

# What is The Gospel? – Part 2

We learned in part one that Jesus Christ came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God – the good news that the god of this world, Satan the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4) will soon be removed, and imprisoned for 1000 years, Revelation 20:3, *‘And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.’*

He will be replaced by the King of Kings – Jesus Christ, as His Kingdom is established at Jerusalem, and His rule is gradually extended over all the earth, assisted by His Bride, the Saints, Revelation 20:4, *‘And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.’*

Although we learned that Jesus concentrated on preaching about His coming Kingdom, He also taught the need to repent, Matthew 4:17, *‘From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’* Repentance is necessary before one can be baptised, and His disciples baptised the repentant crowds, John 4: 1-2, *‘When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)’*

It is through repentance and baptism, which is total immersion in water, that our sins may be washed away, Romans 6:3-4, *‘Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.’* Only then can we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38, *‘Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’*

So it is that Christ’s message of the gospel contained more than one aspect, as W E Vine brings out in his ‘Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words’ : “The Greek word ‘Euangelion’[Gospel] originally denoted a reward for good tidings; later, the idea of reward dropped, and the word stood for the good news itself ... In the N.T. it denotes the good tidings of the Kingdom of God and salvation through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of His expiatory death, His burial, resurrection and ascension.”

Vines, here includes two aspects of the Good News:

- a. The good news about the coming Kingdom of God.
- b. Our opportunity to enter that Kingdom through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection.

This definition is broader and more accurate than the more common concentration on (b) in modern ‘Christianity’, where all too often we see much arm waving, emphasis and rejoicing on the name of Jesus and His gift of salvation. This emphasis on grace alone as a gift under the New Covenant often overlooks the need for repentance *before* we may receive the gift of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:32, *‘And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that **obey him.**’* Romans 2:13, *‘(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, **but the doers of the law shall be justified.**’*

On the other hand, there has also been an emphasis by a much smaller number on (a), to the neglect of (b). Such groups have claimed that the gospel is not a message *about* Jesus Christ, Matthew 4:17, 23, *‘From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. .. And Jesus went about all Galilee, **teaching in their synagogues,** and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.’* This though, ignores much of the teaching,

pattern and example of our Saviour, which in itself is vitally important, 1 Peter 2:21, *'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.***'

The New Testament is much more than just Christ's message about His coming Kingdom, for He taught us how to enter in and left us His example, revealing by His way of life, the way that results in success and happiness. The apostles continued to instruct us about how to qualify for entry into that Kingdom, Revelation 22:14, *'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'*

Christ's example and teaching reveals how much of His life revolved around the observance of the true Biblical Holy Days, listed in Leviticus 23 by which He sanctioned their keeping by Christians today. These days are listed in Leviticus 23.

Jesus Christ's life from a child, and even his death and ascension, were based on the foundation of those days which, when kept, reveal the plan of God for all mankind. From a small child with His parents, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to participate in these commanded assemblies. He did not attend the Rabbinical schools because He was taught their meaning directly by His Father in heaven, John 8:26, 28, *'I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him... Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.'* Gradually, He came to understand the vital role He would need to play in that Plan, until He was ready to begin His ministry.

At His last feast of Passover, he would, as the Lamb of God, replace the Passover lambs sacrificed by the Jews in their homes and in the Temple, once and for all time, Hebrews 7: 27, *'Who needeth not **daily**, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.'* As our Passover Lamb, John 1:29, *'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'*

He would ascend up to heaven at the very time the High priest waved the Wave Sheaf firstfruit offering of abib barley, on the day after the Sabbath during the feast of Unleavened Bread, Leviticus 23:11, *'And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.'*

He would send down the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost 50 days later, verse 15, *'And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete.'* (cf. Acts 2:1)

He will finally return to claim His Kingdom at the next feast day – the Feast of Trumpets, which pictures Christ's intervention in the affairs of man at Armageddon, without which man would succeed in destroying himself. Revelation 11:15, *'And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.'* Matthew 24:22, *'And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.'*

The pattern of this plan is revealed by the keeping of those Holy Days, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2:21. A careful reading of the New Testament shows that all of Christ's followers, whether Jew or Gentile, continued to keep those Holy Days in the New Covenant Church, even as faithful Christians do today.

We gain additional understanding of God's Plan by Christ's parable of the King's son, Matthew 22:1-4, 14, and we learn that not all who are called to the marriage, are chosen, *'For many are called, but few are chosen.'* Christ made this clear again in His parable of the ten virgins, Matthew 25:1-10. When we compare these parables about the Kingdom of God with verses in the book of Revelation, we learn that only those

who are *faithful* will take part in the first resurrection and marry Christ on the Sea of Glass before the Father's throne in heaven, Revelation 14:1, '*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*' And Revelation 19:7, '*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*' Revelation 17:14, '*These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*'

These then return with Christ to claim His Kingdom, Revelation 19:14, '*And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, **clothed in fine linen, white and clean.***', Zechariah 14:5, '*And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, **and all the saints with thee.***'

This then, the example and pattern of Jesus Christ's life, is the third part of the good news that should be included in the meaning of 'the gospel', for only with that knowledge do we grasp that God's plan is about the gradual expansion of God's family. Romans 8:29, '*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn **among many brethren.***' John 4:14, '*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*'

We have learned that Jesus Christ will marry the firstfruit harvest of faithful Christians within His Church. Returning with Him they will reign with Him here on the earth for 1000 years, Revelation 20:4, '*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*'

Through *their* teaching and example very many will be brought into the family of God during the 1000 years of the millennium. Only at the end of that time will there be enough members of that family to educate in God's way all those who have ever lived, who will arise in the 2<sup>nd</sup> resurrection of the great White Throne judgment. Revelation 20:11-15, '*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*'

Jesus Christ's example, and His inseparable link with the Holy Days which reveal so much, is the important third part of the good news for all mankind who have ever lived, which together make up the wonderful gospel of the ever expanding Kingdom of God.

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