

# THE GOSPEL

Before going into the practical part, we need to agree that this is one of the core points of the entire Bible: the proclamation of the good news about the Kingdom of God. According to Scripture then, what is this gospel? What is those Good News exactly?

The apostle Paul, on his second missionary journey, made a quite long stop at the licentious and lawless city of Corinth. There the Lord told him in a vision he had to be bold and keep preaching, because He had many people in that city. After at least one and a half year, there was a thriving community of followers of Jesus there. Unfortunately, after a while problems arose there, and during Paul's long stay in Ephesus he wrote them a letter including instructions and corrections on many topics.

Among them, he addressed the topic of the correct teaching about the resurrection of the dead. There were some wrong teachings about that in Corinth, and Paul had to remind them the importance of the resurrection in the central message of the gospel. Fortunately for us, that forced him to summarize what the message of the good news is about.

*Now I'm making known to you, brothers, **the gospel that I proclaimed to you**, which you accepted, on which you have taken your stand, and by which **you are also being saved if you hold firmly to the message** I proclaimed to you—unless, of course, your faith was worthless. For I passed on to you the most important points that I received: **The Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures—and is still alive!—and he was seen by Cephas, and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Next he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and finally he was seen by me**, as though I were born abnormally late. For I am the least of the apostles and not even fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted God's church. But by God's grace I am what I am, and his grace shown to me was not wasted. Instead, I worked harder than all the others—not I, of course, but God's grace that was with me. So, whether it was I or the others, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. - 1 Corinthians 15:1-11*

What a strong and clear description! The good news is that the Messiah came, died for our sins, was buried, and resurrected on the third day—all of it according to the prophecies and signs given in the Law and the prophets. Furthermore, there were enough witnesses of it, which is of vital importance for the people back then and for us, nowadays. These witnesses were transformed into the most radical, loving people, who proclaimed in Jerusalem first, then Samaria, and to the rest of the world the news of the Kingdom, and died doing so.

So if anyone studies objectively the historical evidence of the Lord's life, death, and resurrection, the objective and non-faith-based conclusion would definitely be that Jesus existed, did what it is written in the gospels, died at the hands of the Romans, having been turned in by His own people, and resurrected the third day.

## THE PROBLEM ABOUT THE GOOD NEWS

The great confusion comes when we want to explain to unbelievers or outsiders what this good news are. Would anyone rejoice about a crucified ex-carpenter teacher in the outskirts of a middle-east village? I don't think so. So how can we share this as good news?

Let me use an example taught by Ray Comfort, from Living Waters. If you were a passenger on economy class in a crowded airplane, and the flight attendant gave you a big backpack that you were obliged to wear, you most likely would be quite upset. You would not be able to eat due to the lack of space, to sleep, or to even watch videos on the personal screen in front of you. Your journey would be badly disturbed, especially when seeing nobody else has been commanded to wear such a thing. You would find it very annoying and would surely complain, and if possible, take it off.

But what if the attendant would whisper to your ears the following message: “Sir, the pilot just told us that we have no fuel to reach our destination. We are going to crash, and there was only one parachute available. Your seat was the winner of the raffle, and you are allowed to jump and make a chance to survive.” How would this explanation change your perspective on the backpack you had to wear? Surely, you would start asking a lot of questions about how to use it, where to pull and when, and you would be more than thankful for it. The backpack was inconvenient for comfortability, but vital for survival. Luckily you would understand that survival and life are much more important than comfort.

In other words, if people are not made aware of their critical state, they will see no need in seeking a Savior, let alone submitting to His uncomfortable will: deny yourself, carry your cross each day, and follow Him.

This misunderstanding is what has caused churches and Christian organizations to sugar-coat the message. If we at first don't tell people that they are actually not good people, and that they deserve God's judgement, the news of a heavenly escape goat who has paid for our sins will make no sense to them. Then we will try to “convince them” to take an “easy step,” just a little prayer, and their life will be happy. We promise them money, health, freedom, peace. Many people make the choice based on those premises, but are soon disappointed when they see that real life does not match what they were offered.

## THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE

For example, take a look at what was preached in the times of the first church. This is only found in the book of Acts, which is basically the only narrative about church life in the New Testament. These were the people who walked with Jesus, and witnessed Him resurrected. These were the ones to whom Jesus appeared for forty days teaching them “about the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Take the time to read and analyze the context, target people group, and the focus of the message. You will notice the pattern of making people aware of their spiritual condition before Jesus was introduced. Some of these audiences were Jews, some were gentiles, and the focus varied according to that. But the focus remained the same.

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| 1) Acts 2:22-38 | 6) Acts 8:12-25   | 11) Acts 16:22-34    |
| 2) Acts 3:12-26 | 7) Acts 9:20-22   | 12) Acts 17:3, 22-31 |
| 3) Acts 4:8-12  | 8) Acts 10:34-48  | 13) Acts 26:19-23    |
| 4) Acts 5:29-32 | 9) Acts 13:16-47  |                      |
| 5) Acts 7:47-56 | 10) Acts 14:11-18 |                      |

It doesn't mean that we have to bring it on the same way, since social culture and background knowledge differs from the times of the Bible. However, it does let us see the order in which a sinner can be brought to conviction and the basis for a firm choice and commitment to follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

## THE FRUIT OF A GOOD GOSPEL PRESENTATION

If we present the gospel correctly to a person on which God had already been working, and they made a choice to follow Jesus, a powerful quality of faithfulness will sprout on their hearts:

**They will follow Jesus at the expense of their happiness, and they will not follow Jesus in order to be made happy.**