

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

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The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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The central message of Christianity is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The word *gospel* means “good news.” Christianity offers the best news of all time! Indeed, it offers the only solution to our most pressing crises. No educational program, political party, or psychological therapy is able to address the deepest problem of the human race. Though human wisdom has brought many temporary benefits to us, history has also revealed how bankrupt we are to address the profound guilt and pervasive corruption under which our world groans.

The gospel reveals that God has come and won the victory for us. It is good news precisely because it is not about what we have done or can do, but what God has done and will do on behalf of His people. The gospel declares divine intervention into a hopeless world.

The gospel announces the good news of the coming of Jesus Christ. Approximately two thousand years ago, during the height of the Roman Empire, God sent His Son into human history in order to save people of every nation from their sins and misery. Christ was conceived by the Spirit of God in the womb of a virgin and was born Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man.

Jesus came to bear the sins of fallen men and women and to offer His life as a sacrifice in our place. His death satisfied the demands of God’s justice against sinners and made it possible for a just God to pardon them. His resurrection three days later testified that He is the Son of God and that God accepted His death as full payment for our sin. Now, all people may be fully forgiven, reconciled to God, and receive eternal life through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Through this great work of salvation, God has revealed to us who He is.

The Character of God

To understand the gospel, we must understand something about God. God is not an impersonal force or energy all around us, but the personal

Creator and Lord of all (Genesis 1). The Bible teaches us that the only true God exists as a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19). They are three distinct persons who are distinguishable from one another, and yet they are one being, not three (John 10:30–33). They share the one divine essence with the same divine qualities. Because of these qualities, which make God uniquely Himself, the Lord requires a sacrifice for sin if sinners are to be saved. To see the need for Christ's death, therefore, we must know more about the character of this triune God.

God Is Love

The Bible teaches us that God is love (1 John 4:8) and that His love moves Him to freely and selflessly give Himself to others for their benefit or good. It is important to understand that God's love is much more than an attitude, an emotion, or something that He does. Instead, love is an attribute of God—His very being or nature. God not only loves; He *is* love. He is the essence of what love is, and all true love flows from Him as its ultimate source. Other words that are often associated with the love of God are benevolence, mercy, grace, and patience. Regardless of what we may think or even hear, the unwavering testimony of the Bible is that God is love!

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
(1 John 4:8)

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in mercy. (Psalm 103:8; see also Exodus 34:6; Psalms 86:15; 145:8)

Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. (Isaiah 30:18)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

God Is Holy

The Bible teaches us that God is holy (Isaiah 6:3). The word communicates the idea of being “separated,” “marked off,” or “placed apart.” With regard to God, it has two important meanings. First, it means that God is above all His creation and is totally distinct from every created being. Regardless of their splendor, all other beings on earth and in heaven are mere creatures. God alone is God—separate, transcendent, and incomparable. Second, the holiness of God means that He is above, or separated from, the moral corruption of His creation and from all that is profane and sinful. God cannot sin, cannot take pleasure in sin, and cannot have fellowship with sin.

And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

The whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3)

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. (Habbakuk 1:13)

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (James 1:13)

For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. (Psalm 5:4)

God Is Righteous

The word *righteous* tells us of the moral excellence of God. According to the Bible, God is an absolutely righteous being and always acts in a way that is perfectly consistent with who He is. There is nothing wrong or incorrect about God’s nature or His works. He will never be or do anything that would justify any accusation of wrongdoing against Him. His works, decrees, and judgments are absolutely perfect.

For the LORD is righteous,

He loves righteousness;

His countenance beholds the upright. (Psalm 11:7)

He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

The righteousness of God not only describes His character but also His relationship to His creation, especially to humanity. According to the Bible, God has revealed His will to all people through His creation (Romans 1:20, 32) and through their consciences (Romans 2:14–16). He has most clearly revealed Himself by His Word, the Bible (Psalm 19:7–11). He will judge every person according to the standard that has been revealed to them. There will come a day in which God will judge everyone according to the strictest standards of justice and fairness, rewarding the good that is done and punishing the evil.

But the LORD shall endure forever;
He has prepared His throne for judgment.
He shall judge the world in righteousness,
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in
uprightness. (Psalm 9:7–8)

For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14; see also
Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; Hebrews 4:13)

I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17:10;
see also Hebrews 9:27)

We must always recognize that God's judgment of man is not unwarranted or cruel, but is a consequence of His righteous character and a necessary part of His government. A God who would refuse to judge wickedness would not be loving, good, or righteous. A creation where wickedness was not restrained and judged would soon self-destruct.

Have you met this God? It is one thing to talk about God, but quite another to encounter His glory in the Bible. Where God is truly known, all mankind becomes as nothing. The least glimpse of His holiness humbles us and threatens to undo us. Even in our original, pristine condition when God first made us, we were mere images and servants, and He was almighty God. Yet we have fallen far lower because of our sin against Him.

The Character of Humanity

To grasp and appreciate the gospel, we must not only understand something about the character of God but also something about our character. What the Bible has to say about us is not flattering or pleasant, but it is accurate.

Humanity Is Morally Corrupt

Before he fell into sin, man's original state was noble, but man's present condition is desperate. The Bible teaches us that although humankind was created good (Genesis 1:26, 31), all humans have fallen into spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). We are by nature morally corrupt, inclined toward evil, and hostile toward the righteous God.

Truly, this only I have found:
That God made man upright,
But they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,
fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:19)

But we are all like an unclean thing,
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;
We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6)