in Heaven) – see John 3:16 and Romans 5:6-11!

While the message of the gospel does detail the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, the gospel does not end there! The message of the gospel also includes the powerful truth concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (see Matthew 28:1-10). Without this part of the gospel’s message, it would not contain any good news. Without this part of the gospel’s message, it would only be a message of defeat (that God’s Son was defeated by His enemies whenever He was put to death on the cross). And, without Christ’s resurrection, any faith in Christ would be useless – because we would have no hope of being raised from the dead (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

God’s Good News About A New Covenant

In conjunction with this great message about the opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ, the gospel also contains good news about a new covenant.

During the time following the nation of Israel being delivered from Egyptian slavery (in Exodus 14), God established a covenant with the nation of Israel. They entered into a covenant that they would be God’s people and He would be their God. He would bless them, be with them, and cause them to prosper. They would be responsible for holding Him as their one and only God and following His laws. Through Moses, God gave the Israelites laws to follow – which were expected to guide the nation of Israel until the time of Jesus Christ. This system of laws (often

referred to as the Law of Moses) contained moral laws, laws regarding conduct, laws about sacrifices, and laws about special religious observances.

However, in making this first covenant with the nation of Israel, God never intended for these laws to govern them indefinitely (permanently). Instead, in Galatians 3:19, Paul said that the Law was “added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come.” Then, Galatians 3:21-22 describes the problem of the first law: Righteousness could not come by the Law! The only way an individual could be righteous by the Law was through perfectly keeping the Law. For, Hebrews 10:4 says that it was not possible that “the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Therefore, Galatians 3:23-25 says that the first covenant (the Law of Moses) was used to prepare the nation of Israel for faith in Jesus Christ!

Then, when the time was right, God sent His Son to this world to fulfill the prophecies made under the first covenant so that He could establish a new and better covenant (see Matthew 5:17-18). Hebrews 8:7 says, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.” The first covenant was taken away by Christ in order to establish a second and better covenant! The first covenant had served the purpose God had designed it to fulfill. Now, God was ready to establish His new (and final) covenant with mankind. That first covenant, therefore, was nailed to Jesus’ cross! Colossians 2:14 (talking about God removing the Law of Moses, which was contrary to us) says, “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Therefore, the Old Covenant is no longer in effect. It has been taken away. And, it has been replaced with God’s new and better covenant! Namely, consider this promise that is at the heart of this new covenant: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12)! Now, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, those who enter into this new covenant with God can truly have their past sins forgiven! However, in order to partake of the blessings of this covenant (i.e. the forgiveness of sins), God has required that we commit ourselves to live according to His laws!

God has revealed this new law for mankind to follow today. And, He has only revealed one system of religious belief, teaching, and practice that He expects people to follow. Ephesians 4:5 says that there is only “one faith.” Furthermore, Philippians 1:27 identifies that “the faith” is “of the gospel.” Therefore, the message of the gospel outlines God’s new law that offers freedom from sin (see James 1:25)! Still, it is a law – and this law is found in the pages of the New Testament. Ultimately, if we refuse to obey the gospel, we will be eternally separated from God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)!

God’s Good News About His Kingdom

Finally, understand that the gospel of God describes the opportunity He has given to all mankind to enter into this new covenant and be part of His kingdom!

Throughout the earthly ministries of John (the Baptist) and Jesus Christ, they spoke concerning the establishment and coming of Jesus' kingdom. For instance, Jesus said that there would be some who were living during the time He was speaking who would "not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27). Certainly, the gospel identifies that this kingdom has been established – and, that the kingdom is the church. In Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus said, "I will build My church...and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven." Notice how the terms "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably in this passage. Jesus' kingdom is His church!

This church/kingdom has been established. We are not still waiting for this kingdom to come! Colossians 1:13 says that some had been "conveyed...into the kingdom of the Son of His love." It was already in existence at that time! In fact, Jesus' church/kingdom came into existence in Acts chapter 2. On that day when Peter and the other apostles were preaching the gospel's message of salvation through Jesus Christ and individuals responded in obedience to the message, they were added to Christ's church (Acts 2:41, 47). This is because Christ's kingdom/church is God's collection of those who are saved. The saved are in this church. Those who are not saved are not in this church.

Thanks be to God, then, that all mankind have been given the opportunity to be part of this kingdom/church! In Christ's church, there is "neither Jew nor Greek...neither slave nor free...neither male nor female" – but all are "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28)! Being part of Christ's church (thanks to God's new covenant) no longer depends upon being born into the right family; but, "if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29) – because God gives all mankind the opportunity to take part of the blessings through the gospel!

Conclusion

The gospel is clearly the greatest news that mankind has ever been told! We should, therefore, not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ – realizing that it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, both Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:16). Rather than being ashamed of the message, we must simply believe and obey it so that we can take part of its great blessings!

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