

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The gospel is called the “good news” and it is particularly good news about our sin problem. In a nutshell, we can sum it up this way:

The gospel is that God himself has come to rescue and renew creation in and through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.¹

Why does creation (which includes me) need rescuing? Because of sin.

Sin is living for my fame and glory instead of God’s. Sin is living life my way, for me, instead of living life, God’s way, for God.² We have all sinned and really need the gospel—we desperately need Jesus to rescue us from the penalty and effects of sin, which the Bible teaches is ultimate and eternal separation from God. When we repent (change our mind about who is really God in our lives) and by faith we believe that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection has secured our rescue and restored us to a right relationship with God the Father, then this good news is true for us! And we have been sent out to proclaim this same gospel of restoration to the entire world.

UNDERSTANDING TWO GOSPEL PERSPECTIVES

We can read the Bible *across* the grain (thematically) and we can read it *with* the grain (as a story). Both are necessary and each one leads to a different way of seeing the gospel. It takes both perspectives to fully understand and engage the gospel.

1. Thematically

The Gospel Power. We understand the *means* of salvation.

- God** —*eternal, all powerful, creator of everything*
- Sin** —*humanity has all chosen self-rule over submission, in relationship, to God; the penalty for sin is death*
- Jesus** —*God incarnate came to die as a substitute for the penalty of humanity’s sins*
- Faith** —*by faith in what Jesus did, not by any effort of our own, we are saved from our sins*

In this case, the *good news* is that God is completely aware of our sin problem, and in and through the work of Jesus Christ, accepts us AND changes us by the power of his Spirit. We *have been* saved from the *penalty* of sin (justification), we *are being* saved from the *power* of sin (sanctification) and we *will be* saved from the *presence* of sin. This means the same power that saved us from the penalty for sin also helps us obey God now. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 1:27-29; 2:6-7)

This results in my understanding that...

I am more broken and sinful than I ever dared believe, and at the same time I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope, because of Jesus.³

2. As a Story

The Gospel Purpose. Here we come to know the *reason* for salvation.

We can look at the gospel through the lens of a story...

Creation → Fall → Redemption → Restoration

In this case, the *good news* is that God sent his Son to redeem the world from the effects of sin and create a new humanity. Eventually the whole world will be renewed to the way God originally created it. Rebellion, death, decay, injustice, and suffering will all be removed. When everything is restored, God will be seen by all for who he truly is—he will be glorified. (Ephesians 2:10,14-22; 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Revelation 21)

How does this happen? Jesus helped clarify how we accomplish the *purpose* of the gospel by giving us his mission: “Go and make disciples”. (Matthew 28:19). As the arts, industry, politics, families—all areas of culture—are being filled with Jesus’ disciples bringing about his gospel restoration, the earth is being filled with his glory! That is the point of the restoration of all things—that God would be glorified!

The gospel is not just about my individual happiness or God’s plan for my life. It is about God’s plan for the world.

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”

The people of God (the Church) then become an alternative city within a city to display, as a foretaste, what the eternal city will be like. (Jeremiah 29; Matthew 5:3-16; Luke 6:20-36; 1 Peter 2:9-12)

God, in Jesus Christ, has given us both the MESSAGE of reconciliation (*gospel power*) and the MINISTRY of reconciliation (*gospel purpose*).

Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. *For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. *And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

Good News!

When we repent of our sin and receive the new life that Jesus has offered us, we begin a journey of restoration inside and out. And not just for us—but for the entire world!

¹ Keller, Tim. “Doing Justice.” Resurgence Conference. Seattle. 2006. <http://bit.ly/keller-dj>

² Chester, Tim. (2008). *You Can Change*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press. <http://bit.ly/chester-ycc>

³ Keller, Tim. *The Centrality of the Gospel*. Retrieved 10/1/2009 from <http://bit.ly/keller-cg>