

## THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

With all of the many ways Christians express their faith through the growing multitude of social platforms today, what can get lost in all the allegories, memes, and euphemisms, is the ultimate message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it becomes a distorted mirage of truth and opinion in the minds of many seekers of the truth. Add into that the mere fact that the internet has evolved from a sharing of information to an overcrowded wind tunnel of noise, emotion, and bias. Perhaps you have heard of the gospel of Jesus Christ and some of you may be quite familiar with it. Some may already be thinking, "oh here we go with that religion stuff." Before you decide to abandon this article let me begin by pointing out that there is a HUGE difference between the many religions of man(kind) and Christianity, and just to clarify when I say man, that is implying mankind, not just males. That is, after all, what God called us in Genesis 1:27, " So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." That's it though, just males and females (I digress). The sum of all differences can be stated that Christianity is God's reaching out personally to man, whereas other religions are man's attempt to reach out to God or to be a god. Christianity also stands alone as being the only religion that God Himself provides a way for our eternal life, our salvation and our being reconciled to Him into a relationship; but not just any old run-of-the-mill relationship, like as an acquaintance that may do us a favor on occasion (if we keep on their good side and like all of their posts on Facebook), but as a child of the Most High God and as an heir to His kingdom type of relationship! (Romans 8:17)

We find all that good stuff in the Word of God, otherwise known as the Bible or the Holy Bible. While the story of the life of Jesus can be found in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and is expounded upon in the other books of the New Testament, His story actually begins in the first chapter of the Bible. In Genesis 1:26. God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness". Another example of God being referred to in the plural is in the New Testament, in John 1:1 it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word they are referring to is Jesus. Before I forget to mention it, if you were to read only one book in the whole Bible, I would recommend the book of John. It shows the very heart of God and of what He wants all of us to hear and understand. There is a reason why John 3:16 is known so widely, even to those who want nothing to do with God. It says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." So while that is the super-duper condensed version of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is more to the story. After all there is over 3000 pages in the Bible, give or take, depending how large or

small it is and how big or small the print is, etc. It maybe goes without saying I suppose but if God only wanted us to read a few pages of His Word, He would've told all the other writers to not waste their time, or something like that.

So, not only is God, THE Lord God Almighty, THE Creator of all things, THE Sovereign God over all, THE I AM, He is actually one God who is comprised of three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (I John 5:7), and all three persons are what we call the Trinity (you won't find that term in the Bible though), and are all completely God in character, power and authority. Since it is shown in the Word that God the Father already had a perfectly fine relationship with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit God did not create man because He was lonely. He created us for His pleasure (Ephesians 1:5) and also as His Word says, for His glory (Isaiah 43:7).

We also find that the Word of God (the Bible) has been God's message to humanity throughout our history. We find out that God's ultimate purpose for us in reading His Word is for us to get to know Him and to know He has made a way to reconcile our relationship to Him. First we read in Genesis 3:8 that God came down to the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day to fellowship with Adam and Eve, then later on God decided to destroy all of mankind by a flood because of their sinfulness but Noah found grace from God (Genesis 6:8) and was told to build an ark, and save himself and his family. Shortly thereafter in history, mankind began to populate the earth and they got together to build a city and a tower (Genesis 11:4) to make a name for themselves (without recognizing or honoring God) and so then God confused their language and scattered them throughout the earth.

From there we read the story of a man named Abram, who God eventually renamed Abraham, and who God called to get out of the place he was living to a land that He'd give to his descendants. So Abraham makes it eventually to the land of Canaan to where he begets Isaac, then Isaac begets Jacob, who God renames Israel. Israel begets what became the 12 tribes of Israel, or the nation of Israel. Eventually because of Israel's (the nation) sin, they became in bondage to Egypt as slaves. After 430 years in bondage, God sent Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage to the land promised to Abraham and his descendents. Later in Deuteronomy 4:35 God has Moses say to the Israelites that His delivering them from Egypt with signs and wonders was so that, "you may know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none other beside Him." Another clear example of God's desire to be known is in the book of Ezekiel. Throughout the book God says, "they shall know that I am the Lord God" or some other similar wording. It has always been God's intention for us to know Him.

So, let's go to the very beginning of God's Word in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" , and the

sun, the moon, and the stars, and all the plants and animals on earth, and birds in the sky and creatures in the waters. And God then created man in his own image, male and female and put them in the Garden of Eden. He created them to tend the garden but also for God to commune with them, to have a relationship with them, and to populate the earth. God gave them trees to eat from but said not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that they eat of it they shall surely die. The female, Eve ate the fruit of that tree and then gave it the male, Adam and he ate of it also. So as God said that in the day they eat of that tree they would surely die, they *would* eventually die a physical death, but also since sin had separated them spiritually from God, they would die a second death, a spiritual death. An eternal separation from God.

We learn a few things from that. 1) Sin entered into the world so that everyone born into the world after that is born into sin, ie, is born with a sin nature. Another way of describing it is we are all born with a propensity to sin against God, to do what is contrary to the will of God. Why? 2) The spiritual connection between us and God had been severed. Even when we are first born, our spiritual connection to God is not working. If you want to see the sin nature in action with a couple of toddlers, put them in a pen together with one toy. At first glance it seems as though God has placed within us a sense of right and wrong, at least on some level, or when we get old enough to know any better that is. Since I think all could agree that murder is wrong. But then, why can't we all agree on what murder is, especially when we're considering an unborn child? That is one reason that God had to give us His Word on what is and isn't sin. That's why He says in Psalm 139:13-14, "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well." Yet, we still all have a free will or a choice to obey Him (and His Word) or do our own thing, and since we now have a sin nature implanted in us, God's Word tells us that there is no one that is righteous, no not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; and the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23 & 6:23).

What does that all mean? God is perfect in all His ways. He is perfect love, perfect justice and perfect holiness (for there is no evil within Him). That is why, just in case anyone was wondering it, God did not create evil. He knew even before man was created what would happen if he gave man a free will. He knew we would sin or disobey Him and become spiritually disconnected from Him and the eternal outcome would be for us, spiritual death. But God had a plan. A plan to reconcile us back into relationship with Himself. A holy and acceptable plan that would not compromise His character by having sinful people in a spiritually connected relationship with Him, in His holy and righteous perfection. The Fathers' plan was to send His

Son here (remember, His Son Jesus is and was God in the flesh) to pay the penalty of death for us by death on a cross, and through the shedding of His blood we have remission (or forgiveness) of our sins and that whoever will believe in Him will be saved and have eternal life. For not only did the Son, who is called the Christ or Savior, take upon Himself all of our sins, but after the third day, He rose from the grave and conquered death, our death and so then "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him. (John 3:36)

Jesus said, "unless one is born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) He was not talking about being born again in the flesh for He said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) So what happens if one believes in Jesus and is then born again? His Word says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," (John 1:12) and that He places His Spirit in us as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (II Corinthians 1:22). When we are born again we have His Spirit in us to guide us and lead us in God's truth and we are now children of God (John 16:13).

For then we are forgiven of our sins, and walk in the newness of life. We are then led by His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14) which He has given us, Who guides us in His Word, the Bible. His Spirit then testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16) and that He (Christ) alone is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (I Corinthians 1:30), and it is, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

And now we can rejoice and give praise to God as we can trust God in His promise that "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

If you haven't accepted Christ into your life up until now, I hope and pray that today is that day. Are you ready to receive Jesus Christ into your life to allow Him to be your Lord and Savior? Romans 10:9-10 says, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Congratulations to all who have received God's free gift of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord!