

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL

“...the gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.” —ROMANS 1:2-4

What is the actual substance of the gospel? Paul says it's regarding God's Son, Jesus Christ. The substance of the gospel is not about a doctrine, a theory, a religion or philosophy, but about the person of Jesus Christ.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul came with one message only; about a person, who He is and what He did. Christianity will never be understood until we realize it centres on the person of Jesus Christ. That's one of the things which separates Him from every other religious leader.

Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). He said, “I am the light of the world; I am the bread of life, I am the Good Shepherd.” Everything Jesus taught was about Himself, and his invitation is, “Come to me.” Don't go to my teachings, but “Come to me.” He also says, “Abide in me.” That is, you live in relationship with me, in union with me and I will be everything you need. For that to be realized Jesus has to be alive, which is why Christianity either falls or stands on the basis of His resurrection.

Over the years, the resurrection of Christ has been disputed by various theories, none of which have authentically materialized, but what has never been disputed is the empty tomb. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...” And in verse 20, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.” Scripture records, not only His disciples, but as many as 500 witnesses at one time to the resurrection of Christ.

This sets the Christian gospel apart from every other religious structure. All the founders of major religious movements such as Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, have died centuries ago. What is left behind are books they’ve written, but not with Jesus and not with the gospel. The gospel is an ongoing work of divine intervention that has restored the life of God, Himself, into human experience, accomplished solely by the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is the Living Christ, raised from the dead, who gives energy, power and substance to the gospel. He’s not simply a teacher we trust and obey, but is the very life that transforms ours, and empowers us by His indwelling Spirit to live the way God intended.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for providing a way back to You, and giving me the indwelling life of Jesus who, in wonderful ways, continues to transform my life.

TO REFLECT UPON: How would I explain the substance of the gospel to an unbeliever?