

The Gospel vs. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism Comparison

In 2003, Professor Christian Smith released an in-depth research of the religious thoughts of American teenagers. He summarized it by saying that what they believed was Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The table below contests MTD with The Gospel to help us understand the contrast and consider how we proclaim and live around the gospel proclaimed by Jesus, the apostles, and the church throughout the ages so that we may consider the truth that we pass to the next generation.

Category	The Gospel	Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)
Starting Point	What God has done in history	What people should do
Center	The death and resurrection of Jesus	Human happiness and goodness
View of God	Active, covenant-keeping, redemptive	Distant, minimally involved
View of Jesus	Risen Lord, Messiah, Savior	Moral teacher / helpful example
Problem Addressed	Sin, death, exile, bondage	Low self-esteem, discomfort, unhappiness
Solution Offered	Forgiveness and freedom through Christ	Self-improvement with divine support
Role of Resurrection	Essential, climactic, validating event	Optional or symbolic
Ethics	Flow from salvation already accomplished	Central goal of religion
Response Called For	Repentance, faith, allegiance	Being nice and trying harder
Salvation	God's act before human response	Reward for good behavior
Tone	Proclamation (news)	Advice / therapy
Missional Impulse	"This has happened—listen!"	"This might help you"

Gospel Survey in the Book of Acts

This is a survey of the sermons in the book of Acts by Peter (2,3-5,10), Steven (7), and Paul (13, 17) and how they each state or imply key truths of the gospel message.

Use it to consider how we know and proclaim the Good News in our own lives.

Gospel Element	Acts 2	Acts 3-5	Acts 7	Acts 10	Acts 13	Acts 17
Fulfillment of the Age	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Death of Jesus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	implicit
Resurrection	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exaltation as Lord/Messiah	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gift of the Spirit	✓	✓	✓	✓	implicit	—
Call to Repentance & Salvation	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓