

God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 4: The Gospel

As we continue exploring the story of the Bible and God's eternal plan, we want to overview the gospel's message God would use to tell people about their opportunity for salvation and what God requires from people to have that salvation. After Jesus's resurrection and prior to His ascension to Heaven, He gave some final instructions to His disciples about preaching the gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Today, salvation hinges on learning and obeying this gospel message (Romans 1:16).

1) The gospel in Old Testament prophecy.

Though not as prevalent as the Messiah, the gospel is also foretold in various ways throughout the Old Testament. Consider a few examples that point to what we can now recognize as the gospel. Genesis 12:3 prophesies about the way in which God would bless all people of the earth through Abraham's Descendant (which was accomplished through Jesus and referred to as preaching the gospel in Galatians 3:7-9). Jeremiah 31:31-34 prophesies about a new covenant that would be established and would replace the old covenant (Law of Moses) that was only temporary (Hebrews 8:7-13; Galatians 3:19-25). Joel 2:28-32 prophesies about a time of judgment for the enemies of God and a time of deliverance for those who submit to God's rule and call on Him (which was fulfilled when the gospel was preached and obeyed in Acts 2:16-41). While other passages could be considered, recognize that every prophecy made concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ was fulfilled. The old law has served its purpose, been fulfilled, been taken out of the way, and been replaced with the new covenant (which is the gospel of Jesus Christ, Colossians 2:14)!

2) The gospel is God's good news. The Greek word translated "gospel" means "good news." Certainly, there is no better news anyone can receive

than the news about the salvation from sin that has been made available to all people through Jesus Christ! Although this was previously a mystery people did not understand prior to its revelation, it has now been made known in the pages of the New Testament (Ephesians 3:3-6). This is described as a message of reconciliation, as it reveals the opportunity for reconciliation between God and all sinners (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Then, this message contains a far better law than what was available under the old covenant (which only contained shadows of what would be available through the gospel of Christ). In fact, the gospel contains the perfect law that provides freedom from sin (James 1:25; Hebrews 8:12; John 8:31-32)! Yet, while there are many messages about salvation that exist in the world today (as many different churches teach many different messages), God has only delivered one gospel and warned against accepting any other gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-31; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:15-18; 2 John 1:9-11)! The Bible simply refers to "the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). This refers to the religious beliefs, teachings, and practices God approves and has fully revealed through the pages of the New Testament (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 1:3). This message of truth provides the pattern for every aspect of how we are to live to please God today (2 Timothy 1:13; 3:16-17). Anything different from this pattern makes us guilty of sin (1 John 3:4; 2 John 1:9-11; Revelation 22:18-19)!

3) What the gospel does. The gospel is not just an encouraging message about God's love for people. Rather, it is powerfully designed to accomplish specific things. For example, the gospel calls sinners to God (John 6:44-46), teaching us who He is, what He has done for us, and why we should devote our lives to Him so we will experience the

salvation, sanctification, faith, and glory He desires (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). Second, the gospel converts/turns sinners to God (Acts 18:8) so we will live a life that is devoted to Him (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Third, the gospel saves sinners from spiritual death (Romans 1:16) so we will be forgiven of our sins and have eternal salvation in Heaven (James 1:21). Fourth, the gospel teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains people to live for Jesus (2 Timothy 3:16-17) so we can live fully pleasing to God (2 Peter 1:3).

4) What the gospel requires. The gospel is not a message that accomplishes these things regardless of what people choose. Instead, it requires some things from us. For one, its message must be meekly received in that a person empties oneself to focus on whatever is required (James 1:21; Luke 8:5-8, 11-15). Second, the gospel must be believed so one is fully convinced Jesus Christ is the Son of God and offers salvation (Romans 10:17; John 8:24). Third, the gospel must be obeyed (James 2:24; Luke 6:46; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). The gospel requires people to repent of sin (Acts 2:37-38; 17:30-31), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32-33), be immersed in water (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16), and then live faithfully for Jesus (Revelation 2:10; Romans 12:1-2).

The gospel of Jesus Christ centers around the salvation that has been made available through Jesus and the grace of God offered to all who obey the gospel through faith (Romans 1:1-6; 16:25-27). But, as we watch this plan unfold and the various components of it, what about the kingdom God has promised? We will focus on the nature of this kingdom and who are part of the kingdom in the next lesson.

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?