

The Gospel – To the Jew First, part 1

Over the next few lessons, we are going to learn about the Gospel from the Hebrew Scriptures. There are two main topics: First, the method God established to obtain redemption and second, the promise, identification and function of the Messiah.

Within each topic, we'll focus on various points. We will review the gospel in Genesis and then in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Next, we will review the Messianic promise of the Torah and then in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

What this study is:

1. A Review of the Gospel as from the Hebrew Scripture
2. Provides the Student With Proper Information to Witness from the Old Testament
3. Provides Proper Information to Witness to Jews and Gentiles Alike, but with the Emphasis to Jews

What this study is not:

1. This Is Not Method for Speaking to Jews
2. This is Not Going to Teach You Hebraic Terms
3. This is Not a Non-Biblical Approach

Why the Need for This Study:

1. Jews Do Not Believe the New Testament
2. The Hebrew Scripture Provides Common Ground
3. We Are to Understand the Full Council of Scripture (Not Just the New Testament)

To begin, we will use the book of Genesis to establish the need for and way of redemption. The study will cross over into Messianic verses as well, but we will focus on the plan of redemption first.

Genesis 2:15-17 – God made everything good; He gave Adam everything and only gave him one rule, “Do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; if you do, you will die.” This verse is a good place to start because it establishes God’s intent. There were no life principles to follow, only to avoid eating the fruit of one tree.

Genesis 3:1-6 – The one rule that Adam was to obey he disobeyed; he did eat of the tree. The particulars of this account are not the point; questions about the snake are not as important as the fact that both the man and woman ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The man and his offspring, the entire human race is now inherently sinful and prone to rebellion against God.

Genesis 3:14-15 – The judgment against the snake and against Satan. The first judgment against the snake is not the point of this section. In Genesis 3:15, the satanic judgment is pronounced. Notice that it says of the seed of the woman – He shall bruise you on the head and you will bruise him on the heel.

This verse is typically rejected as being against Satan or being a promise within the curse. But Hebrew scholars are in disagreement over the meaning of this verse.

Naturalistic:

The Naturalistic explanation of the prophecy is the understanding that this is a prediction of conflict between man and snakes. The snake loses its legs in judgment. The snake will experience hostility from mankind. The sight of the serpent will create loathing in man and fear of its deadly sting will call forth an instinctive desire to destroy it.... Because of its position on the ground, the serpent strikes at the heel of man; while the man deals the fatal blow by crushing its head. Therefore, the victory will rest with man.

Symbolic:

The Symbolic position states that the passage teaches about a struggle between good and evil people. The seed of the woman represents good people, the seed of the serpent, evil people.

If Torah study is neglected, there is a spiritual void created that will be exploited by Satan. If Torah study is cultivated, the student will be able to overcome Satan.

This position is nothing more than an allegorical approach to Scripture. The text speaks of individuals, not groups, and there is nothing in the text that would indicate otherwise. In Hebrew, the text is singular and cannot be denied.

Individual:

Some commentators who are Messianic in nature see this as Messianic but reject Jesus. Some make this about an individual, but not Messianic (perhaps Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc...).

They avoid the individual understanding knowing that this would indicate a promised one. There is a redemption promise due to the sin that was committed in the garden. God said it would be the seed of the woman, not the man. This is not a mankind fulfillment but God working through the seed of the woman.

The nouns are all singular; there is no implication of mankind or snakes in general. There is a seed of the one being addressed, but who is that? Is it the snake or is it the one behind the snake?

This gets into the Messianic nature of the promise, which is both vital and important. We'll get to this later, but for now, we will just observe the fact that God has promised a redemptive program and a defeat of Satan from Genesis 2-3.

The sin problem is perpetuated in Genesis 4-6 where selfishness, jealousy, and violence are accounted. Man becomes utterly evil and everyone did and thought only evil. Genesis 6:8 – But Noah, he found grace in the eyes of YWHH. This does not mean that God was gracious to Noah (although He was), rather this was Noah finding grace/favor or responded to the grace of God.

The flood account is a type of salvation. The reason that Noah was warned and used by God is by grace. The salvation is the Lord and He must provide it, not by evaluation of man, as we read every person was evil. This did not exclude Noah; Noah was just as bad. But he understood the grace of God. The theme we have so far in regard to God and his dealing with sinful man is that God provides for those who understand His promise, but to those who reject who God is and His promise, there is judgment.

Genesis 12-15 – The account of Abraham being called out of the nations.

Key passages – Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-16; 15:1-21

These passages are very important to Israel. The account of Abraham is the cornerstone for the Jew. This is their identity because this is where the promises began. Here are some major points:

Genesis 12:1-3 – God chooses Abram and gives him a promise.

1. I will make you a great nation
2. I will bless you
3. Your name will be great
4. You will be a blessing
5. You will be the cause for blessing and cursing
6. In you, all the nations will be blessed

The fact that Abraham will be a blessing to all nations indicates that from his offspring there will be someone who will be used to be a blessing to all nations. This is the promise of the seed (messiah) and the line in which it was to follow. This is a continuation of Genesis 3:15.

The action that is performed by Abraham after the promises are given is in response to the promises. Abraham does not do this to obtain the promises, but because he has already obtained them. Once again, the provision of God is not a result of works but is by grace.

This promise is reiterated with some expansion in Genesis 13:14-16. The promises in this passage are not due to any action or performance by Abram but are given solely by grace.

Genesis 15 – This is the key chapter in the account of Abraham and becomes the focal point of the Gospel in Genesis. This chapter has a few key points:

1. The method of obtaining righteousness is delineated.
2. The promise is that of seed coming from Abram's lineage.
3. Abram probably knew of the promise of Genesis 3:15 and understood that Messiah was to be through him.
4. The Covenant is sealed with Abram.
 - a. Only God passed through the carcasses – Unconditional.
 - b. No Obligations are placed upon Abram.
 - c. The Prophecy of the Egyptian Slavery and Exodus.
 - d. The Land Promise was reiterated (with dimensions).

The second-generation Jews who were reading this would have understood an important concept. God is a God of promises. There are promises that are unconditional and will not be changed. If God were to break His word, then He is not God. The Law, which was to come 430 years after this proclamation to Abraham, is not an addendum to these promises. The Law was a constitution for Israel and a means for blessing and curses while in the land, but the promises made in 3:15 and to Abraham are unconditional. The righteousness of God is an unconditional promise to the believing ones. Belief in God means believing in His revealed character. Do you believe that YHWH is a God of unconditional promises, providing His righteousness to all who believe, or do you believe that God is a god of works, providing His righteousness to all who deserve it?

The Gospel – To the Jew First, part 2

Over the next few lessons, we are going to learn about the Gospel from the Hebrew Scriptures. There are two main topics: First, the method God established to obtain redemption and second, the identification and function of the Messiah.

We will review the Gospel in the Torah and then in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Next, we will review the Messianic promise of the Torah and then in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Last lesson, we looked at the key verses in Genesis about the method of salvation. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. At this point, we are going to learn that the method of obtaining righteousness/approval/personal redemption from God is consistent in the Hebrew Scriptures.

If you read any publication of the gospel, we see that most, if not all, of the verses used are from the New Testament and rightfully so. The New Testament gives the specifics of the Gospel revealed; they're no longer in shadow. This revealing is primarily the person of Jesus Christ. As we have stated, the Messianic hope will be discussed, but for now, let us see through the Hebrew Scriptures that salvation is of the Lord and is a promise of YHWH.

God's Provision to His People as an Example of Grace:

The Exodus – The Deliverance of Israel – Exodus 14:13-14,31

The Conquest – Joshua 24:2-15;

The Provisions of David – The Apple of God's Eye – 1st Samuel 16:11-13; 17:37

God's statements of Grace in the Writings:

Psalms 14 – There are two main points: the first is that none are righteous; there are none who do good. The second is that there are those who are declared righteous and have received the goodness of the Lord. How can we rectify this? How can there be no one who is righteous yet some who are called righteous? The answer, of course, is that they did not obtain righteousness in and of themselves but from one who gave it to them. "When the Lord restores His captive people" — this is an act of God, not deserved but promised.

Psalms 40:1-4 – Enumerates the things performed by God and what was performed by the psalmist. All things are performed on behalf of David. The first verse tells of the "why." The verb for "waited patiently" is "קָיָה"

qāwāh,” which means to eagerly anticipate. In this text, the object of the eager anticipation is YHWH. This is the same idea as hope. Verse 4 also states “who has made YHWH his trust.”

Psalms 40:6, 11-13, 17 – David continues by stating very clearly that the provision of the Lord is not because of who he is, not his sacrifices, not his goodness. Even when David's heart fails, God is faithful. God is a God of promises and provision to those who have their confidence in YHWH and not in themselves.

Psalms 143:1-2 – In Your sight no man is righteous, yet there are those called righteous. How does a man obtain righteousness? It is obtained by believing God and not by self-reliance. The Lord is my Savior, not my co-savior.

Isaiah 6:3-7 – Isaiah a prophet of God, a man who sees visions and is beloved among the Jews and he states, “I am ruined, I am a man of unclean lips.” After being in the presence of God, there is only one realization. Even one that is God-focused, who is by all accounts a righteous man on the earth, in his own eyes, he is a sinful man. Is Isaiah being modest or is it apparent that he realizes who he is?

But also take note of the fact that there is a declaration. God does not tell Isaiah (through an angel) that he has not sinned or hasn't sinned that much or that his sin is less than his good works. No! The angel communicates that his sin (God acknowledges there is sin) is taken away and forgiven. David also speaks of this in Psalm 32:1-2. So, how does one obtain forgiveness, pardon, and have God's righteousness placed in his account? The answer may be obvious to us, but it may need to be pointed out to others that God provides it to the one who believes.

Isaiah 43:22-25 – A promise to national Israel. This, again, points out that God is a God of promises. Even in the presence of mighty sin, God promises (to National Israel) that He will restore them, not because they deserve it but because of His goodness and faithfulness in His promises.

So, it is with each man. None is righteous; there is no good in any man when compared to God. Therefore, in order to be righteous, we must have provision from One who is righteous.

The conclusion that we draw from these passages is that there are two needs. The first is forgiveness of sin, for the rebellion and evil that is in every thought and heart of man. The second is righteousness that can only be placed into our individual account by YHWH. The method for that is clear as well.

1. One cannot obtain forgiveness by
 - a. Trying to stop committing sin
 - b. Trying to outweigh our sins
 - c. Through sacrifice of bulls and goats
 - d. Forgiveness is given by God as a grace provision to all who believe
2. One cannot obtain the righteousness of God by
 - a. Being good – that would be our own righteousness
 - b. Avoiding sin – not doing wrong is not the same as doing right
 - c. Through any other means than God giving it to you
3. Read Isaiah 52:3-7; 53:4-6,10-11; 55:1