

# What Is the Real ‘Gospel Truth’?

**What is the real message concerning the gospel Jesus Christ brought and announced to mankind? There are so many Christian denominations today, all claiming that they have the real “gospel truth.” Yet, Jesus said there is only ONE gospel. So if they are all different, how can they all be right? Who has the real gospel—the GOOD NEWS—that Jesus Christ proclaimed? It’s time you knew what the gospel is REALLY all about!**

The word “gospel” is not a contemporary word. It’s derived from an old English word, *godspel*. It simply means *good news or glad tidings*. Additionally, “evangelist” is translated from the Greek word *evangelistes* and means someone who is a presenter of the gospel, or good news. Many call themselves evangelists and assert they are presenting the good news. But of the many “evangelists,” or preachers of good news, who *really* understands and presents the complete meaning of Jesus Christ’s message?

Jesus said a time would come when *many* would claim that He, Jesus, was indeed the Christ, which means the “Anointed.” “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For *many* shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ (the Anointed); and **shall deceive many**” (Matthew 24:4–5).

Notice that *many* (most) will be proclaiming Jesus is the Christ. Obviously, they will claim to represent Him as spokesmen for His good news. Therefore, it shouldn’t be surprising to see so many different denominations announcing Jesus is the Christ and profess they are His evangelists. But we’re still left with the question: Who really understands and is presenting the complete information concerning Jesus Christ’s good news? And besides, *what is this good news?*

## **Good News About What?**

The gospel Jesus commissioned His disciples to announce is a large subject. There are many aspects to this announcement of good news, or glad tidings. And furthermore, it contains multiple teachings, analogies, similes, parables, examples, instructions, and commandments for our edification.

This mission, in a very broad sense, was clarified at the conclusion of Christ’s earthly ministry: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to *observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18–20).

The teachings that Jesus was referring to can be found throughout the Old and New Testaments. He clearly instructed His followers to go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them. A follower reaches this decision as a result of repenting and believing the gospel. Baptism follows and is defined in Romans 6:3–9 as a serious decision, because it

concerns one's commitment to God, thereby resulting in entering into a covenant relationship, which includes committing to living the way Christ lived and abiding by His teachings. Therefore, it goes without saying, this is a major decision and shouldn't be approached lightly.

It's also a serious decision becomes the new way of life to which Christ calls His disciples sometimes requires sacrifices and even sufferings and hardships. Peter says, "For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, *arm yourselves likewise with the same mind*: for he that *hath suffered* in the flesh *hath ceased from sin*; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that *ye run not* with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: ... *For this cause was the gospel preached* also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, *but live according to God in the spirit*" (1 Peter 4:1–6).

It was clearly demonstrated that the minds and hearts of the listeners, if they were to become disciples, needed to be persuaded and convinced by Jesus' teachings to change. He had to connect with their minds and hearts, causing *a change of life-style* once they repented and were baptized. This initiated them into the spiritual body, the Church, commencing a lifelong process of modifying behaviors to mirror Christ's example. *This is called conversion* (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6; Romans 12:1–2).

In order to further assure the success of His disciples (students), Christ promised He would help them by empowering them with His Holy Spirit. "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But *ye shall receive power* after that the *Holy Spirit is come upon you*: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up..." (Acts 1:7–9).

The Person of Christ, how He lived, and what He taught were central to the early New Testament Church. The apostles emphasized Jesus Christ and His example and teachings as the foundation for pleasing God. They taught that He, Jesus Christ, was the door to eternal life (John 10:7–18). Using the *Old Testament*, Paul publicly taught the Jews that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ (Acts 18:28, 31). This point was central to the gospel message because of what Jesus claimed about Himself and, in the course of His ministry, proved to be true.

However, there is a very important and specific *point* concerning this segment of the good news. We find it in an announcement made by an angel of the Lord who appears in a dream unto Mary's husband Joseph. The angel's proclamation discloses an *important fact* that underscores a major objective for Jesus Christ's mission and has enormous meaning for humanity. Notice: "And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall *save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). This is an

*extremely important point* regarding the ministry of Jesus Christ and, specifically, a very essential benefit resulting from His ministry.

Keep in mind the very first announcement to the human race was the declaration that He, Jesus Christ, would be a Savior *saving humans from* (not in) *their sins*. This particular segment of Christ's ministry is understood by many today within the traditional Christian community to varying degrees. But, unfortunately, this truth is so often exploited for the purpose of *merchandising many well-meaning people* who get caught up in the emotional pomp, flair, and ceremony of the varieties of charismatic and liturgical expressions found among these false teachers and within various denominations. Notice what Peter says: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many shall follow* their pernicious [wanton] ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. *And through covetousness* shall they with feigned [fictitious] words *make merchandise of you*: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Peter 2:1–3).

However, regardless of how abused this point of truth may be by the vast majority of the traditional Christian community, we cannot dismiss the poignancy of "Christ crucified" and the incredible benefit mankind has received through our Savior's sacrificed life for us. Paul mentions, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Paul was not ashamed of this (or any) aspect of the gospel. Notice: "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to *preach the gospel* to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the *gospel of Christ*: for it is the power of God *unto salvation* to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:14–15). Paul was adamant. He believed that in Christ resided the saving power of God, salvation of the soul and eternal life for mankind, as the angel of the Lord announced before Jesus was born.

Also, when Paul visited Antioch, he stood up in the synagogue and proceeded to expound upon the history of Israel. This presentation was an excellent encapsulation of Israel's history commencing with the wanderings in the wilderness, up to and including Jesus Christ. Notice what Paul says about Christ as he begins to conclude: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins*: And by him all that believe *are justified* from all things, from which ye **could not** be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38–39).

Paul was excited, as were the other apostles, because **Christ crucified** meant that man could be saved *from his sins* and become empowered by God. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them *which are called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians. 1:23–24). This was good news!

But why? Why was this so important and why were these men so convincing? What was behind this movement emboldening them with such energetic enthusiasm and providing such confidence and faith that they were willing to give up their lives if they had to?

### **The Emboldening Witness of the Resurrection**

Many of us today fail to recognize the significance how, over approximately fifty days, *so many people literally saw* Jesus Christ **after** His resurrection from being dead. The witnessing of this event was *enormously persuasive*. This took place between the time of His resurrection and the Day of Pentecost. Paul explains this when he writes; “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you... By which also *you are saved, If ye keep in memory* what I preached unto you... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he **rose again the third day** [*not a day and a half later*] according to the scriptures: and that he *was seen* of Cephas [Peter] then of the twelve: After that he *was seen* of above [more than] five hundred brethren at once... After that, he *was seen* of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all he *was seen* of me also, as of one born out of due time (1 Corinthians 15:1–8).

**This was an astonishing event!** A person coming back from the dead, physically embodied yet unrestrained by the molecular world, and *seen by hundreds of people* over a fifty-day period! *This had never been witnessed before in the history of mankind!* It was unique among any culture or civilization. Yet the prophecies throughout the Old Testament had foretold of the event and summarized it quite clearly in Isaiah 53. So it was no secret. Even Herod knew by the word of the prophet Micah, that a King was to be born in the city of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:3–6). This event had a **tremendous life-changing effect** on all who witnessed Jesus walking around, eating, and talking after they had watched His brutal beating and crucifixion, Without question, it was hard to believe and incredibly startling. Yet it happened!

So its quite understandable how these people in that early New Testament Church were so motivated and energized, willing to literally “turn the world upside down,” as they were accused of doing. Notice how much this event was talked about and how it influenced their testimony as they traveled throughout Asia Minor, Rome, and the regions beyond Palestine.

Peter says, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom *God hath raised up having loosed the pains of death:* because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:22–24).

Peter continues, “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would *raise up Christ* to sit on his throne; He seeing this

before spake of the *resurrection of Christ*, that his soul was not left in hell [the grave], neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:29–31).

Paul proclaimed the same message. While in the city of Thessalonica, “Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them [in the synagogue], and three Sabbath days [*not* Sundays] reasoned with them out of the scripture, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and *risen again from the dead*; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:2–3).

Paul, in his defense of himself before both Festus and Agrippa, emphasized the resurrection. Notice: “Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, *Touching the resurrection of the dead* I am called in question by you this day” (Acts 24:21). “But [the Jews] had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, *whom Paul affirmed to be alive*” (Acts 25:19). “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the **first that should rise from the dead**, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23).

The importance of Jesus’ death and resurrection for each repentant sinner was paramount in the teaching of the early apostles. These men were believed **because they believed**. They spoke powerfully and with conviction **because of what they had seen!** They were empowered with a sense of determination because they were commissioned by One who had broken the bonds of death, having put on immortality, thus proving He was the prophesied Messiah. Through His resurrection to immortality, He gave the disciples real *evidence of their human potential*, a potential so incredible they were willing to sacrifice everything they had to gain what Jesus offered them (2 Corinthians 3:15–18; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1–2).

You can imagine what an experience it must have been for the disciples when the risen Lord appeared to and spoke with them, telling them what He wanted them to do. Whether you read the commission as written by Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–20; Luke 24:44–49; or the details Luke outlines in the first chapter of Acts, you must admit it was an **incredible life-changing experience**. The results speak for themselves. These men left their businesses and careers, dedicating the remaining years of their lives “fishing for the men and women” God was calling.

However, though connecting the hearts and minds of human beings to God through repentance and baptism, and converting their behaviors by the renewing of their minds through God’s Holy Spirit is an important aspect of the gospel, it is by no means the only aspect. There is *additional dimension* to the real “gospel truth.” The gospel is multifaceted. It is a broad message that contains and covers the comprehensive plan of God’s program of salvation. That program includes additional information concerning the good news of HOW God intends to ultimately solve mankind’s problems and finally institute world peace.

Unfortunately, most traditional Christians today never hear this part of the “gospel truth.” The truth of HOW the living Jesus Christ is on a countdown from heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father, and WHAT SIGNIFICANCE that has for mankind and this earth are seldom explained. Sadly, it has been *de-emphasized* and *diluted* because of *man-made traditions* and Greco-Hellenistic influences. **What is this missing dimension of the gospel?** What impact will the living Jesus Christ have on this world’s nations, peoples, and cultures?

### **The Message of the Messenger**

As we have said, most Christians today will recognize the portion of the gospel message that *pertains to the personage of Christ*. The Christian community is well aware of the circumstances surrounding the good news of how Christ died and rose again that we might have eternal life. But, focusing on the Messenger, many Christians today are unaware of the portion pertaining to **the message** the Messenger brought, as one sent from His Father, whom He declared was greater than Himself.

The writer of Hebrews alludes to this fact when he mentions, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Hebrews 3:1). This word “apostle” comes from the Greek word *apostolos* and refers to an ambassador of the gospel, messenger, or one who is sent. The writer is explaining that Jesus Christ was sent from God as an **Apostle of God**, a gospel Ambassador, and a Messenger, functioning as a High Priest. And we know part of His **function** as High Priest is to serve as an advocate for us on our behalf, taking on the role of propitiation due to His sacrifice resulting in the removal of sin and maintaining our condition of forgiveness (1 John 2:1–2; Romans 3:23–26; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21).

However, is there more to His role as a messenger and/or ambassador than what we have been traditionally led to believe? The answer to that question is an emphatic **YES!** Notice Isaiah 9:6–7: “For unto us a child [Jesus Christ] is born, unto us a son is given: *and the government shall be upon his shoulder*: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the *increase of his government* and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6–7). We must recognize there is **additional dimension** to Jesus Christ’s role and it does, indeed, *include a message that goes beyond and yet is complementary to the personage of the Messenger*. The scriptural evidence shows God’s plan of salvation and atonement includes a comprehensive SOLUTION that takes into account **both** spiritual matters and mankind’s material condition.

### **Christ, the King of a Kingdom Without End**

As mentioned previously, Matthew 1 supplies *additional details* on the events described in Luke account of the birth of Christ. For example, the text reveals the angel Gabriel is the one who visited Mary. Gabriel is depicted as materializing into our dimension of time

and space startling Mary to the point that she became somewhat alarmed and frightened. But Gabriel assures her that God viewed her with favor, and he (Gabriel) was there only to inform her that God had chosen her to conceive and bring forth a Son whose name would be Jesus. Gabriel goes on to say, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall *give unto him the throne of his father David*: And **he shall reign** over the house of Jacob [Israel] for ever; and of **his kingdom** there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32–33). Jesus Christ was born through the royal bloodline of King David and poised to inherit that throne, ultimately destined to become *the* King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16).

So as an additional part of His mission, He was sent to qualify for that position. *And it wasn't easy!* From the time He was born trouble pursued him. Do you remember how Herod, upon learning from the Magi a King was born, had all the children two years old and younger killed? Jesus' family had to flee and escape to Egypt. Then later, at the commencement of His ministry, Satan tempted Him forty days in the wilderness but failed to thwart Him in any way. Finally, at the end of His physical ministry, three and a half years later, Satan enters into Judas himself and causes the betrayal to occur leading to His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. Jesus Christ was a consistent target of ridicule, criticism, persecution, and betrayal throughout His life on earth. Yet He came through it as a victor, declaring that we should be of “good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Because of the success of His mission, He is entitled to reinstitute the government of God on this earth! Part of His mission was to announce His rightful claim as Ruler prophesied to *administer the government of God* throughout the world upon all nations and people.

Notice what Mark says about the beginning of Christ's ministry: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the *gospel of the kingdom of God*. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the *kingdom of God* is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14–15). Notice Matthew 4:23: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and *preaching the gospel of the kingdom....*”

The message of the *Kingdom of God* also played an important part of the gospel. It was especially viewed by many of His followers as very good news, but unfortunately, many misunderstood and thought He was going to initiate a revolt against the Romans, freeing the Jews of their brutal occupation. Sadly, this resulted in many following Him for the wrong reasons.

Even Peter had expectations that Jesus would make some move to bring about an immediate revolution. Many of those early disciples, if not all of them, were well aware of the fact that Jesus had been born a king, heralded by Gabriel, who had announced it to Mary personally prior to His human birth. In addition, they were well aware of the prophecies pertaining to the nation of Israel and the world ruling empire the Messiah would govern from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2; Jeremiah 23; Micah 4). So the expectations were high, and many believed He would deliver them from the occupation and atrocities of the Roman Empire *at that time*.

Several times they thought He was going to initiate the commencement of the revolt. The triumphant entry back into Jerusalem at the final Passover was one of those times. Thousands were laying palm fronds on His path as He rode in on the colt the disciples had retrieved. The crowd was yelling, chanting, and shouting with exuberant enthusiasm, “HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!” The religious leaders were beside themselves with rage. They asked Jesus to stop the people from chanting. Jesus, somewhat amused, responded, “Even the rocks would cry out if these should hold their peace.”

In another episode, later in the day, Peter and the others were more encouraged as Jesus entered the temple again. Once more, as He had done a year or so earlier, He entered the temple and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, saying, “Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mark 11:17). He was passionate during this event. No one challenged Him as He stormed through the temple’s outer court causing mayhem and confusion among those conducting business. Many thought this was it. The revolution has begun. But it was short lived and disappointing to some.

Many of His followers expected Him to be something He was not on this visitation. Without a doubt, He was born to rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, *but first* He was to blaze the path for humankind’s redemption. That required Him to become the “Suffering Servant” **FIRST**. Read Isaiah 53. Here the prophet explains the coming Messiah and why he must come *servicing, first* in the role of the sacrificial Lamb of God, and *second* as a qualified King of Kings.

Notice what the writer of Hebrews says about this first phase of Christ’s mission: “But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him [man] with glory and honour, and didst set him [man] over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see *not yet* all things put under him [man]. *But we see Jesus* who was made a little lower than the angels [He was human] for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honour;** that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man [**FIRST**]. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifyeth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Hebrews 2:6–13).

Unfortunately, many of those first-century disciples didn’t understand this. The result of this disappointment was epitomized at the end of Christ’s physical life when, standing before Pilate, He was traded off for Barabbas who was a violent revolutionary and thief. Pilate said to the Jews while Christ was before him, “But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of



the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man [Jesus], but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber” (John 18:39–40).

Yes, many forsook Him only to return when finding out later, by many *miraculous appearances*, that He was in fact alive and, as He said, would raise the temple [His body] three days later (John 2:18–22). **THE RESURRECTION, the greatest miracle in human history, had occurred!** Jesus Christ arose *bodily* from the dead but was no longer restricted, as bodies normally are, by the laws of physics. Through His post-resurrection appearances, Jesus revealed the nature of immortality and the means by which it is obtained.

*This resurrection was unique* and extremely different from what those early followers had witnessed when the widow’s son at Nain or Jarius’ daughter was raised from the dead. They were brought back, but remained as physical flesh-and-blood human beings living out the rest of their *natural* lives as such. But the resurrected Jesus Christ was SOMETHING DIFFERENT! He was immortal; His body had been transformed. The risen Christ was able to go through doors without opening them. He could travel at the speed of thought and make Himself visible and invisible at will! As a matter of fact, the apostle John says this about what Jesus showed them. “This is the disciple which testified of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also *many other things which Jesus did* [as a mortal and immortal], the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen” (John 21:24–25).

### **Christ the Immortal King of Kings**

Now, back to the segment concerning the “gospel of the kingdom.” In the book of Daniel, we are told futuristic events that were revealed to this prophet that substantiate **the message** Christ brought concerning this *global government*. These prophecies explain the magnitude and scope of how consuming His rule will be. It is the ultimate solution to all of man’s problems. Whether political, environmental, cultural, racial, or religious Christ is destined to return and reinstitute the government of God, *establishing a global theocracy!*

Notice how Daniel interprets king Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. This king of Babylon was told that there would be four world kingdoms following his (Daniel 2:36–43). However, the God of heaven would set up His kingdom in the days of the fourth empire. “And in the days of these kings [the fourth kingdom] shall the *God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed:* and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain *without hands*, [not from man, but from God] and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and *the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure*” (Daniel 2:44–45).

Some years later, after King Nebuchadnezzar died, Daniel had a dream. This time animals were used for the imagery instead of materials. Again we see a similar description of kingdoms used but this time described as animals. We are told that it's a seven-headed, ten-homed beast that will eventually rule the *whole earth* (Daniel 7:23). However, in the days of this fourth kingdom, which is parallel to the fourth kingdom described in Daniel 2, the God of heaven will set up His kingdom.

Notice: "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever...And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Daniel 7:17–18, 27).

And finally, we are told in Revelation 13 that this seven-headed, ten-homed beast *speaks great blasphemies against God* and will emerge onto the geopolitical scene to the wonderment of the whole world (Revelation 13:3). Nobody will challenge it because of its perceived international power and strength (Revelation 13:4). It shall make war with the saints and overcome them for a time. This is the prophesied martyrdom and is described in Revelation 6:9–11 as the "fifth seal." It is during the time of this empire's domination that Jesus Christ will return and save mankind from itself. This message that He brought, **the message of His return** and the **setting up of God's government on this earth**, was the announcement of His ultimate destiny. It also plays an enormous role in WHAT He was commissioned for on His first visitation, which required taking on human flesh—described in Hebrews 2:16—as the seed of Abraham.

His teachings were filled with references of this kingdom that would ultimately fill the earth and become the utopian environment that would finally provide mankind world peace. He was constantly making mention of it throughout His ministry.

Notice how He explains the Kingdom of God in Matthew 13:31–32: "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." He also said, in Matthew 13:33, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened." And then in Matthew 13:44, He says, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." In all these instances He portrays the kingdom of God as a progressive, all-encompassing, all-consuming empire that is without end, as also described in Isaiah 9:7.

However, though His kingdom will ultimately become a worldwide kingdom, the parable of the wheat and tares describes the current condition of **HOW** He is *conducting the method of determining* **WHO** will be in it. His disciples said, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the

good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:36–43).

The point of this parable is, the righteous grow up with the unrighteous. Christ explains, “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30).

God’s kingdom and its establishment on earth was a major portion of Christ’s teaching throughout His ministry. *It was the goal* He discussed and presented time after time, hoping His followers would *catch the vision* and want to aspire for entry into it. Jesus Christ is foundational to eternal life, but without a reason and/or purpose for aspiring to eternal life, it becomes pointless. The message of the Kingdom, His global empire, *is the reason and gives purpose for wanting to please and serve God and achieve the resurrection.*

To have the opportunity to help our Lord reinstitute His world-ruling government on earth, serving to help mankind enjoy world peace and prepare the world for ultimate salvation, is a joyous reason for desiring to have eternal life. The thought of living and working with God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity is *astounding*, to say the least; yet, it is the ultimate destiny of man—the very purpose for which God put man on this planet.

Notice what David says: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visitest him? For thou hast made him [mankind] a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him [mankind] with glory and honour. Thou madest him [mankind] to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his [mankind’s] feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:4–9).

Did you notice it? God says He has put all things under man’s dominion. Many of us miss this magnificent truth that has been overlooked for so many years throughout the traditional Christian community. It has been hidden under a plethora of Babylonian and Hellenistic teachings and traditions that have clouded this wonderful truth of God’s ultimate promise for us to be co-heirs with Christ, positioned to inherit all that He has been given. Paul says, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the *Spirit of adoption*, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then **HEIRS: HEIRS of God, and JOINT-HEIRS with Christ;** if so be that we suffer with

him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:15–17). In Galatians 4:7, Paul says, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, *but a son*: and if a son, then an **HEIR of God** through Christ.” But what does this mean, **HEIR OF GOD**? Is there a deeper and richer meaning behind this statement that has been overlooked and de-emphasized due to traditional teachings concerning heaven as the reward of the saved? Has the concept of heaven clouded or distorted and/or misdirected our understanding of what God really has in reserve for us upon our resurrection and entry into this everlasting kingdom, ruled by Jesus Christ on this earth?

### **Co-Heirs of Immortality with Jesus Christ**

Over the course of Jesus’ three and a half year ministry many looked upon Him as somewhat of an enigma. Many believed *on Him*, but not *in Him*. His claims of deity were often considered blasphemous and offensive to the Jews and their religious leaders (John 10:31–42). However, for some, these alleged preposterous claims were quite curious. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was one of these respectfully curious observers.

In John 3:1–21 is an exchange of dialogue between Jesus and this religious leader who, in the dark of night, clandestinely had a meeting. The two of them went back and forth *in friendly discussion* about details concerning “life after death” issues. Apparently, Nicodemus respected Jesus enough that he verbally admits he accepted Him as a man of God (John 3:2).

The conversation proceeds with Jesus challenging Nicodemus with the statement that he must be “born of God” if he indeed expects to enter into God’s Kingdom. They go back and forth, with Jesus explaining that what is *born of flesh is flesh* and what is *born of spirit is spirit*. And unless you are *born of the spirit*, Jesus declares, you **cannot enter** into God’s Kingdom. Nicodemus must have expressed some bewilderment over Jesus’ emphatic insistence about needing to be born again, because He (Jesus) mentions in the course of the dialogue not to be surprised. Jesus says, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Remember, Nicodemus knows the context and literal meaning of the Greek word *gennaō* that Jesus is using. We know this because in the beginning of the conversation Nicodemus expressed some confusion in his question, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (John 3:4).

So it’s quite clear Nicodemus knows Jesus is talking literally. He (Jesus) is talking about the literal birthing, the physical process, *not a religious experience* dealing with repentance toward God. So it’s understandable that Nicodemus would become incredulous and blurt out, “How CAN THESE THINGS BE?” (John 3:9). Jesus chides him a little, but then goes on to tell him, “**And no man hath ascended up to heaven**, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

What Jesus is attempting to explain is that unless you are changed into **immortal material**, which He called “spirit,” you cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That’s real plain and simple. He further described this “change” as being literally *gennaō*, which in

the Greek language *means* to be **literally, metabolically** born again, or from above, or from God. This was astounding to this Jewish religious leader! He could hardly believe his ears—that one must be **literally born all over again**, but this time of something other than flesh, something Jesus called “spirit.” It’s no wonder Nicodemus was so startled upon realizing this concept and, as mentioned before, excitedly blurts out, “How can these things be?” And regrettably, for most of us today, to think the “real gospel” is about a message that defines the ultimate conversion as a **literal change** from flesh and blood into an immortal spirit being is, to say the least, incredibly difficult to believe. Yet, that is exactly what Jesus described to Nicodemus that evening. Unfortunately, the Hellenistic teachings that have encroached upon the Christian faith over the centuries, promising heaven for the saved and hell for the damned and viewing man as an immortal soul temporarily trapped in a material body, have served only to cloud and hide this amazing “*gospel truth*.”

Notice what the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:44: “There is a natural body [flesh and blood], and there is a SPIRITUAL BODY.” He goes on to add, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God [that’s what Jesus told Nicodemus]; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. *Behold, I shew you a mystery*; We shall not all sleep [remain dead], but we shall all be changed [converted from flesh to spirit], In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [at Jesus’ return, not upon death]: for the trump shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality [spirit life]” (1 Corinthians 15:50–53).

This is the REAL GOSPEL TRUTH! Christ is coming back to this earth as a qualified King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His rewards are with Him, and He has power over death. Upon His arrival He will call *from the grave* (not heaven) those who successfully accomplished the Christian way and have accepted Him as their personal Savior and High Priest, and will give them their just reward.

Notice: “And many of them that *sleep in the dust* of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). Jesus also said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are *in the graves* [not heaven or hell] shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28–29). *Did you notice?* The dead will be called from the dust of the earth and the graves, NOT HEAVEN. Remember, no man has ascended to heaven except the Son of Man (John 3:13), The dead are waiting for the resurrection that occurs at the last trump when Jesus returns to the earth (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17).

Those of us who have built our houses on the “Rock” (Jesus Christ) will be blessed to live eventually on into eternity (Matthew 7:22–27). However, this first resurrection, for those who qualify, will afford them to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years initially (Revelation 20:4). We will be rewarded and serve our Lord, rebuilding the social structure of the *earth*, as kings and priests (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). Notice Jesus’ parable

and how He characterizes the reward of those who successfully accomplish the Christian calling and who accepted Him as their Lord. He says, “And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money ... Then came the first, saying Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds, And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou AUTHORITY OVER TEN CITIES... And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities” (Luke 19:15–19).

This segment of the parable of pounds/talents is describing the rewards for those in the first resurrection that commences at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Paul portrays it for us when he says, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

And where will He be? Where is He landing? He is returning to the Mount of Olives, in Jerusalem. Notice what the prophet Zechariah says, “Behold the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; ...Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon *the Mount of Olives*, which is before Jerusalem on the east. .. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over **ALL THE EARTH**: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one (Zechariah 14:1–9).

As we can see, there is an enormous dimension of the REAL GOSPEL that, unfortunately, is grossly missed by many in the traditional Christian community. A great deal of the message Jesus Christ brought *has been covered up* by many of the Greco-Hellenistic/Roman teachings of philosophers like Plato, Socrates, Cato, and Aristotle. The teachings of going to heaven upon one’s death is nothing more than the extension and continued propagation of the original lie committed by Satan in the Garden of Eden when he told Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4).

Today literally tens of thousands of well-meaning traditional Christian people *think they don’t die*; because they’re taught to think they have an immortal soul that just goes on living in a different life form in a different dimensional location. They have been influenced and taught these Greco-Roman religious concepts down through the centuries, promoted by the Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical movements of the traditional Christian community, resulting in blinding so many from the much more powerful and incredible *real* gospel truths of their *real* human potential—that of being **born of God**, born into His kingdom, literally changed, converted into an *immortal spirit being*, ruling and reigning with Christ **as an immortal co-heir with Him!**

**So What Shall We Do?**

In the book of Acts, Peter presents his first sermon upon receiving empowerment from the Holy Spirit. You can read about what he spoke on in Acts 2:14–36. The result of this presentation was *many wanted to know what they should do!* Notice: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said...what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, **Repent and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37–38).

It appears that approximately three thousand people were baptized that same day (Acts 2:41). This was a tremendous beginning for this embryonic Church movement. As people responded with such belief and excitement, a momentum developed resulting in additional people joining the movement (Acts 2:47).

Remember this took place about fifty days after Jesus had risen from the dead. The coming and manifestation of the Holy Spirit was further validation of Jesus’ credibility. The fact that He was seen by hundreds of people verified His own statements and those of the prophets. The disciples along with others talked, walked, and ate with Him during this time. And now He had just been taken up into the clouds, right before their eyes, and they were told by two angels that He would come back “in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9–12). THIS WAS IMMENSELY EXCITING! Many who were there and witnessed this astonishing event were left in awe and amazement. They knew what He had shown them over the last seven weeks, and how this incredible conversion to SPIRIT LIFE was their potential too. It resulted in thousands of people wanting to do whatever it took to attain that resurrection in like fashion.

Today we understand it’s not easy to believe the real gospel truth. *It’s not a traditional message.* It never was. That’s why some characterized it as a movement that “turns the world upside down.” Peter mentions that Christians could expect; “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Peter 3:3–4). Yes, many have come and gone over the centuries. False prophets have announced exaggerated conditions and events that have never happened, all contributing to justify the **disbelief of “the many”** over the years. Even Jesus said, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For *many* shall come in my name, saying, *I am Christ; [many will preach Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, or “Anointed”]* AND SHALL DECEIVE MANY.” This is exactly what is going on in *traditional Christianity.*

Sadly, in today’s Christian community *there are many* using Jesus Christ’s name to do a great deal of wonderful works, but the unfortunate truth is that “*many*” are not pleasing God our Father or Christ our Savior. Notice: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; ... MANY will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [*lawlessness*]” (Matthew 7:20–23). This is a very sobering statement when one realizes the ramifications. To think you are pleasing God, but then find out you have “missed the mark” (*sinned*), is an extremely upsetting realization.

Therefore, it's incumbent on every Christian and individual aspiring to be a Christian that we pursue a relationship with God based on the right "Spirit and Truth." Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the *true worshippers* shall worship the Father in SPIRIT and in TRUTH: for the *Father seeketh such* to worship him" (John 4:23). God is seeking people who will PRIORITIZE TRUTH in their life. *Without it our faith will be ill conceived.* Those of us who want to please God must have a faith *based* on the right *spirit* and *truth*. Any other kind of faith will *not* be pleasing to God. A faith built on anything less than truth will lead us to the wrong spiritual approach to the faith God expects and requires to please Him (Hebrews 11:6).

So it's essential we realize that, *first*, the Christian way is a selfless approach toward living. Jesus consistently taught that it was *more blessed to give than to receive*. Better to serve than to be served. Leadership was not to be like that of the Gentiles who ruled over people. Christ taught that whoever would be the greatest among us would take on the role of a servant, ministering to those who are in need. The Christian way is best explained by Christ Himself when He said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was..." (Matthew 25:31–46). *Take some time to read and study this latter portion of Matthew 25.* Because understanding this concept is core to what Jesus Christ expects from every one of us as Christians.

In addition, it is significant we understand there were *critical doctrinal distinctions* causing Paul to appeal to the Christians of his day to "stand fast, and hold the traditions," as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:15. He said, "Remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances [traditions], AS I DELIVERED THEM TO YOU" (1 Corinthians 11:2). And remember how Jude implores us to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). All of these comments indicate a "falling away" from the original truth. This early apostasy is well recognized by many church scholars and/or church historians. It's a well-known fact of history that after the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century, the Christian church became inundated with unregenerate people and took on a profile much like the Roman Empire. It became evident that instead of the Christian church conquering Rome, Rome had, in fact, conquered the church!

So today, we should be contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, a faith that is based on the original *apostolic spirit and truth*. This is fundamental to every Christian sincerely desiring to be a TRUE WORSHIPER of the living God. Understanding this is to understand the real gospel truth. And furthermore, recognizing that which is central to God's calling is critical to the positioning of your relationship with Him and your Savior.

This was the focus of the whole first-century church; it was a message about the Messenger *and* His message. It included the knowledge about His crucifixion and consequent sacrifice for us that we might have immortal life as a *born* spirit being. And it was also *about the message* of a soon-coming world-ruling government that will have no end and commence here on earth, culminating with the Father ultimately tabernacling with mankind on this planet.



This new beginning is described by John when he wrote, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, *coming down* [to earth] *from God* out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, *the tabernacle of God is with men* [on earth], and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:1–3). John is describing God, the Father *coming to earth* to live with mankind commencing a kingdom without end. *We are not going to heaven*. It was never intended for us to go there because God the Father’s current location was always intended to be temporary. His original plan always included Him and our Savior making their abode with us here on earth, but as John describes a NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH! It will be, as has been mentioned, something other than material, or physical, as we know it. It will be of a *spiritual composition* that is eternal. Notice what Paul says: “For our citizenship [loyalties] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:20–21).

Paul goes on to remind us to keep this life in perspective because it is, by comparison to eternity, but a moment in time. Notice what he says: “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which *are seen* are TEMPORAL; but the things which *are not seen* are ETERNAL” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Along the same lines Peter, after explaining how the Lord will return and all that we see will eventually be burned up, says, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that *ye look for such things* [spiritual things], be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:13–14).

The promise to be part of this new heaven and new earth is ours! We have been promised to be co-heirs with Christ, destined to share in His inheritance. Paul assures us of this by saying, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:16–17). And that glory is the resurrection into immortal life as a literally BORN IMMORTAL SPIRIT BEING! What a tremendously *incredible human potential!*

God has provided for those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and take on His life’s teachings (doctrines, commandments) and faith as their values, a reward of immortal spirit life and entrance into His universal kingdom upon Jesus’ return to this planet. We will, for a thousand years, rule with Christ on this earth as kings and priest—but that is just the beginning. Remember what the prophet Isaiah said: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7) And Daniel says, “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom [the beast power in the end times], and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Daniel 7:18, 27). What a fantastic future we have as Christians. The REAL GOSPEL TRUTH holds a dynamic future for those willing to give their lives to God as living sacrifices.

The choice is yours!

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