

THE TRUE, COMPLETE GOSPEL

Light on the Rock (lightontherock.org)

by Philip Shields March 2004

(Be looking also for another sermon on the good news, June 2006)

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The Good News! The Gospel of Christ, the gospel of God, the gospel of the kingdom. Much time and ink has been spent by some who insist the “gospel” is only about Jesus Christ. Equal time has been spent by those insisting the gospel is only about the message of the Kingdom of God, and is not about Christ or His life. This message shows the gospel is far bigger and greater than many are preaching. Please listen and study carefully from God’s word, to see the truth on this topic.
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Greetings once again, brethren. I have a topic I think is just so crucial that we get straight, that we get it right. I just did a Google search, and I looked up “the true gospel of Jesus Christ”. Hundreds of web pages and papers popped up. I found it very interesting, and actually delayed my own preparation of this just reading what others were saying about it.

We refer to the first four books of the New Testament as “the Gospels” -- the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. **In the actual opening words of those books, Mark’s book is clearly called “the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ.”** Some use an expression: to refer to some fact as being absolutely true, they might say “it’s the gospel truth”. So the word “*gospel*” is bandied around freely, but most probably have little idea what it really means, what is included in the word “*gospel*”, or the power behind its meaning.

Do you realize how important it is that we preach the right gospel? What is the gospel? If you had to write a paper right now, defining and explaining “the gospel”, what would you say?

Mark 1:15. Here Jesus tells us that we must *believe* the gospel. The gospel is not just something academic; it’s something we have to believe. We can’t effectively believe something unless we can clearly describe it, define it, or write about it.

Some believe the gospel is exclusively the story *about* Christ – His birth, His life, His death, His sacrifice. Scriptures are used to prove their point. Is this the complete definition of the gospel, though?

Others claim “No way, that’s a very false gospel.” These people believe the gospel is absolutely *not about* Christ, but about the *message* He brought. They say the true gospel is about the Kingdom of God, end of story, as far as they’re concerned and they have scriptures they use to prove *their* point.

The people who believe this second definition, that the gospel is just the message of the Kingdom but does not include anything about Jesus Himself, do of course believe in Christ, and they do of course preach His name. And yet, when it comes down to defining what “gospel” means, this group of people would say, “no, it’s not *about* the person or life of Jesus Christ, but about the message He brought”.

Can that be right? Is that what the Bible fully says about the gospel? How can we have such *opposing* views among professing believers when all we have to do is to do a thorough and complete study on

what the Bible actually says the gospel is, using *all* the scriptures on the topic? I hope whichever “camp” you come from, you will be willing to review all the scriptures with me on this vital topic.

That’s what we’ll discuss today. I’ll title my study today “The True and Complete Gospel.” I’m going to encourage you to do your own full study of it though.

Is it even important whether we define gospel correctly, or does that fall into the category of “striving over words”, which God’s word says we are not to do (**1 Timothy 6:4**)?

Please turn to Galatians 1:6-9. I found it interesting that this passage is used over and over again on websites with sermons or articles about “the gospel”, as it is on mine in this case. Paul says it is so important to be preaching the right gospel that he pronounces a double curse on those who would preach a false gospel.

By the way, I don’t care what booklets or articles you’ve read on this topic. Get back into the word of God itself, the Bible. Don’t read an article about the gospel unless it’s chock full of scriptures to support what the Bible actually says – *fully and completely*. More importantly, study it with a concordance yourself. *Believe the Bible*, not the writings or preachings of mere mortals, including this one! Go to the source, without a human intermediary. I like studying the original Greek or Hebrew as much as possible, so I don’t even have to contend as much with a translator’s bias. But I’m asking you to hear or read this study with your own open Bible – and then continue your own further research into this topic, using primarily your own Bible and a concordance. Be willing to start from scratch, without prior beliefs forcing you into one direction or another, and see where *God’s WORD* leads you! Jesus promised the Spirit would lead us into all truth (John 16:13) and would glorify Jesus. Believe God’s word.

Galatians 1:6-7

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in *the grace of Christ, to a different gospel*, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert **the gospel of Christ**.”

First of all please notice this context: Paul says that anything which emphasizes something other than the grace of Christ - is a different gospel! That’s the context to the more frequently used verses 8-9 which place a curse on someone who preaches a different and wrong gospel.

Notice he says, “the gospel of Christ”. Analyze the word “of”. **“OF” – means “about” or “belonging to” – or both? (Gospel of Christ; gospel of the Kingdom)**

The phrase “the gospel OF Christ”: some say this is the gospel Jesus brought. They define “of” as “belonging to”, as in “this is the house *of* Sam” meaning, “this is the house belonging to Sam”. “Of Christ”, they say, means the gospel Jesus preached, not a gospel *about* Christ.

But the word “of” *can* also mean “about”. Take the phrase “the grace of Christ” (Galatians. 1:6). Certainly its meaning could be either “the grace *about* Christ” or “Christ’s grace”. Another example: people who teach the gospel is only “the gospel *of* the Kingdom”, always go on to say in their own literature that it is the gospel *about* the Kingdom, and not just “the Kingdom’s gospel”? “The gospel of peace” is certainly the gospel *about* peace. It makes little sense to define “of” in that sentence to mean “peace’s gospel”. So the word “of” can mean “about” **or** “belonging to”. Either one. Usage

defines how “of” should be understood. I’ll return to this concept several times because it is crucial to understanding the full and complete gospel.

So back to Galatians. 1:6-7 – the context is “the grace of Christ” and Paul laments (moans with sorrow) that some are preaching a “different gospel” other than the good news of the grace of Christ.

THE Double CURSE for Preaching the Wrong Gospel

Galatians 1:8-9

“But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach a gospel to you beside what we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches a gospel to you beside what you have received, let him be accursed.”

So Paul says it twice. He puts a double curse on those who will preach the wrong gospel. It’s going to be crucial we have some clear scriptures which define and describe Paul’s gospel message – because he’s the one inspired to place a double curse on those who preach a different gospel from his. Since there can be only *one* true gospel, we must also conclude that Paul’s gospel was the same one that Peter preached, that Jesus preached, or that should be heard today!

By the way, everyone who tries to confirm their gospel definition is the “right one”, uses that passage. They go on to define their way by using a dozen or so verses to make their case. But in sermon after sermon which I’ve studied on all sides of this issue, I find preachers and writers ignoring 30-40 other verses which show “the gospel” in different light than the one they focus on. That’s happening on all sides.

Now, what does “Gospel” mean?

“Gospel” simply means “a good story” or “good news”. “Good news” is employed as the equivalent of the Greek “*euaggelion*”, *gospel*, *good message*. This word in the earlier Greek language originally signified a *gift* or a present given to one who brought good tidings. Later on “gospel” was employed to describe the good news itself. That’s what the Greek word means.

The **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** says the *English* word “gospel” was derived from an Anglo-Saxon word, which meant “the story concerning God”. In the New Testament the Greek word means “**good news**”. That’s what the Greek actually means. However the English word “gospel” comes from “*God’s Spell*” or “*good news concerning God*”.

Let’s start with what the Bible actually says the gospel is, and not assume that it’s just about this or that. The Bible actually has many, many phrases that define the gospel. Hence the title of the study – “the true, *complete* gospel”.

How the Bible itself most often uses the word “gospel”

The Greek word for “gospel” itself is used over 100 times, and it’s used in many different phrases and sentences. The simple phrase “*the gospel*”, without further elaboration, is used more often than all the other phrases put together.

When an additional phrase is added to the word “Gospel”, the most common *phrase* found in nine or ten places is “the gospel of *Christ*”. Let’s look at one example.

Romans 15:19-20

“in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ**. 20 And so I have made it my aim *to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation...*”

If you add **Mark 1:1**, “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”, that adds another. One passage – **Romans 1:16** – is translated simply as “the gospel” by many translations, where KJV and NKJV say “the gospel of Christ”.

The most commonly used phrase in all the Bible that uses the word “gospel” is – “The gospel of Christ” – 10 times, or “the gospel of Jesus Christ” once. Put together, that’s 11 times. All it’s saying is “the good news of Jesus Christ”.

Important fact: **The “gospel of Christ” is used more frequently than “the gospel of the Kingdom” or any other phrase.** Mark begins his gospel with that phrase. In verse 14 he uses a different phrase – but surely it’s about the same gospel, for there can really be only one true gospel.

The 2nd most commonly used phrase is “the gospel of God” (Romans. 1:1, etc) -- seven times! If you add “the gospel of the blessed God” (1 Timothy 1:11), that makes it **8 times**.

The 3rd most common phrase -- #3 -- is “the gospel of the Kingdom of God”, used four times in all the Bible.

Mark 1:14 talks about “the gospel of the Kingdom of God”. It’s God’s Kingdom, God is the head of it. It’s His family, His household, His way. And Jesus will be his King of Kings. But the head of it, the one who owns that Kingdom, who’s leading that Kingdom, is God the Father. It’s the Kingdom of God. And that’s why when Jesus in the sample prayer says “Thy Kingdom”, He’s praying to God our Father in heaven, and He says “Thy Kingdom, Your Kingdom, God’s Kingdom, the Father’s Kingdom come”. It is the gospel of the Kingdom of God, is another phrase here.

So far we have “gospel of Christ”, the gospel of God, and “gospel of the Kingdom of God”, as the 3 most commonly used phrases.

Acts 20:24 adds another: “the gospel of the grace of God”. Here again, “of” would have to mean “about”. It would seem odd to say “Grace’s gospel”. No, the “gospel *of* the grace of God” has to mean “the good news *about* the grace of God.” Keep that in mind when thinking of “the gospel *of* Christ.” Could “of” there also mean “about” and not just “belonging to”?

So it is clear that the message of God’s GRACE has to a huge part of the complete and true gospel. That will become abundantly clear as we proceed.

And then we have **Romans 1:9**, “the gospel of His Son”, Jesus Christ. The good news of Jesus.

Romans 10:15, adds “the gospel of peace”. Also **Ephesians 6:15**. It’s not another gospel - - just a further aspect of the full and complete gospel. Does the gospel *OF* peace mean the gospel *about* peace, or peace’s gospel? I’m really making this point because some insist “the gospel *OF* Christ” can

only mean “the gospel Christ preached”, and they say it cannot mean “*about* Christ”. But please read all the verses where that phrase is used and see if such a narrow definition can even make sense!

These are some of the phrases where “gospel” is used.

I wanted to start this way because so many think it’s just about “the gospel of Christ”, and so many think it’s just about “the gospel of the Kingdom”. Well folks, there’s also:

- the gospel of God * the gospel of the grace of God. * the gospel of His Son
- the gospel of peace * Eph 1:13 – Gospel of your salvation

There’s also **Romans 16:25** that says “*My gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*”. You have to say in Romans 16:25 that the use of the word “of” *has to mean* “about Jesus” for it to make any sense.

Let’s look at a few more phrases where “gospel” is used and defined.

Ephesians 1:13 “The gospel (the good news) of **your salvation**”. So the complete gospel must include the message of our salvation as well. That has to include the *process* of salvation, and the good news of the *Savior* we have, surely. And “OF your salvation” has to mean “about” here too, for it would make no sense to say “salvation’s gospel”.

And keep in mind: how is it good news for you or for me unless there is a way into this marvelous kingdom? So the good news is also about how we are being saved and have entrance into this glorious kingdom, or else it may be good news for others but not for me! The good news is how even a wretch like me – and like you (yes, *you’re* a wretch too. Revelation 3:17; Romans 7:24) – can be part of this kingdom!

So if we put all this together, we’re already beginning to get a fuller, more complete picture of what the gospel is. So far we have the gospel of Christ, the gospel of God, the gospel of peace, of salvation, the gospel of His Son, the grace of God, of your salvation, and more.

I want to read this next one, as its kinda cool. Please turn to **Revelation 14:6-7**. This is right at the very end-time. In Revelation 14 we see the Lamb standing on the Sea of Glass, with the 144,000, and then it says in verse 6...

Revelation 14:6

“And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having *the everlasting gospel* to preach to those dwelling on the earth, even to every nation and kindred and tongue and people...”

Everyone’s going to hear *that* gospel. And this gospel of the Kingdom, remember, shall be preached in all the world for a witness (**Matthew 24:14**), and that includes this particular verse right here. Maybe this will be the final fruition of that particular verse because it says so, right here in Revelation 14:6, that this angel is going to be heard by every nation, every tribe, every tongue and every people. Now let’s continue in verse 7:

Revelation 14:7

“**saying with a great voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him!** For the hour of His judgment has come: And *worship* Him who made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

So part of the gospel is a message called “the everlasting gospel”, preached by an angel to all the nations of the world. That message is to fear God, give glory to Him and worship Him. That, too, is the gospel, according to scripture, right? Does the gospel you and your church believe in include the message that we are to worship and even *fear* God? We are to even **obey the gospel**, as I’ll cover in more depth in a while (**1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8**). Do you think of the gospel as good news which we must *obey*? If not, perhaps your gospel is not complete enough. I’m only quoting scripture, right?

Now, that’s still not a comprehensive list, but I hope I’m making the point that there’s a curse on those who preach a false gospel and we need to get it right and that also means we need to have the *complete* gospel. I’m asking you to do your own in-depth study of the phrase “gospel of” and YOU let God speak to you directly without any human intermediaries with their own agendas and preconceptions.

So to summarize so far, the gospel is NOT ONLY, cannot be only, about any one of those phrases we just read. The complete, true gospel has to be about ALL the phrases that describe “the” gospel. The gospel is not *just* about Jesus, it’s not *just* about His Kingdom, and it’s not just about any one of these. I’ve heard that said and preached. I’ve heard it written that way, that it’s either just about Jesus or just about the Kingdom. Brethren, that’s being too narrow and it just cannot be complete or true. The gospel is the Kingdom, it’s grace, it’s peace, it’s salvation, it’s about God, it’s about Jesus, it’s the gospel of Christ, it’s everlasting good news, it’s fear of God, it’s worshiping Him...I’d call it awesome news, when we understand *its usage in scripture* fully.

WHEN was THE GOSPEL FIRST PREACHED?

Now, some other things we need to clear up before going too far. **Is the gospel just a new covenant phenomenon?** Is it something Jesus originated when He came as a man on earth two thousand years ago? There are many web site sermons that say that the gospel originated with Jesus Christ when He came as a man. One writer says “the *preparation* was set by John the Baptist but Jesus was the one who started the gospel”. Well, it sounds pretty, but is it right?

We’re going to find as we do these studies that themes are woven all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, and the gospel is no exception. It’s not something starts in Matthew or Mark or Luke. In fact, if you turn with me to Galatians 3:8 you’ll see something very interesting. How does anyone miss this?

Galatians 3:8

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, **preached the GOSPEL before to Abraham, saying,** “In you shall all nations be blessed.”

So right there it should be clear that even Abraham had at least part of the gospel preached to him. It’s either that, or rip that verse out of your Bible. (I’m being facetious).

Of course, that part of the gospel was referring again to our Savior, because it was going to be in the Seed of Jesus Christ that all the nations of all the earth would be blessed. *Now, if the gospel was preached to Abraham, it obviously is so much bigger, older, broader, much more exciting, than just a New Testament phenomenon, isn’t it? And it started way before Jesus came as a man on the earth.*

In Hebrews 4:1-2, talking about the ancient Israelites:

Hebrews 4:1-2

“Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it. 2- **For also we have had the gospel preached, as well as them**. But the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”

So there you have it. There's so much more to the gospel than the idea that it started with the preaching of Jesus Christ. It did not. It started way back then, even before Abraham. ***The gospel, as you'll actually understand, if you study it on your own, started with the message that God gave Adam and Eve about the Tree of Life.*** That's where the gospel message started. And it was believed fully by Abel, Moses, David, Joseph, Daniel, Josiah, Malachi, so many. They understood the gospel, to some extent, and preached it to the ancient Israelites. **I believe the good news was laid out by God before Adam and Eve** – and I believe it was certainly preached to Adam and Eve.

Romans 1:1-3

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, ***separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets*** in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

They didn't understand as much about it as we do today, because more and more is revealed as we get closer to the day of Christ's return. Remember, Peter says that the prophets of old would have loved to understand what we see today (**1 Peter 1:10**). And remember, to whom much is given, much is required. We have the Bible tools so handy to us today. They didn't even have a printed Bible. They had to go to a synagogue and have the Bible read to them. They could never afford to have a Bible. Each book of the Bible was a big scroll – huge scrolls. It would have cost the equivalent of what a top-end car costs in today's dollars for someone back then to have been able to have their own complete Bible. Besides, not everyone could read back then. But today we have the Bible on computer, we have all kinds of translations and versions, some have theirs on their PDA's .

Probably few people think of the gospel as something Abraham heard, or that David wrote about, but they did. In fact, if we have time I'll get into it. **If we don't have time, let me just say right now that the whole story of the promise given to Adam and Eve, that their seed will defeat the dragon, defeat the serpent, that their seed would win out, and then the sacrificial animal that Abel brought out, all of that portrayed the entrance into the gospel.** Then, the whole story of Abraham and Isaac, and God calling them out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and the Israelites later on crossing the Red Sea and being baptized in the Red Sea, going on their way to the Promised Land, all of that pictured the gospel. They had it preached to them.

The gospel, really, is about the entire plan of God. I believe that's the definition I'd give to it. The gospel is really about the entire plan of God, from A to Z, from Alpha to Omega, Alef to Tav. *It's really about living by every word of God, and how you and I can have a very real PART in the plan of God. God has a plan for you, and that's good news. You're not being left aside.* You're part of it.

Have you ever played those games as a kid where they'd have a pickup game of basketball or baseball, and there'd be five, ten, fifteen, twenty guys standing there? Then two would get up there, and they'd take turns picking members of their team? Finally they'd have enough, and they picked you, and how good you felt, remember that? I remember that. Well, this is the story about how God picked you, and how God's going to pick everyone eventually, of those who will let Him come into their lives. Some won't. Some won't allow it.

The gospel is about God's plan of salvation, and how through that plan God is preparing a BRIDE for His Son, and He's going to have children become part of His Kingdom. How Jesus is a very, very central part of that, you'll soon see. The gospel is high-octane good news, a very potent message from the supreme Creator God. If we could come before His presence, we'd absolutely faint due to the majesty and holiness we would experience. It's a very potent message from the supreme Creator God, to all humanity who will hear. He loves us and He's bringing us into His Family. That's His kingdom message, *and* that's the message of the gospel of Christ. It's the same message called "the gospel of God" and "the gospel of salvation".

We're being called to hear, and to understand. It started way back with Adam and Eve, and Abel, and Noah, and Abraham. Now it's your turn to hear, understand, be part of, and be counted in the gospel, the good news, that you're part of that plan. Done right, this gospel should be so exciting, that it should so grab you and make you not able to sleep. It should cause you to be so excited when you hear it and grasp it.

Now, is the gospel just a message? Or does that message have some teeth to it? In other words, is the gospel message just some easy going message about peace and love and harmony? Yeah, it's *partly* about peace and love, folks – and of course that's not namby-pamby. The gospel is not just about people telling everybody they're loved. There is so much more to it. I read one sermon where the preacher is saying the gospel has no room for anything but gentle love and forgiveness.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

"since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 ***in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed."

1 Peter 4:17

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of **those who do not obey the gospel of God?**" It goes on to say in verse 18: "If the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?"

Here again, the gospel is something that has to be obeyed -- or else! So God is coming and He's going to punish those who will not obey the gospel. So the gospel is something that has teeth. Once we understand it, we have to obey it. We can't callously ignore the true gospel.

Let's LET THE BIBLE DEFINE THE WORD "GOSPEL" by the way it is USED in Scripture

Let's put the verses all together and see how the Bible defines "gospel" by how it uses that word in sentences. I'm not putting anyone down, truly not.

What did Jesus come preaching?

Matthew 4:23

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people."

The 2nd time “gospel” is used:

Matthew 9:35

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”

Now, let's keep reading.

Mark 1:14-15

“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus **came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent, and believe in the gospel.**”

This is now the 3rd time out of a total of 4 times, “the gospel of the Kingdom” is used. That is what Matthew and Mark are inspired to say to summarize what it was that Jesus preached. And notice we are to repent and believe in the gospel, as well as obeying it.

Now get this: if that is what Jesus preached, then when you read anything Jesus is preaching (a red-letter Bible would make this easy), what He's preaching has to be part of what is called “preaching the gospel of the kingdom”. Keep that in mind for later. The Bible will not and must not contradict itself.

Jesus also spoke much about His Father, for in fact He says He came to reveal the Father as part of His mission. The message Jesus brought was really His Father's words to the family of God (**John 14:24; 7:16; 8:26-28; 12:49-50**), with Jesus as the firstborn Son. You get what I'm saying here. The gospel is really God's message, the Father's message. *That is also why the SECOND-MOST commonly used phrase about the gospel, is “the gospel of GOD”.* Jesus is the firstborn Son. The Bible talks about him a couple of times as being God's messenger, sent by God as God's apostle (**Hebrews 3:1**).

Jesus as the firstborn Son came to tell the rest of His brothers and sisters, the rest of us, the rest of the children of God, what Father wants us all to know. And do you know what part of that message of the kingdom was, when you study all the words of Jesus in a red letter Bible?

Jesus is saying to us: “Hey, brothers and sisters, I'm not the only one who's going to be in the Kingdom of God. The good news is that our Father has a place for you, too, and a place for all of us which I will prepare for you. It's going to be just awesome when we're all there together. Yes, the Kingdom of God is awesome news. *You're not being left out.* A huge part of the good news of the kingdom of God is the good news that the Son of God was sent to make it possible for you to be part of God's kingdom!”

So many times we look out in the world and wonder how these people make so much money, have such big houses. Everything seems to go so well for them, at least outwardly. They have looks, they have money, they have fast cars. Sometimes they're not very happy, sometimes they seem to have happiness too. But, it doesn't matter. Sometimes, like David, we wonder why the wicked prosper. Sometimes we fall into that same depression and trap. Sometimes we feel like we've been left out of all the good stuff in life. And God's saying, “No, you haven't been. You haven't been left out”.

In John 14:24, Jesus says the words we hear are not His words, but the Father's words. **John 12:49-50** says He spoke on his Father's authority; spoke what His Father wanted Him to say. There are

many other places where Jesus says “I have not come to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” (**John 5:30; 6:38**).

So we see that this Kingdom of God has a lot of punch behind it. Now, the complete phrase “*the gospel of the Kingdom of God*” is used a total of only four times [not 7-8, as I state as a possibility on the audio]. But the phrase “Kingdom of God” itself, without the word “gospel” as part of it, is used fifty five times just in Matthew and John. “Kingdom of heaven” is used also in the gospels, thirty two times, almost entirely by Matthew.

Jesus says He was sent to proclaim the kingdom of God, though in Luke 4:43, the word “gospel” is not attached to that statement. We will soon see that Peter and Paul and the apostles also preached “the kingdom of God” – but they clearly understood that message HAS to include a STRONG central message of that Kingdom’s Father – as well as that Kingdom’s Savior, Jesus Christ.

Luke 4:43

“but He said to them, **“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, *because for this purpose I have been sent.*”**

Jesus wanted God’s kingdom to be a reality. The Kingdom was constantly on Jesus’ mind. He gave many parables describing the kingdom of God.

But now I want you to remember what we’ve just read: Jesus came to teach about and preach the kingdom of God. I want you to keep that in mind when we analyze what is recorded about what He actually preached. You can read all that for yourself in any red-letter Bible.

In Matthew 24:14, the last of 4 times “gospel of the kingdom” is used, He gives a more somber warning here, in a somber context:

Matthew 24:14

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations. And then the end shall come.”

Now, we’re going to have to define what that means and includes, to get the complete and true gospel, because so many say the gospel is not about Jesus, but about God’s Kingdom only. They use these verses and then they stop there.

So this gospel of the Kingdom is going to be preached all over the world before the end comes. Now, there are several other verses that define Jesus’ preaching as well as being the gospel of the Kingdom. Now, the question that’s immediately posed, then: are those that say the gospel is not about Christ – the gospel of peace, the gospel of salvation, the gospel of God, and so forth – are they right? No. Don’t forget that last list of phrases that we’ve just gone through. The Bible is teaming the word “gospel” up with many other words. Like peace and salvation and God.

Now, a hint is given in Mark 1:1 when Mark begins his book with these words - “The beginning of the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The good news of Jesus. And Mark goes on to describe the very story and the circumstances behind John the Baptist’s preparation for the coming of Christ as well as the story of how Jesus began His ministry. He seems to be calling the very story about the life and message of Jesus, as something that’s included in that gospel. Can anyone say I’m wrong in that? It’s obvious, isn’t it? You’ll see that more strongly as we go along.

Those of you who believe the gospel *is* about Christ are probably wondering why I'm spending so much time trying to make the case that "the gospel" does include the message about the life and death of our Savior. I'm trying to show the broadness of the kingdom's good news. But *all* of you keep reading and listening, because the gospel is bigger than most people - - from whatever doctrinal beliefs - have taught so far.

A MESSAGE ABOUT ANY KINGDOM MUST INCLUDE THE STORY OF ITS KING AND HOW THE KINGDOM CAME INTO EXISTENCE

When we hear in history classes about any previous kingdom, what is one of the central themes of the class? If we hear about **the Roman Empire**, can we really learn about the Roman Empire and not have to learn a lot about **the Caesars** who made the Roman Empire possible, as God allowed. God is the one who allows people to be leaders. But it's the Roman Caesars who brought it about, again, within God's will or permission. He's the one who sets kingdoms up and takes them down. **If we hear about the Roman Empire, we have to learn about the Caesars.**

If the topic is the Greek Empire, we have to understand about that brash young general named Alexander the Great who led them and made that kingdom possible, who conquered the Persians and much of the known world.

When we discuss the height of **the British Empire, among the things discussed are the lives of the kings and queens, like Elizabeth the First**, and how she and the British fleet and God's intervention with the weather defeated the Spanish armada in 1588. How she began to lead a great empire in the making. Later we read of **Queen Victoria** in the 1800's. Then we learn of the Prime Minister during World War II, **Winston Churchill**.

We must learn about a kingdom's leaders if we are to learn completely about that kingdom.

For people to say the Kingdom of God is not about the story of Jesus Christ, to me, is an absolute insult to God and His Son, as you shall see from scripture. It is an insult to the King of Kings who's going to make that kingdom be a possibility and bring it about by His life, by His death, by His sacrifice, by His resurrection and by His soon-coming return. It's wonderful news that the Living God we serve sent His only begotten Son to die for us sinners so the one true God can be our God!

No other religion on earth, to my knowledge, has such good news that their *God*, the only one true God for that matter, loves people so much that He came and gave Himself up for people, to serve people. To lead them and serve them and die for them and be resurrected for them.

We cannot possibly have the story of the Kingdom of God without the story of Jesus Christ. The story of any kingdom must include the story of its King, its princes, its leaders, and how that kingdom was able to come about - or it's an incomplete and hollow story! And again, for a story to be good news, it has to show me how even a wretch like me can be included in such a holy kingdom.

Brethren, the gospel of the Kingdom starts and ends with the wonderful good news about the King of that Kingdom being a loving, self-sacrificing King who will set up a new kind of Kingdom. If you think I'm wrong, just bear with me, because I'm going to show you some real clear scriptures that make it so clear.

Now, what is a Kingdom? The gospel of the Kingdom has to include the entire definition. It's the story about its ruler and King, of course. It's the story about its territory, its subjects, its people, its laws, its culture, its way, its social order. Besides that, it has to be the story – the central story – about its awesome King and High Priest, sacrificial king and lamb, savior and husband of a bride He wants to marry, that hopefully, God willing, includes you. And if it doesn't include you in the bride, you can at least be included in that Kingdom.

In talking about the Kingdom, remember, Jesus told us about *the way of* the Kingdom. We're supposed to seek first the Kingdom and its righteousness. That's part of the Gospel that He brought. Jesus' message wasn't just the fact that the Kingdom is coming. Very clearly Jesus thought about the Kingdom often, talked about the Kingdom often in parables, very clearly, if you look up in a red-letter Bible, where it shows you where Jesus was speaking about Himself, in the first person.

WHAT did Jesus Preach?

To those in the camp that say the Gospel is not about Jesus, but is about what Jesus preached – think carefully. The Bible summarizes His preaching as preaching “the kingdom of God”. Now open a red-letter Bible showing in red letters all the things that Jesus directly said and spoke about, and you'll see something very interesting. **Did Jesus not often talk about His mission, who He was, why He was on earth, what His mission was? Stop and think. This is so clear in the red-letter editions of the Bible.**

Jesus over and over and over again talks about Himself, especially in the book of John. He spoke of why and who and what He was. “I am,” He said. “The vine, the truth, the way, the good shepherd, the door. I am the Lamb of God. I'm the resurrection, I'm the bread from heaven.” On and on. He talked a lot about Himself. He spoke often of his coming death on the cross, and why it had to be. He spoke often about His new way, that it was different from the traditions of men. By very definition, everything Jesus said, every time He opened His mouth to preach, HAD to be part of His “gospel of the Kingdom”. Because we're told that is what He came preaching about!

Part of the Kingdom message has to include teaching about the way of the Kingdom, and how His way was different. He would say, “You've heard it said....But I tell you now, you're to love your neighbor. You're to love your enemy. You've heard it said, don't commit adultery. I say to you, don't even look upon a woman to lust after her. You've heard it said, thou shalt not murder, and I say don't even hate a man in your heart.” So he shows them a new and better and higher way as part of the good news message of God's Kingdom.

Part of the space given the gospels is also about what Jesus DID. Healing all kinds of people, sometimes even those who were not asking for healing (like the man at the pool of water). Helping the poor. Lifting up the downtrodden. Giving hope to the hopeless. Included in the gospel accounts are stories about Jesus' life and how He touched so many lives. All of that is also part of the Kingdom message, or why would we have it?

I say all this to refute those who say the gospel is not about Jesus, but only about a coming Kingdom. That simply is not supported by scripture when you see, plainly, what Jesus actually said and preached. It's summarized in the phrase, that “He came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom”, but when you see the actual words *He said*, much of what He said was in fact about Himself, His mission, His Father, His way, His purpose, His life and death, His resurrection and His promises after He would be resurrected.

So we need to understand there would be no good news without all the things Jesus did. **There'd be no gospel, no good news, without Jesus.** Am I saying therefore that the good news is *only* about the story of Jesus? No, I'm not. I'm saying the true gospel has to *include* that. Am I saying that it's just about the coming Kingdom of God? No, I'm not. I'm saying the true gospel has to *include* that. ***Without Jesus' life and passion, without His sacrifice and resurrection, there would be no Kingdom to talk about, brethren.***

A gospel message of the Kingdom that officially defines the gospel as not being about Christ misses the point – misses that point, certainly. There'd be no Kingdom without that King of that Kingdom, and the story and the telling and the retelling of that story of that awesome King, who is coming again, and coming to be our King of Kings and – are you ready – to be our husband, no less – would all be pointless and impossible without the story of Jesus!

Can you imagine? ***Can you imagine any bride-to-be that can help but talk about her man, her husband-to-be? Jesus wants a bride who has godly passion for Him.*** One who hasn't lost her first love. One who's zealous for Him. One who is awakened to Him. One who has come out of her sleep. One who's excited about Him, can't help but constantly talk about Him, and demonstrates that love for Him by living His same way as a light and a witness for all to see.

Brethren, I have a three-part series of studies on "The Mystery of Christ and His Church". Free, absolutely free. Just ask for them or download from the web (2004). It's a very inspiring story about where you and I fit in.

PAUL CLEARLY DEFINES THE GOSPEL HE PREACHED

Now let's go to what Paul said. What am I saying so far? The gospel must be the complete message of the Kingdom – its laws, its ways, its culture, and of course its King. It's an incomplete gospel without all that, and therefore would not be a true gospel if you leave any of those parts out. Paul himself explains that in at least three passages, very clearly when he says, "The gospel I preach was this..."

Now, let's go back to Galatians 1. We've already read about how he puts a double curse on those who preach a false gospel. An incomplete gospel does not convey the truth either.

Galatians 1:6

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him **who called you in the grace of Christ**, to a ***different*** gospel..." Remember "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24)?

Think real hard about what he has just said. And then he goes on to say in verses 11 and 12.

Galatians 1:11-12

"But I make known to you, brethren, that **the *gospel which was preached by me*** is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ".

So the gospel is still very much on his mind. Then he talks about being raised in Judaism...and then He talks about what He preached. Remember in verse 11 he has just mentioned "**the gospel which was preached by me**".

Galatians 1:15-17

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach HIM among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.”

He warned against anyone preaching a different gospel than He preached. Then he tells us, “here’s what I preached: I preached Jesus, among the Gentiles”.

When Paul was being called, here’s what GOD told Ananias (read the whole account in Acts 9):

Acts 9:15 “But the Lord said to him, ‘**Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name** before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.”

Ananias prays for Paul, he gets his eyesight back, and then what?

The very first time Paul preached as a new believer, in **Acts 9:19-22**, what did he preach?

Acts 9:19-22

“So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. 20 **Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues**, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “***Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem,*** and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, ***proving that this Jesus is the Christ***”.

Paul was called to preach the gospel. What did he preach from day one? It can’t be clearer, can it?

That’s what Paul said he preached. Now, if you think this is off in any way, let’s read clearly. **I already told you that Jesus Christ preached about His mission and purpose also. He often spoke about Himself. In other words, “Jesus preached Jesus as well”, if I can say it that way. You can’t read the gospel of John and come away with any other conclusion! Preaching about the way into the kingdom of God – which was through Jesus – WAS preaching the Kingdom of God!!!**

Page through the book of John sometime, and you’ll see. Sitting by the well Jesus says, “I can give you living waters”, John 6, When He made the bread multiply. “I am the bread from heaven.” And so forth. And Matthew 26, when he broke the bread, just before His death the next day, He says “I am this bread”. He says, “This is My blood, My new covenant for you. Drink of it, all of you.” He talked about the wine and how it pictured His purpose. So He talked about Himself a good deal, too. We’re told – as a summary – that He came preaching the kingdom of God. Yes, He did. And the message about who HE was, and why He was on earth, *is very much* a part of preaching the kingdom of God.

Now, turn to 1 Corinthians 15. This is so important. If you think I’m off in any way, **let’s read how Paul now clearly defines as the content of his gospel**. Any of you who still believe the true gospel cannot and does not in any way include the story and message about Christ, please be willing to prayerfully read this passage. *Brethren, as we learn truth, we have to accept that truth* – or we will lose what God is showing us.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 IN THESE VERSES Paul defines very clearly what HE calls the gospel:

1 Cor. 15:1-2

“Moreover, brethren, ***I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you***, which also you received and in which you stand, **2 by which also you are saved**, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain”.

So there's something in the gospel message about salvation. That's a clue, isn't it? If we have half a brain cell working even part time, we'll see that the gospel includes something about salvation! Let's keep reading. ***Paul is now going to clearly DEFINE what his true gospel was all about:***

1 Corinthians 15:3-6

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.”

THERE YOU HAVE IT! Verse 1 – Let me tell you the gospel I preached.

v. 2- the gospel by which you are saved

v.3-4 – and what I preached is that Christ died for our sins.. was buried... and rose again

How could Paul more clearly define what he preached? He goes on to talk about the Kingdom of God (like in verse 50) as well! The true and complete gospel is ALL of it.

I recently read a statement from one anonymous writer who said something like “you can't find one single sentence that says the gospel is about Christ dying for our sins and being crucified.” I thought: this man isn't reading his Bible. He can't be! For 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 makes it very clear that the gospel definitely DOES include the story of Christ being crucified and resurrected.

Now remember and pay close attention here, he's clearly defining what the gospel is. Here's the same man who said that if anyone preaches a different gospel than he preached, that preacher was going to be doubly accursed. If you want the gospel defined, it's right here. Paul continues with details about the resurrection of Jesus, and even spends the entire chapter on the resurrection in general.

Then he concludes the passage of defining the gospel with this, in verse 11:

1 Corinthians 15:11 ***“Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”***

Now, I can't think of a clearer definition from Paul. You can ask “what did Jesus preach?” He preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. But how do you define the gospel of the Kingdom of God? The **Kingdom of God is not going to be possible unless we have a way into it, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50)**. And the way into it is through the veil of the torn body of Jesus Christ. When they ripped His side wide open there on the cross, with the spear up His side, as it says in the book of John, the veil of the temple, in that very instant, was torn in half, and there was access given to the very throne of God, as Paul explains in the book of Hebrews.

The gospel of the Kingdom starts and ends with the wonderful good news about this awesome King, who's so loving and self-sacrificing that He's finding a way for us to get into that Kingdom, to pass over our sins by His death for us. This is a HUGE part of the story; this is the good news of CHRIST, the GOSPEL OF CHRIST, about the One who makes the kingdom possible.

Now, how is that good news, GOSPEL, for you and me? Again, part of the gospel is the very good news that God's calling people, including YOU and me, right now to be a *part* of His Kingdom. It's going to ultimately be set up right here on earth. The first ones being called, the church, are being prepared to be the very wife of Christ. Even to the Laodceans at the end of Revelation 3, Jesus says, "if you will just open the door I'll come and have dinner with you, and I want to have you sit with Me on My throne". There's some intimacy being expressed here.

The good news for YOU is that you are among those He's calling to sit with Him on His throne and to co-inherit the universe with Him. *Let's be FRANK: the gospel of the kingdom is not GOOD NEWS to YOU unless You can be told how **you** can be in that Kingdom because of what that awesome King did – dying for you, so you don't have to die for your own sins. God passed over your sins when he accepted Jesus as the Passover lamb, when He died at 3PM, at the end of the 14th of the month of Abib. That same Jesus was resurrected, showing that we too will be resurrected, and we too will be in that wonderful Kingdom.*

Let's look at one more scripture passage clearly defining what is the true gospel of the Kingdom of God and of its Shepherd-King-Savior who makes it good news for us, so we can be part of it! Turn now to Romans 1.

Romans 1:1-6

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, ***separated to the gospel of God*** 2 ***which He promised before through His prophets*** in the Holy Scriptures, 3 ***concerning His Son Jesus*** Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 5 **Through Him we have received grace** and apostleship ***for obedience to the faith*** among all nations ***for His name***, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;"

Okay, so here again he's telling the story of Jesus Christ, and he's calling that story the gospel of God. Can it be any clearer? It's pretty clear now, isn't it? **In fact, if we go into the book of Acts and analyze other's preaching, starting with Peter on Pentecost in Acts 2, we'll see that they preached the very same message.** What was Peter's message?

WHAT DID PETER, PAUL, PHILIP AND OTHERS PREACH?

We could go right through the book of Acts to see what they actually preached. They came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, that's what they – and we - were told to preach. But when you look at the *words* they said, they didn't just say, "there's a coming Kingdom, get ready for it". That's not all they said. What did Peter talk about? Let's open to Acts 2:20, cutting into the middle of his sermon there on the day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:20-24

"The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass that **whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.**"

22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: **Jesus of Nazareth**, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know -- 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you

have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

He goes on to talk about Jesus' resurrection in verses 31 and 32, and how He's exalted to the right hand of God. You tell me: **what's he talking about? About the risen Messiah!**

He's preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God, brethren, by talking about that awesome King, husband, priest, Lord of Lords, that everlasting Father, King and Priest, Prince of Peace, the Rod, the Branch, all of these things. He's talking about JESUS. And Peter WAS preaching the gospel of the kingdom in this sermon. It indeed is very good news.

Acts 2:34-35

34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

Who's he talking about? He's saying, "I'm talking about the same Jesus you crucified, who is now Lord and Christ." He summarizes in verses 36-39.

Acts 2:36-39 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has **made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.**"

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

So what did Peter preach, as he preached concerning the kingdom of God? It's pretty clear, isn't it?

Now, in Acts 4, I think Peter and John are being told to shut up, don't be talking about this Name any more, in verse 7...

Acts 4:7-12

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, **that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead,** by Him this man stands here before you whole.

11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

They're preaching the Kingdom of God by talking about the salvation that's available through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and how He came to be that Prince of Peace, and the King of Kings.

Acts 5:29-32

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 **The God of our fathers raised up Jesus** whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and

forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Remember, they were told in Matthew 28 to go to all the nations, baptizing, teaching, and preaching people everywhere to "observe all things I have commanded you". And so they have to be told, as they're doing here in Acts 5, that we must obey God, and if we obey God, we'll receive the Holy Spirit. That's what Peter's doing now in Acts 5. The gospel is about being saved from Satan's grasp. It's about redemption, about having our debts paid. **The gospel is also about the exciting news of how we are being saved. It's about becoming part of His family and His Kingdom. This is good news.** It's all about that way of life, being a good way, a way that has to be observed and obeyed and feared. That way will bring us joy and happiness.

That gospel includes a message of obedience, or we're going to receive punishment if we don't obey the gospel. It doesn't change the fact that we're saved by grace, not of ourselves, not of our own righteous deeds, lest anyone should boast. But after we've been saved by grace, the proof of that new relationship is a new walk of obedience, as it so clearly says in Ephesians 2:4-10. It also talks in Acts 20 about the gospel of the grace of God.

ALL of this is part of the good news. It's not *just* about a *coming* kingdom, but how we can be part of the family of God RIGHT NOW! Ephesians 1 talks about the gospel, THE GOOD NEWS, of your *salvation*. In Romans 1:16, Paul talks about how he's not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Romans 1:16

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it [the GOSPEL of Christ] is the *power of God to salvation* for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

The gospel is power for salvation. Salvation is part of that gospel message. Here's a little bit of homework: I'd like you all to look up the word "preach" and "preached" and "preaching" in a concordance and see just how many times they "preached Christ". They didn't just preach about the Kingdom of God. They came preaching about Jesus as well. Here are a few examples:

Acts 5:42

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, *they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*"

Acts 8:5

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria **and preached Christ** to them"

Acts 8:12

"But when they believed **Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**, both men and women were baptized." There you have it!

Acts 8:35-36

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, **preached Jesus** to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

So obviously preaching about Christ is something they did quite often. I'm reading all of this because they were told to preach the gospel. **But when you read about what they preached being detailed and described, so many of these verses talk about them preaching Christ - about Christ - over and over and over. Because, the preaching about Christ must be included in the message of**

GOOD NEWS we have. *Without Jesus and what He did on the cross, there is no good news for you and me, because we would still be in our sins, and the kingdom of God would be unattainable!*

What they preached, as they obeyed the command to preach the gospel, is summarized very nicely in Acts 28:30-31

Acts 28:30-31

“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 ***preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*** with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”

Remember **the very birth of Jesus was called glad tidings, good news.** In Luke 2:9-10, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said, [remember], “*Don’t be afraid, for **I bring you good tidings of great joy, [that’s just another way of saying GOOD NEWS, GOSPEL]** which will be to all people. For there is **born to you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.***”

Isn’t that what it says? I bring you good tidings – gospel, good news - of great joy because someone’s being born today who is Christ the Lord.

Who is Christ? 2 Corinthians 11:3-4. It’s possible that they can be preaching a different Jesus, a different gospel. It says here...

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be **corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.** 4 For if he who comes **preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached,** or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, **or a different gospel which you have not accepted** -- you may well put up with it!”

I hope it’s really clear. Jesus did bring a message of repentance, a message of humility, and He did talk about parables and mercy and forgiveness, the lost sheep. He did not just talk about the coming Kingdom - - ***or perhaps, if we view His message correctly, everything He talked about was in fact a part of the Kingdom message.*** He did talk about the value of you, the value of me, when we come back and return to the Father, as a prodigal son, as a lost coin that was found, as the lost sheep that was found (Luke 15). He talked about the joy that is in heaven over one sinner that repents, all of that. ***All of that is very much a part of the gospel – because it’s part of how we become heirs with Christ of the Kingdom!***

And He preached in His gospel about being aware, and being wary of falling asleep, as the ten virgins did. He gave a parable about a great king putting on a wedding for his son, and how we need to value that calling, to be at that wedding (**Matthew 22:1-10**). The point of having a Savior is to make possible that Kingdom. So much of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is not just about Jesus’ words, but His actions. The stories. We call them the gospels, the stories of what He did. Healing the sick, confronting the Pharisees, feeding the hungry, calming the angry Sea of Galilee, being lord of the elements, sending out the seventy to preach.

Mark’s gospel focused on Jesus as the suffering servant. **Luke** has the focus on the love of Jesus Christ for all kinds of people. Luke talks in detail about Jesus’ comments of healing the Roman centurion’s servant, finding no such faith in Israel. How the marriage supper got into calling the poor, the lame, and the blind. Because this too, is good news. *Because so often when there’s a great festivity, an awesome wedding feast, a great party going on, you and I would normally not be invited*

to them. We're not part of the world's values. We're not part of the jet set. We're not part of the celebrity world.

Brethren, you're being called. To be a servant, yes. But you're also being called to be a celebrity someday – if by that we mean a well-known servant of God helping people all over the world. You're the very child of God. Among the firstfruits, with Jesus Christ the firstfruit. The very bride of Christ, snuggling up with Him on His very throne. You'll be the servant of God as well. A servant of the world, as well. And their king or queen, as well. ALL of this is part of the gospel message.

I hope it's getting so clear. Forgiveness, being preached to all the nations, that's part of the gospel message too. If you're not a physical Israelite, that's okay now. You can have the gospel preached to you too. You can be in the Kingdom too. Jesus said so. "Go to all the world. Preach to all the nations. Bring My name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem."

John's gospel emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God. And John tells us why he wrote the book and its purpose, he says at the end of the book of John. John 20:30-31.

John 20:30-31

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but *these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*"

THAT is John's good news: in Jesus we have LIFE in His name.

That's his SPS – his Specific Purpose Statement. At the end of his book, he says "I wrote all of this so you may believe – not just in a coming Kingdom, but believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." He said, "I want you to know you're alive. You have life. You're being called to be part of a great party, a great Kingdom, a great way. To be on the ground floor of something that starts out like a rock that hits the world's Babylonian systems on its feet and destroys it, and then that rock grows into a huge mountain that fills the whole earth. And you're being called to have a ground floor opportunity here."

You know how the world talks about the opportunity of a lifetime? What an overused phrase. You and I have been called to the opportunity of an eternity, because of Jesus Christ. It's possible because of Jesus Christ. That's good news. And you're going to be healed, and you'll have the power to heal others. Just like the other disciples and apostles did. You're going to have the power to go around the world and heal people, to find people who are separated from each other after the Great Tribulation. You're going to have the power to feed the hungry, to make things right. You're going to have the power, to be a part of a Kingdom in a real way. And all of that was because of what Jesus Christ did for you and me.

You know back in John 2, the very first miracle of Jesus. It was on His mind constantly. He changed the water to wine. His very first miracle was to show His purpose, to provide enough blood to cover everyone's sins. There were six jars of water there. Those jars were the kind used for purification. Six, the number of man. It was uppermost on His mind. They weren't just ordinary jars or pots, they were used for purification. And He talks about "My hour has not yet come", in John 2:4.

There's so much that He had on His mind. You know, when the rest of the world finally has their eyes opened to see what they did to the Son of God, **there's a verse in Zechariah 13:6** where the question

is asked as they see His wounds and scars, **“Who did this to you?”** When they see the holes in His hands, when they recognize Him and know Him as King of Kings, his friends and fellow Jews, and Israel and the world for that matter, will come to adore and worship Him, and say, “Who did this to you?” It says there in **Zechariah 13:6** ***“It happened in the house of My friends.”*** Read it!

Oh man, wow. I just think that hits you so hard, when you let that really sink in, what He’s saying there. *“I got these wounds in the house of My friends”*.

Jesus suffered for me and you in the house of His friends. He let Himself be despised for all of us. For me and for you, so we can be part of God’s kingdom. That’s GOOD news for me and for you.

Anyway, there’s so much more, but I’m out of time. It’s all about a coming Kingdom, yes, and it’s about a King, too. And the message MUST include the message about the way to the Kingdom. I’ve said all that. I started back in Galatians 1, where Paul pronounces a double curse on those who bring another gospel. I’ve shown you what Paul said his gospel clearly was. Let’s praise God that the full gospel is what you’ve now heard, and what we’ll preach and obey, and is what the Bible *says* the gospel is.

So what is the gospel? The gospel is about the plan of God. About the plan of God that shows you there’s a coming Kingdom, and that the coming Kingdom was made possibly by the life story, the words, and the life of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice for you and me, and His resurrection for you and me. It is about a coming Kingdom, but about a coming Kingdom that has a way, that has a King, that has laws that are to be obeyed and we are to have faith in that coming King and Kingdom, and in that way.

The GOOD NEWS in short, is God’s plan of salvation for all who will accept the Son of God and worship God our Father and our Master Jesus Christ, who is also fully God.

We’re supposed to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It’s not a namby-pamby message. It’s a very strong message. So even as we savor the gospel of peace, the gospel of grace, the gospel of our salvation, let’s also savor also what summarizes it all: the gospel of the Kingdom, and bring all these parts together, and have a complete story, not just a partial one. Let’s not be like the blind men who tried to describe the elephant. Some said it was like a snake, some said it’s like a wall, some said it’s like a trunk of a tree, because they were only able to describe part of what they could feel, and grasp in that sense. Let’s put all the story together, and realize what an awesome gospel the true gospel truly is.

Have a good day, celebrate, believe, obey, and rejoice in the complete gospel of God that was preached in the garden of Eden, and continues to be preached until Jesus comes back and reveals to His people, “Yes, these scars, these holes in My hands, happened in the house of My friends” **(Zechariah 13:6)**.

Feel free to email this to your friends. We must believe the complete and true gospel.
God bless you all - - and please pray for my understanding too. *Your brother, P. Shields*

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