

The Gospel – What Is It?

Many people have heard the term gospel. Some preach it and others use it as a synonym for truth. But what is it? The word gospel is derived from two old English words: **1)** God (the divine creator) **2)** spell (tale). It is a translation of the Greek word euaggeelion, which is pronounced *yoo-ang-ghel-ee-on*. In English we pronounce that Greek word as evangel. It means “a good message or **good news**.”

Often times the word “gospel” is used with a modifying word to bring clarification to its use in a particular scripture. For example:

1. The gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1; I Corinthians 9:12) and the gospel of His Son (Romans 1:9)). These two descriptions speak of the good news of salvation that comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ who is the very Son of God in human flesh. Again, this is a good news of deliverance from sin’s penalty, power and presence through the two advents of Christ.
2. The gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24) emphasizes that salvation in all of its aspects is on the basis of grace rather than on some meritorious system of works.
3. The gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14) is the good news that God will establish His kingdom on earth through the two advents of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15) describes how this good news of salvation in Christ brings peace in all its many aspects (peace with God, the peace of God, peace with others, and world peace) through the victory accomplished by the Savior.
5. The eternal or everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6-7) expands our perspective of gospel as we normally think of it. This gospel as proclaimed by the angel has several key elements of gloriously good news that are developed in three commands:
 - a. Command #1: “Fear God.” This refers to a holy reverence that recognizes the sovereign authority and power of God to deal with man in His holy wrath and thus, to bring an end to the world of sin as we now know it. To fear God is to recognize Him as the true God who can destroy the soul and not just the body as God will do with the beast of Revelation and His anti-God system.
 - b. Command #2: “Give Him glory.” This refers to the praise and honor that should accrue to God from mankind due to our recognition and high estimation of God as the sovereign Creator of the universe.
 - c. Command #3: “And worship Him who made ...” The word “worship” means to show reverence or respect. This word emphasizes the external display as seen in our obedience, prayer, singing, and formal worship. The word “fear” emphasizes the reverential mental attitude behind the worship. In the Tribulation people will be forced to fear and formally acknowledge the beast and his image. In this message the angel is demanding that mankind reject the beast and formally turn to God to worship Him (Revelation 14:11).

The gospel or “good news” is essentially the **story** of the Lord Jesus Christ and it is described in Hebrews 6:1-3 as the elementary teaching about the Christ. The first and most complete proclamation of the gospel was by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost following Jesus’ ascension into heaven. It is primarily from Peter’s narrative in the Acts of the Apostles 2:22 – 39 that this teaching is derived.

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, ‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.’ Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “ Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

- Key Points of the Gospel -

1. The first and most important key point is that the gospel is centered in the man called “Jesus”.
 - In Hebrew his name is Joshua¹ (Yahushua), which means, “I AM Salvation”.
 - He was called Immanuel,² which means “God With Us”.
2. He was born to a virgin³ named Mary. (Miriam in Hebrew)
3. He is a direct descendent of King David both by natural birth and adoption.⁴

¹ “She will bear a Son; and **you shall call His name Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

² “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND **THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL**,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” (Matthew 1:23)

³ Mary had no sexual relations with her husband Joseph until after Jesus was born. The Holy Spirit impregnated Mary ... showing that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus is also referred to as the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22 & 45 and Romans 5:12-21) because He was created by the will of God not the will of man.

⁴ Jesus’ genealogy in the gospel of Matthew (1:1-17) follows Joseph’s lineage from King David through his son, Solomon. Since Hebrew lineage follows the father’s side it is appropriate to list Joseph’s lineage since he adopted Jesus. Under Hebraic law adoption has the same rights attached to it as a natural born child.

Jesus’ genealogy in the gospel of Luke (3:23-38) follows Mary’s lineage from King David through his son, Nathan. The lineage goes all the way back to Adam establishing the fact that Jesus was the Son of Man.

4. He preached and taught the people what God told him to.⁵
5. God testified of Him by performing miracles, signs and wonders during His earthly ministry.
6. He was crucified on a cross for our sins, though He was innocent.
7. He died and was buried.
8. He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead after three days in the grave.
9. Forty days later He ascended into heaven.
10. God has made Him both Lord and Savior.
11. He now sits at the right hand of God, judging the living and the dead.
12. The person who believes this message and is baptized will receive the Holy Spirit and be accepted as righteous before God.

- Whose responsibility is it to tell others the gospel? –

1. Those who are **sent** ... which means all Christians. The word “apostle” means “sent one”.
2. Romans 10:13-15 says, for *“WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”* *How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”*

- Whose responsibility is it to convince an individual of the gospel? –

1. The Holy Spirit’s. *“And He (the Holy Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; (John 16:8)*
2. John 16:9 says, *“concerning sin, because they do not believe in me.”* By stating points 1-7 in the **Key Points of the Gospel** you are telling others who Jesus is.
3. John 16:10 says, *“concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold me.”* By stating points 8-9 in the **Key Points of the Gospel** you are telling others where Jesus has gone.
4. John 16:11 says, *“concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”* By stating points 10-12 in the **Key Points of the Gospel** you are telling others what Jesus is doing.

- How do people get the faith to believe the gospel? -

1. By Christians telling them what Jesus says.
2. The Scripture tells us that, *“So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”* (Romans 10:17)
3. For example Jesus said, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who **has believed** and has **been baptized** shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”* (Mark 16:15-16)

⁵ *Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner (John 5:19)*

- What is required of an individual after hearing the gospel? –

1. Repent - change their mind about what they believe.
2. Confess with their mouth what they believe
 - *But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart” ... that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you **confess with your mouth** Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:6 and 8-10)*
3. Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.
4. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - *Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; **they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.** (Acts 8:14-17)*

- Baptism is connected to the preaching and obedience of the gospel –

1. Preaching the Gospel
 - The death of Christ – Acts 2:23
 - The burial of Christ – Acts 2:27 & 31
 - The resurrection of Christ – Acts 2:24 & 32
2. Obeying the Gospel
 - Death – Baptized into His death – Romans 6:3-4
 - Burial – Buried with Him in baptism – Romans 6:4
 - Resurrection – The likeness of His resurrection – Romans 6:5

If any of the above elements were to be left out, our obedience to the gospel, as a result, would be incomplete. Of all the commands connected with salvation, only **baptism** involves the three necessary elements of the gospel. Belief, repentance, and confession, although necessary steps in the salvation process, **cannot** provide the means by which one unites with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Romans 6:6-7 reveals exactly when God destroys our sins. *“Knowing this, that our old self was **crucified with Him**, in order that our **body of sin might be done away with**, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for **he who has died is freed from sin.**”*

Paul indicates very clearly that the crucifixion one undergoes in baptism is for the destruction of the body of sin, not that the body of sin has already been destroyed prior to baptism.

- The Apostle's Creed –

The key points of the gospel were so important to the early church that leaders began to preserve them in a creed that people could remember. The final form of this creed is displayed below.

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
2. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord
3. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
5. He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again;
6. He ascended into heaven, He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
7. and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and the life everlasting. Amen.⁶

⁶ The creed was broken into twelve parts for three reasons: 1) To make it easier to memorize, 2) to divide the main lines of thought, and 3) to honor the twelve apostles.