

## THE GOSPEL

Two thousand years ago, a series of miraculous events occurred in Israel, and the Son of God came to this earth in the form of Jesus Christ. The major events of His life, from his birth to his death to his resurrection from the dead, were attested by appearances of angels, and when He began his ministry at the age of 30, he declared,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and sight for the blind, release for the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Immediately He began to preach, teach, and reverse the works of the devil. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He gave sight to the blind. Demons were cast out; the waves of the sea obeyed his command; and food was miraculously multiplied to feed everyone who needed it. But even more than that, the poor had the Gospel preached to them. No longer were they forgotten, left out, or pushed aside by the rich, educated, or powerful. He taught the people that there is a God who cares, and He is the Creator of the universe. And not only does He care, He answers prayer and desires to dwell with people whom He made to be his sons and daughters.

This is good news! Throughout history, people throughout the world have known of the existence of the spiritual world. Some knew they were separated from God, while others lost the knowledge of God completely. But all of them were subject to the rule of evil spirits, and fear and appeasement of these spirits were the regular way of life for millions. The idea that there was a way out of this situation, or that there was a spiritual being whose purpose was to help men instead of harm them, was unknown.

Now Jesus came proclaiming the way back to God! And not only proclaimed, but Satan’s kingdom was being overthrown! The Bible says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”<sup>(RSV)</sup> Sickness, death, deception, madness, witchcraft, poverty, evil and the problem of being cut off from God had reigned on earth too long. Jesus came reversing this curse.

And what were the requirements to enter this Kingdom? Only two: Repentance and Faith.

The Bible says, “Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, saying, ‘The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’”<sup>(NIV)</sup>

And why repentance? As the prophet Isaiah said,

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.  
But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.  
For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt.  
Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.  
No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity.

They rely on empty arguments and speak lies;  
They conceive trouble and give birth to evil. (*Is 59:1-4 NIV*)

This is the problem of Mankind. This is how we became separated from God and were removed from living with Him in Paradise. Our evil ways have offended Him so that He would not listen.

But in the Bible God says,

I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry,  
For then the spirit of man would grow faint before me--  
The breath of man that I have created.  
I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger,  
Yet he kept on in his willful ways.

I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;  
I will guide him and restore comfort to him,  
Creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel.  
"Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD.  
"And I will heal them." (*Is 57:16-19 NIV*)

So what should be our response to this? If sin is the problem, stop sinning. Get on the right side of God by doing what is right

As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming." (*Col 3:5-6*)

Despite what some people say and seem to think, sin is serious business. Ananias and Saphira were two disciples in the early church who lied to the apostles and God struck them dead on the spot (*Acts 5*). The Bible says the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, idolaters, and all liars will be thrown into the Lake of Fire at the end of the world. (*Rev 21:8*)

But the good news of Jesus is that there is an answer. There is an atonement. There is forgiveness. God will not be angry forever if we turn away from these sinful deeds and begin to follow Jesus Christ.

For when we start to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the most amazing thing happens. Something that no other religion on earth can offer: Our sins are forgiven. And how? By good works, prescribed rituals, or some kind of ceremony? Not at all. They are forgiven by the death of Jesus Christ the Son of God. His life was sinless, yet He was crucified by sinful men. He was the Son of God and rose from the dead three days later. And He is alive today, sitting at the right hand of God. He is no longer hindered by time or space. By the grace of God, the blood of Jesus is available to pay for the sins of everyone, everywhere who unites with Him.

And how do we unite with Jesus? Very simple: Decide that you are going to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Then make Him Lord (Master) of your life and do what He says:

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do unto others as you would have them do to you. (*Lk 6:27-31 NIV*)

"A new command I give to you: Love one another as I have loved you. No greater love has any man than this that He lay down His life for his friends. (*Jn 15:12-13*)

"So do not worry saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For all the nations of the world seek these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well." (*Mt 6:31-33*)

For Jesus told the Apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." (*Mt 28:19*)

As the Apostle Paul said, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (*Col 3:12-14*)

Start doing the works of God. Shine the light, instead of darkness. Do good, not evil. Be an instrument of peace, love, trust, and honesty in this world. Do as Jesus did and set others free. Make the world a reflection of heaven, instead of a taste of hell.

Then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.  
The Lord will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.  
Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (*Is 58:10-12 NIV*)

"This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,  
and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD. (*Is 54:17 NIV*)

So what will you do with Jesus Christ? Are you ready to make him Lord of your life? Do it today. Make your decision, and then kneel down and simply tell Him in your own words what you have decided to do. Tell him the sins you are turning away from. Ask Jesus to come into your heart and give you the power and desire to live for Him all the days of your life. Then find a pastor or another Christian and tell him of your decision to follow Jesus and ask to be baptized. This simple step will initiate your new faith in Jesus Christ and seal your relationship to Him.

This is God's will for you, and it is life and peace.