



Peninsula City Church

Back to the Gospel

A Fresh Look at the Gospel

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Back to the Gospel

A Fresh Look at the history of the Gospel

Introduction

Q. Was the Gospel a new idea or something much older, which Jesus introduced and preached?

During this summer season, Jacob has been walking through a series called 'Back to the Gospel.' He has looked at topics like Christ died for me, Christ died as me, and Christ lives in me. Although looking from a slightly nuanced or shade of view, we will continue in this line of thought. The intention is to complement what has been said to this point.

If we were to ask various people, what their idea of the Gospel is, we would get multiple answers. For example, it is the message, which Jesus preached, or it is the message that Christ-followers are to share. Perhaps it would be seen as good news about the coming of Jesus for sin, His love for us, the New Testament's message or even the refocusing on the existing Kingdom of God etc. We might even say that it is a combination of these and even more. But why do we need the Gospel? What happened that the Gospel even exists? Where did we get our understanding of the Gospel? The following clip may be of some help on this matter:

Gospel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HT41M013X3A> (20th January 2021).

1. Is the Gospel merely a New Testament idea?

Q. So, where do we find the first hint of the Gospel and why do we need it?

For many, the Gospel is a New Testament concept. It came into existence with Jesus Christ as He preached and lived the Kingdom of God message and lifestyle. But is this really the case? Two important questions that will be briefly answered here are,

- Where do we find the first hint of the Gospel?
- Why do we even need the Gospel?

We will first look at the where. The first suggestion of the Gospel in the Bible was way before the gospels themselves or even Jesus' preaching. It was already being declared way before Jesus' day. Since we are looking at the topic of 'Back to the Gospel' let us go way back to the Gospel. It was actually announced within the Old Testament. On this matter, It has been said that the,

"The New Testament is the Old Testament concealed. The Old Testament is the New Testament revealed.

Augustine is often cited as the source for this famous quote, defining the meaning of the Bible, but its origin is actually from the Bible itself."¹

But in all reality, we are not sure who first said it. In the end, it does not matter who said it; first, the principle remains.

We find the first indication of the Gospel in the Old Testament in Genesis. It is the first suggestion of the 'Good News' or the '*Euangelion*' as we know it today in the Bible. In Genesis chapter three, we read of the serpent's desire to take over the blessing given by the Lord to Adam and Eve to

¹ Robinson, Robert Clifton. *The Old Testament Is The New Testament Concealed, The New Testament Is The Old Testament Revealed*. Teach The Word Publishing, Inc. Kindle Edition. (p. 3).

rule over the earth as co-rulers, Gen 1:26-30. The serpent was endeavouring to be that ruler of all things on earth but would be a false ruler.

So, the serpent (or snake) as the deceiver did deceive Adam and Eve and stole their crown (so to speak). The Lord then made a prophetic announcement of 'Good News.' Namely, a true King would come in time and crush the head of this false ruler, i.e., the serpent, and its self-styled authority. The true King would then restore the rightful co-rulership to His children. This is good news. It is known as the 'Protoevangelium,' from two Greek words, *protos* meaning first and *evangelion*, meaning good news. In doing this, the true King would receive a deadly bite to His heel. That is,

¹⁴ "Then the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, more cursed are you more than all the livestock, and more than any animal of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life; ¹⁵ and I will make enemies of you (Lit. *put hatred or hostility between you*) and the woman, and of your offspring (singular, Lit. *seed*) and her Descendant (singular, Lit. *Seed* it is the masculine singular pronoun, i.e., it is a prophetic reference to the collective struggle between humanity and the serpent, but ultimately Christ); He shall bruise (or *crush, to cover*) you on the head (singular), and you shall bruise (or *crush, to cover*) Him on the heel (singular)" (Gen 3:14-15 NASB).

On the idea of the curse, it has been suggested that,

"The Hebrew word אָרַר (*arar*) is usually translated as 'curse', and so, it carries an uncertain, though certainly negative, meaning. Many uses indicate that it should be defined along the lines of 'binding,' 'preventing' or 'restricting' someone or something (compare the following where the word is used Gen 3:14; Ex 22:28; Job 3:8) This matches the content of the serpent being cursed (limited and restricted) more than any other animal life."²

The serpent would be bruised as would the King's heel. The root word is rare in the Old Testament in both the cases in Genesis 3:15 is 'shuph' (שׁוּף) and means to bruise. It is also used in Job 9:17 where it usually translated as bruise, and in Ps 139:11 where it has been translated as overwhelm or cover.

"Although the words יְשׁוּפֶךָ and תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ have different meanings since they constitute "a play upon words" by sounding similar, they are both used here."³

But in the end, it was prophesying the downfall of the serpent's stolen and false authority. One would come who is the one true King to remove the false ruler, who usurped the Lord's children's authority. The Seed would be Christ the King of kings. It has been said on the matter,

"The death of Christ, who is in a preeminent sense the seed of the woman, will mean the defeat of Satan."⁴

From a Jewish perspective, it has been said that this coming One who would crush, bruise, or overwhelm the serpent. That is, in,

"A Jewish midrash (early commentary on Genesis) has: 'Rabbi Tanchuma said in the name of Rabbi Samuel, Eve had respect to that Seed which is coming from another place. And who is this? This is the Messiah, the King.' (Midrash Bereshith Rabba 23)."⁵

² Adam: His Failure And His Hope (part 3): eTecherBiblical PowerPoint. 2020.

³ "Talmud: Rashi on Genesis 3:15." https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Genesis.3.15.1?lang=bi&with=Talmud&lang2=en (20th January 2021).

⁴ Berkoff, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmans's 1996), 294

Although many Jews are still waiting for the Messiah, the King to come to bruise the serpent's head, we know that He has already come. Here in Genesis 3:15, we see the seeds of the Gospel revealed. It is slowly unpacked throughout the rest of the Bible that, Someone is coming who will liberate humanity and give them back what was stolen from them. That is as it has been said,

“The whole of Scripture is not packed into every Scripture, but we may allowably expect every Scripture to prepare and make room for the whole. This is what happens in Genesis 3:15.”⁶

2. How did Jesus see the Gospel?

Q. What was the biblical model of the Gospel, which Jesus understood and announced?

So, we have all read Jesus' declaration of the Gospel and preached it in John chapter three. He was talking with Nicodemus regarding new life and the Kingdom of God. Within this context, Jesus used an illustration to show the Gospel in an event in Israel's life. That is,

¹⁴ “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes (or *in Him*) will have eternal life in Him” (Jn 3:14-15 NASB).

Out of all of the events, which He could have chosen to explain the Gospel to Nicodemus, he selected one from the book of Numbers chapter 21. That is,

⁶ “Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷ So the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and against you; intercede with the Lord, that He will remove the serpents from us.’ And Moses interceded for the people. ⁸ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make (Lit. *Make for yourself*) a fiery serpent, and put it on a flag pole; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, and looks at it, will live.’ ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent and put it on the flag pole; and it came about, that if a serpent bit someone, and he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived” (Num 21:4-9 NASB).

Why would Jesus have chosen this account of the bronze snake on a pole? The story continues from the garden when the snake bit Adam and Eve (so to speak) and humanity has suffered the consequences ever since, (Gen 3:1-19). However, God made the people look to the very thing that was killing them in faith, and they would live (Num 21:8-9). The snakes were the things that were killing the people, but they were to now see them in a new light. The snake on the pole would be the God-given remedy if viewed through faith. So, to Jesus the Son of man (human) (cf. Jn 3:13-14) would be lifted up in the same way, (see also Jn 8:28; 12:32 for John's recording Jesus' being lifted up). As sin and death came through the first human, faith life would come through a human without sin. It was an illustration of the Gospel used by Moses, which Jesus used and through it enlightened the people as to the way forward to liberation.

John recorded that Jesus pointed out to some of His followers, the serpent and false ruler of the world that his time for judgement had come. This ruler, by default, would be cast out or cast aside. He also indicated again how it would happen; it was by Him being lifted up in crucifixion as was the bronze snake in Numbers.

³¹ “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.’ ³³ Now He was saying this to indicate what kind of death He was going to die” (Jn 12:31-33 NASB).

⁵ “Language Studies. Difficult Sayings: The Seed, the First Messianic Prophecy. Genesis 3:15.” <https://www.studyLight.org/language-studies/difficult-sayings.html?article=456> (20th January 2021).

⁶ Motyer, Alec. *Look to the Rock*. (Leicester, England: IVP, 1996), 34

John again showed that this serpent is called the devil and satan. Here he states that he would be thrown down,

⁷ “And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸ and they did not prevail, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev 12:7-9 NASB).

John went on to explain what he had seen happen to the serpent, who is the devil. How he would be bound for one thousand years, then he would be freed for a short time and as a deceiver would deceive the nations for the last time. Then he would be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, which had been created for him to be tormented forever as Matthew recorded,

“Then He (Jesus Christ) will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels’ (Matt 25:41 NASB).

John shows the end result of the serpent,

¹ “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time... ⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison... ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (i.e., *burning sulphur*), where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20:1-3,7,10 NASB).

It is the final destination for the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan. In Revelation chapters, 21-22, John revealed the restoration of our access back into the beautiful garden to co-rule with the Lord.

Paul, in his letter to the local church in Rome, made an interesting comment. That is,

“And the God of peace will soon crush satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (Rom 16:20 NASB).

Paul ironically said that it was the God of peace who would crush satan under their feet. What does a peaceful god have to do with a violent act like this one? Well in Rom 16:7-19 Paul mentioned the work of satan that was going on amongst them. The local Roman church was to take note of these tools of satan and avoid them. For, in the end, he said God would use them to break in pieces or trample down satan’s deceptive devices amongst them. Or else as some of the Bible translations have it will bruise satan under your feet.

So, this is going back to the Gospel, way back to go forward to understand what the Gospel is and how we are to see it. Yes, Jesus was bruised (so to speak), but the serpent’s authority was crushed. Jesus Christ did not come to fight the devil. He came to proclaim that He was the King of kings and He is here to restore to His own what was rightfully theirs. It was their birthright given to them when they receive their commission as the ruling children of God. As John said in his letter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ,

“And You have made them to be a Kingdom (or Kings) and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev 5:10 NASB; cf. Ex 19:6; 1 Pet 2:5,9).

Some Concluding Thoughts

Q. Was the Gospel a new idea or something much older, which Jesus introduced and preached?

When it comes to the idea of the Gospel, we can see that it is not merely a new thing. It is a timeless truth that was part of God's plan to make us in His image to co-rule here on the earth. But we have continued not to trust Him to either do things our way or believe the lies of the serpent. We need to realise that the serpent's authority has been crushed by the death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ, the eternal King of kings. The true King has come in time and crushed the head of the false ruler, i.e., the serpent, and its self-styled authority. It was prophesied right when things went wrong in the garden. Then it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ as he came to declare that the Kingdom of God is present now.

Paul has declared that it was for liberty that we have been set free to rule and reign as His heirs and co-heirs with Christ.

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1 NASB).

The rightful authority does not and never did belong to the serpent. It was also way the Lord's as the King of kings. To give to whoever, He chose, and He chose those made in His image. He came to refocus His own on this amazing truth. We have been blessed with the gift of being co-rulers with Him. It is the basis of the Gospel of freedom in Christ.

At this point, we need to ask, “What is God saying to me right now?”

“How should I respond to what is being said?” or, “so what?”

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond.