

What Is the Gospel?

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The word *Gospel* is frequently found in the New Testament (101 occurrences). Its literal meaning is “glad tidings” or “good news.” It refers to the wonderful news that man can be saved from his sins through Christ and what He did when He came to earth. Sometimes people speak of the first four books of the New Testament as “the four gospels.” However, there are not four Gospels. There is only one which may be preached with God’s approval (Gal. 1:7-9). It would be better to speak of “the four accounts of the Gospel,” therefore. In the larger sense the word *Gospel* may be used to refer to the entire message of the New Testament, for all of it revolves around the good news about salvation through Jesus.

The Gospel consists of facts to be believed. Paul gives a very brief summary of these facts in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He shortens the Gospel even further in 1 Corinthians 2:2 where he says, “For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” We are not to understand him to say that nothing else about Jesus is important, but he is saying that it is these matters (Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection) that constitute the foundation of salvation, which is the good news. It is ironic, but so true, that the death of God’s Son becomes good news, “Gospel,” to the sinner. Had He not died, we could not be saved! However, there is no virtue in merely believing that a man named Jesus died, but that in His death, redemption and salvation from sin were accomplished. Of course, His death could have wrought nothing special, had He not been the only begotten Son of God. Likewise, He could not have been man’s Savior had He remained in the tomb. The Gospel then includes many facts about Jesus (and adequate evidence to support them) all of which relate to the glorious news of salvation.

The Gospel also consists of commands to be obeyed. Faith in the facts of the Gospel is necessary to be saved, but insufficient by itself. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the Word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Later, He said “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The Gospel commands us to believe in Christ (John 8:24), repent of our sins, and be baptized to be forgiven of sins (Acts 2:38). When we have obeyed these commands, the blood that Jesus shed in His death on the cross washes away our sins (Rom. 6:3-4; 17-18; Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16) and the Lord adds us to His church (Acts 2:41; 47). The Gospel also commands us to live

pure and blameless lives of service to Christ (Jam. 1:27; Tit. 2:11-12; Rom. 12:1-2, etc.). We will be lost if we do not obey the Gospel (2 The. 1:8-9).

The Gospel consists of promises to be enjoyed. Jesus promises that those who follow Him will be greatly blessed in this life but even more abundantly in eternity (Mark 10:29-30. Jesus promises His disciples that He will be with them as they do His work, even to the end of the world (Mat. 28:20). Then, when the life and work of the Lord's people is finished on earth, He has promised to give us eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17), an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and imperishable which has been reserved in Heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:3-4) and freedom from all sin, pain, trial, and tears (Rev.21:3-8).

It is no wonder that God chose the word *Gospel* to describe the message He had for men.

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