

LIFE QUESTIONS



What Is The Gospel

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There is a lot of misunderstanding and erroneous about the gospel which has led to a number of false teachings and assumptions, which in turn can influence your views and opinions on the character and nature of God. These misunderstandings have a direct effect upon your beliefs, views and opinions which are taught and passed on to others and so the cycle continues.

This is what has happened regarding the gospel. To many, the gospel is about the forgiveness of humankind's sin, for all who believe in Jesus Christ and have asked Him to forgive them by repeating a form of words. Such individuals believe they will go to heaven when they die, as long as they keep asking God to forgive them of their sins. A proportion of this belief is correct and hinders the believer from knowing and experiencing God and His goodness.

The gospel is generally understood as 'good news', this is an over simplification, when you consider the implications. There are many things in life that can be classed as good news. The passing of an exam, an engagement, a wedding, a job promotion or pay rise, the birth of a baby or even a bargain from a shop. These are some of the many things that can be associated as good news. To simply state that the gospel is good news, is to reduce it to any number of things mentioned above. None of these seem to justify what the gospel really is as we shall see, for the implications of the gospel are wide, far reaching and life transforming as nothing else in life! It is more accurate to describe the gospel as being so good you just can't believe it!

The word gospel has its origins in Hebrew and had to do with a victorious announcement which an army had over its enemies. This would lead to great rejoicing amongst the community as well as throughout the country. Paul uses this analogy in 2 Corinthians 2:14 and likens it to Jesus Christ who through His sinless life, death, resurrection and ascension defeated God's enemies - satan, sin, sickness, death, hell and the grave. Hallelujah! Therefore everyone who identifies themselves with Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death and resurrection is included in His victory. Regrettably many believers are not able to identify themselves with what Jesus has accomplished and therefore are not able to make full use of the gospel.

On a number of occasions, the gospel is referred to as God's gospel (Rom 15:16), designed by Him (Rom 1:1-2) and is His plan and desire for all mankind, whether they choose to believe in Him or not! If it is His gospel, then it is only fitting for it to reflect His character and nature. If God never intended for this to be the case, then it's no wonder that so many of those who claim to follow Him are mixed up and confused. I know without a shadow of doubt that God never intended this to be the so.

John the apostle, says that God is love (1 Jn 4:8), therefore you should expect that the gospel would reflect His character, nature and grace (Ac 20:24). Paul states that the goodness of God brings humankind to a place of repentance (Rom 2:24). This and other verses indicate how valuable and important you are to God. The is also seen in Jesus giving His life for the sins of the world (1 Jn 2:2; 2 Cor 5:19), not just a select few. He didn't wait for anyone to get their act together or to improve their life and behaviour, but went to the cross when we were all at our

worst (Rom 5:8). Then in John 3 we read, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (17-18 NIVUK).

Some have taken the character and nature of God as revealed in the gospel to the extreme where they believe that no one will go to hell. The gospel clearly shows that Jesus Christ has dealt with the problem of the world's sin (1 Jn 2:2), reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19) by His death on the cross, taking upon Himself the wrath of God. In doing so, He became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). In 1 Thessalonians 5:9 we read, "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (NIVUK). People go to hell not because of their sin, but because they refuse to accept God's way and how they can know His salvation which He has freely made available to all humankind.

On another note, there are those who believe that anything bad or disastrous that takes place is as a result of God's judgement against an individual or a particular group of people. This is not only wrong as it goes against the message of the gospel as well as the nature of God. It borders on being demonic, as people are detracted away from the true nature and goodness of God. We live in a fallen world and bad things do happen. In Luke 13 we read of two tragic incidents, one where Galileans were slaughtered when they went to the temple to offer sacrifices. The other occasion was when the Tower of Siloam collapsed killing 18 people. Jesus didn't blame God or anyone else for that matter, rather, He pointed out that everyone has the responsibility to be spiritually prepared in the event of the unexpected happening.

Sin and humankind's inability to keep the law, kept God and humankind separate and humankind could do nothing to remedy the situation. Paul not only outlines the problem but also gives the solution, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22 NIVUK). However this is not all, for Paul goes on to explain what the Gospel of Christ is in Romans 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (NIVUK). Therefore the gospel is God's power for salvation thereby making everyone righteous before God for all who believe what Christ has done because of His sacrificial death and resurrection and it is already inside all who believe!

The scriptures clearly show that the purpose of the gospel was to bring humankind into an intimate and meaningful relationship with God. Paul says, "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting peoples' sins against them...." (1 Cor 5:19 NIVUK). Not only did God reveal His power by addressing humankind's inability to deal with the problem of sin, but Jesus, in the place of humankind, also took upon Himself the wrath of God. Thereby making it possible for humankind to have intimacy with God and to know and experience Him for themselves (Eph 1:16-18; Col 1:9) provided we believe what God has done for us. Failure to understand the gospel and its implications not only affects understanding as to who God is, but also of what Jesus has accomplished for you and the benefits which are yours, all because of the gospel.