

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Written by Institute of Religion

Saturday, 19 January 2013 14:05 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2013 14:23

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“Repent! Believe in the gospel, be baptized and then you will be saved!”

“Go ye therefore into the world, preach the gospel unto everyone”

Gospel concerts, Gospel music, Gospel message. The gospel is seemingly a very integral part of Christianity. But what exactly is this gospel and what does it mean for you and me?

Firstly, we must define the term **gospel**. The word Gospel is derived from Old English *gōdspel* (*god* and *spell*), which is ultimately a translation of the Greek *euaggelion/ evangelion*, meaning *good message* or *news*

. The canonized scriptures, contains four inspired histories of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, known as the Gospels (the Gospels). They are: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Gospel literally means “good news”. What is this “good news” proclaimed by the Bible? A most common rendition as it pertains to the Gospel is “*that Christ came, suffered and died for our sins and now we are saved*”

Many persons are mistakenly of the belief that the gospel is *just* about Jesus Christ, the person. They believe the gospel message is summed up in Christ coming, dying on the cross for our

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sins and saving us from ever burning torment in hell, coming again to take us to heaven to live forevermore singing in the presence of God with the angels and drink milk and honey. But what is the real gospel (good news)? We will explore what the Holy Scriptures of God, the Bible, has to say about the gospel.

Different Gospels

The Bible itself speaks of a number of gospels:

- The gospel of Christ and the gospel of God (Romans 1:1, 16, 15:19)
- The gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24)
- The gospel of your salvation (Ephesians 1:13)
- The gospel of peace (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15)
- The gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matt 24:14, Mark 1:14))

The terms, though different, all refer to the same gospel, each focuses on different aspects of the same good news. The term the ***Gospel of the Kingdom of God*** most adequately encapsulates all the other descriptions of the gospel. The kingdom of God is a literal kingdom, of which Christ taught about, making it the subject of the “

gospel of Christ

” - Gospel of Christ meaning the good news he spoke about, rather than the good news about himself. The

gospel of the grace of God

, for it is his grace that enables mankind, sinful though we are, to inherit the kingdom of God, as a result of his sacrifice for the indebtedness of our sinful nature and actions. This brings about salvation, hence the

gospel of salvation

, which ultimately means resurrection and life in the kingdom of God. The

gospel of peace

, being the good news that there will be peace on earth, but this peace will only be manifested in his kingdom when he arrives to the earth a second time. So we see that the Kingdom of God encompasses all these attributes: it is the gospel that Christ proclaimed, it comes by the grace of God, it is the actualization of salvation and it is the ushering of peace on earth.

Elements of the Kingdom

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We are discussing the gospel of the Kingdom of God, but what are the elements of the Kingdom? Firstly, a kingdom suggests rulership, including a **king** (Jesus Christ), and other positions of authority, such as priests (Rev 5:10). If there is a king then there would have to be **subjects**

. Revelation 2:26-27 speaks about those how are victorious in Christ being given

authority

over the

nations

(the subjects) and ruling them with an iron sceptre and dashing them to pieces like pottery.

The kingdom will also have **laws** and **principles**, which are enforced by the authorities. For example we see in the Zechariah 14:16-19, that the nations are mandated to come to Jerusalem year after year to worship the Lord at the Feast of Tabernacles, otherwise they will be punished.

Every kingdom has **territory**. While the kingdom of God will be over the whole earth, the centre of the kingdom is Jerusalem, a new Jerusalem, that will come from heaven and occupy the geographical locale of modern day Jerusalem (Revelation 21:15-18).

Gospel of the Kingdom? But isn't the Gospel only just about Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is very central to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. He is the king of the kingdom; he is the means by which everyone who is in the kingdom will enter it. He represents the grace of God, and he is our salvation. He is the messenger who brought the gospel of the Kingdom. He will himself usher the kingdom from the place it was prepared in heaven on to the earth.

It is for this reason, that many mistakenly have a narrow view of the gospel, believing it only has to do with the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. These are all very important events which make the kingdom of God possible, but as we have seen from the scriptures, there is more to the gospel than just these events.

There are some biblical texts which seem on the surface to suggest that the kingdom is just

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about Jesus Christ. For example, there is Mark 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 and 1 Corinthians 2:2, to list a few.

Not because it is coined “the gospel of Christ” means Christ is necessarily the subject of the gospel, but rather it could also mean that he was the messenger of the gospel. Paul did refer to the gospel as “my gospel” in Romans 2:16. Does this mean that the gospel was about Paul? By no means! But rather it was the gospel, or good news, that Paul proclaimed.

Let us consider 1 Corinthians 15:1-6. Paul was addressing the matter of the resurrections to the Corinthians; hence it was important for him to outline this aspect of the gospel, the resurrection of Christ. He did go on to develop on the resurrection of the dead and the nature of the resurrected body, which are yet other elements of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

From the other scriptures we already explored it is clear that gospel is about the kingdom of God, not only about Jesus Christ, though he is a very integral part and participant in the gospel message.

There can be only one Gospel!

Another premise we need to establish is that there can only be **ONE TRUE GOSPEL**. The apostle Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Galatians where he says

*“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the **one***

we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse,”

(Galatians 1:8). Only a few decades after the ascension of Jesus, Paul had to warn the Galatians in his letter dated about AD60 from turning to a different gospel. What this indicates to us is that the original gospel was being distorted very early in Church history.

Paul had a similar concern for the church in Corinth even before that! In second Corinthians he lamented, *“For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough,”* (2nd Corinthians 11:4).

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In other words, they were putting up with a different gospel, and Paul had to write a strong rebuke.

How important is it to believe in the correct Gospel? The path to salvation is clearly stated; believe in *the Gospel*, be baptised, and receive the Holy Spirit. Belief in the **correct gospel** is paramount to salvation. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “*whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*”

Paul again emphasized the import of believing the correct gospel in order to attain salvation:

“By

this

gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.

Otherwise

, you have believed

in vain

.”

(1 Corinthians 15:2)

The Gospel revolution

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, though prophesied long before Christ, really took off when John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah. As Luke 16:16 states, “*the Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom*

of

God

is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it.”

John the Baptist prepared the way for the Jesus to carry on the gospel message, with his precursor: “Repent! For the Kingdom God is at hand.”

What Gospel did Jesus Christ preach?

Almost every time Jesus Christ mentioned the Gospel, he calls it the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

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- Mark 1:14 - *"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said, 'The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'"*

- Luke 4:43 - Jesus says, *"I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."*

- Luke 8:1 - *"After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God."*

Until the end of this age, the Gospel will not change. This is clearly stated in Matthew 24:14, *"And **this gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* Many evangelists today extend great efforts to fulfil this prophecy and the commission of Matthew 28, by preaching a gospel, but not the gospel which Christ proclaimed, not the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, but a different gospel.

After Jesus was resurrected, He did not come with a different Gospel, one about His death and resurrection; but rather He continued to preach the *same* Gospel He started His ministry with, the gospel of the **Kingdom of God!** Acts 1:3 says, *"After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God"*

Now this is not to downplay the paramount significance of Jesus' birth, life and death. These are all important events which make the coming kingdom of God possible, but the essence of the Gospel message is about the kingdom of God. As we can see from scriptures, it is clear that Jesus' main message was about the kingdom of God while He was here on earth.

What about the disciples and apostles, what Gospel did they proclaim?

Jesus instructed His disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, *"...and he sent them out to proclaim the*

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kingdom of God, ”

(Luke 9:2). And as we saw earlier, the gospel message did not change after Christ resurrected, furthermore the disciples continued to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God as they were instructed by Jesus (Acts 19:8). Philip too, preached the gospel of the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12).

What Gospel did the Prophets proclaim?

What about the prophets of old? As mentioned before, the Gospel was a continuation of the Law and the Prophets from the Old Testament (Luke 16:16). In providing evidence that Jesus was the Christ; the expected Messiah, the Apostles went back to the Law and the Prophets. It states, *“He [Paul] witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus,”* (Acts 28:23).

So to get the complete picture of the Gospel, we must go back into the Law and the Prophets then examine the connection with the kingdom of God that Jesus and the disciples preached.

Many people are of the belief that the Gospel started to be preached by Christ and His apostles, however the Bible tells us that the gospel of the Kingdom of God was preached to Abraham (Galatians 3:8). Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham, *“All nations will be blessed through you.”*

Isaiah prophesied about the glorious Kingdom of God to come, a government of peace, with Jesus Christ as the king, *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his*

kingdom

, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this,”

(Isaiah 9:6-7).

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The Kingdom of God: God's plan from the start

Have you ever asked the question or wondered, what is the purpose of man? Why did God create us in the first place? The answer is found in the Gospel! The Gospel speaks to the fulfilment of this purpose, which is the same now as it was 2000 years ago, and the same from the very creation of man.

Going back to the creation story in Genesis, it was the intention of God for man, who is made in the image of God, to fill the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:26-28). God dwelled in the Garden of Eden with man, until Adam sinned. The Garden of Eden was the utopic Kingdom which God started with man. However after Adam sinned, God no longer resided with man. Sin will not be tolerated in God's Kingdom (1st Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5, Revelation 22:15). We also see this dramatically when sin was found in Lucifer, God had to cast him out of heaven (Ezekiel 28:13-17). We must choose to follow God; He does not force righteousness upon us. But as a result of sin entering man and tarnishing our very nature, all of mankind are now all sinners.

Yet, God did not give up on us; He sought to redeem us by initiating a plan to deal with the problem of sin.

The Plan goes into action

Sin increased greatly, as Genesis 6 states. God decided to wipe man from the face of the earth, but Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). So God sent a great flood to put an end to the people and their wickedness. After the flood God made a covenant with Noah, giving him the very same instructions he gave to Adam in the beginning *"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth ..."* (Genesis 9:1).

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Noah was faithful to God, however, his son Ham brought disgrace to his father and was subsequently cursed (Genesis 9:21-25). From Ham's descendants came the Canaanite nations, who continued on the path into deep sin. However God would set aside for Himself a nation to lead the rest of mankind into the Kingdom of God. This nation would come through Abraham, a faithful follower of God. Genesis 12:1-3 gives us an account of God calling Abraham. God in his covenant with Abraham associated with him kings and a kingdom. *"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you"* (Genesis 17:6).

Israel: God's Temporal Kingdom

God made Israel into a nation and eventually He established a kingly line, starting with King David, which will last forever in the Kingdom of God (2nd Chronicles 13:5). God promises to restore the nation of Israel at His coming and make David king over them forever (Ezekiel 37:21-24).

The Kingdom of God Prophesied

Daniel, a prophet of God, among the exiles in Babylonian captivity, foresaw the Kingdom of God. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thigh of bronze, and feet partly of iron and of clay (Daniel 2:31-33). Each part of this statue represented an earthly kingdom. History has shown these to be Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Each kingdom was overrun by the subsequent kingdom. The Roman Empire is in a dormant state waiting to rise again in the last days. Daniel prophesied this in Daniel 2 stating,

"While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2: 34-35)

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This rock, this mountain, is the Kingdom of God, as Daniel went on to interpret.

*“In the time of those kings, the **God** of heaven will set up a **kingdom** that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces”*
(Daniel 2:44-45).

We see that God will indeed set up a kingdom that will last forever, the **Kingdom of God**.

Who will be the King of this Kingdom?

Every kingdom has a king. Isaiah 9 reveals to us who will reign, king of the Kingdom of God in verses 6 and 7 which state, *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.”*

This is a prophecy about Jesus Christ. It is he who will be king of the Kingdom of God.

Redemption: the Kingdom of God opens once again to mankind

Recall, God will not allow sin into His kingdom, and we are all sinners. This is why God had to redeem us, through His Son, Jesus Christ. The birth of Christ was a pivotal milestone in the good news story, the gospel of the Kingdom of God, which started from the creation of man.

Paul went at lengths to explain the role of Christ’s death and resurrection, to be the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep; for as in Adam all died (sin), so in Christ all will be made alive and then the end will come, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father (1st Corinthians 15:20-25).

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Behold, the Kingdom of God!

Where will the Kingdom be? Many persons hold the view that the reward of the saints, the kingdom of God will be in heaven. These are positions held based on misinterpretation of scriptures such as Matt 5:10 “...for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”; verse 12 “...great is your reward in Heaven”.

But Jesus said in John 14:2 that he goes to prepare a place for us. In Revelation 22:12 Jesus says: “

Behold I am coming soon! My reward is with me...”

When Christ returns he will bring and set up the kingdom here on the earth. Then there is the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31), where Lazarus the beggar died and was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom and the rich man died and was in torment in Hades. However this was a parable, a story told by Jesus to teach a spiritual lesson, not to be taken literally.

Revelation 5:10 tells us that the kingdom will be on the earth, Christ will rule from the earth and the saints will rule with him, from earth. Zechariah prophesied that Christ will be the ruler of the Earth in Zechariah 14:9. He will set foot on the Mount of Olives from which he left (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11). It is written in several places in the Bible that the meek will inherit the Earth, not Heaven (Psalm 37:11, Matthew 5:5, Luke 6:20).

When will the kingdom be established? Some persons hold an incorrect belief that the Kingdom of God is already established on the earth! They often refer to the healing scriptures “...the kingdom has come upon you...”

(Matt 12:28)

“...the kingdom of God has come to you...”

(Luke 11:20). Also Colossians 1:13

“...and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves...”

kingdom (Greek.

basileia

) in this sense means

“sovereignty”

or

“authority” (*Strong’s concordance*)

and not the territorial kingdom. So the authority of the Christ, the king of the kingdom of God has come upon, but his territorial kingdom he will bring with him on his second coming.

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The scripture tells us that no one knows the day or the hour (Matt 24:36) but we know that when Christ returns to the earth he will bring with him the kingdom of God (Revelation 11:15 and 20:4-6). As world affairs continue to deteriorate and mankind threatens to slaughter itself, Christ will return to establish His kingdom before mankind completely destroys the Earth (Matthew 24:22, Mark 13:20-27). Again, Daniel 2:44 says that in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom...meaning that Christ will return and overthrow the rulers of the world in the last days (Zechariah 14).

Finally let us consider, why the Kingdom of God, is indeed the gospel, why is it good news. In the context of today's world which is filled with chaos, anxiety, inequality, poverty, injustice, diseases, wars, violence, perversion, death sorrow; the Bible paints a beautiful picture of a kingdom which will be free of these things, peace – even amongst the animals – no more suffering or pain, the earth will be restored to its former glory, how it was before sin entered the world.

Deserts will spring with life: Isaiah 41:18-20 *"I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it"*

Agriculture will flourish: Amos 9:13 *"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it"*

Even the animals will live in peace: Isaiah 11:6-8 *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den"*

Those with disabilities will be healed: Isaiah 35:5-6 - *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert"*

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War and violence will cease: Micah 4:3-4 *“He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken”*

The world will live in peace: Isaiah 65:21-23 *“They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labour in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune, for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them.”*

Isn't this all good news? This is indeed the gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ taught; this is the Bible's gospel, a gospel, about a coming Kingdom, with Jesus as it's king that will last forever and ever – Amen