

Defining the Gospel

The *message* or “*good news*” of the person and work of Jesus Christ, God the Son, come to the earth to fulfill God’s eternal plan of salvation. The message carries within it the power to transform the sinner by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, into a child of God and grant them eternal life. It furthermore includes the proclamation of all of God’s promises to mankind in Christ, as well as His threatenings to those who continue in their sin and rejection of God’s way of salvation provided “freely” through Jesus Christ. Primarily, mankind has been separated from God by sin, is subject to His wrath, but that *mankind can be saved from God’s wrath by repentance from sins and faith* (trusting in and relying upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, receiving Him as both Savior and Lord) *in Jesus Christ*. Secondly, that this gospel message is to be preached among the nations so that mankind can be saved adhering to it. (Romans 1:16-17, 10:9-10,17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Acts 17:24-31, John 3:16-18, Galatians 3:22, 1 John 5:11-13)

This study is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather a general overview of Gospel truths. Further, one should not think that a comprehensive understanding of everything here is required for salvation.

The Gospel and its elements are clearly spelled out in the New Testament both in the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles. The passage in Acts 17:24-31 shines like the noonday sun!

Acts 17:24-31 - 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.' 29 "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." NASB

God is Self-existent, Creator, Sustainer, Omnipotent, and Holy

God is perfect and because of that fact is set apart from mankind. God is Holy and without sin, He is utterly pure and without any blemish. God is dependent on nothing, everything else is completely dependent on God for its existence. He is all-powerful, all-knowing and everywhere present. God exercises providence over the whole creation bringing to pass whatsoever He wishes. God possesses all dominion, authority and power, mankind is limited in authority and power. *Mankind owes his/her existence to God, even his/her next breath is given by the Providence of God.* God created the world for the purposes of manifesting His glory through providence, sin and redemption.

Psalms 135:5-6 - For I know that the LORD is great, And that our Lord is above all gods. 6 **Whatever the LORD pleases , He does**, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
Revelation 4:11 - 11 "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and **because of Thy will they existed, and were created.**"
Romans 11:32 - 32 For **God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.**
NASB
Galatians 3:22 - 22 But **the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given** to those who believe. NASB

Man is under His wrath because of sin

Through the sin of Adam and Eve all mankind have become sinners. The gospel declares that the punishment for sin is death (eternal separation from God). It speaks the message that God being Holy cannot tolerate sin, and is angry because of sin and will come to destroy the world and the sinners within it. ***God is at war with those who sin and reject His Son Jesus Christ.*** Those who reject Jesus Christ will be eternally separated from God, and cast in to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Romans 5:12 - 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men, because all sinned** NASB
Romans 6:23 - 23 For **the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB
Isaiah 13:9-11 - 9 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And **He will exterminate its sinners from it.** 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light. 11 Thus **I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity;** I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. NASB
2 Thessalonians 1:7-11 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 **dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** 9 **And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,** 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB
Revelation 21:8 - 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, **their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,** which is the second death." NASB

God requires perfect righteousness

Since God is Holy, those who dwell with Him must also be Holy. He cannot tolerate the presence of sin as it violates His very nature. Therefore, for anyone to come into His presence, they must come completely righteous, without blame or charge of any kind. ***You cannot stand in God's Kingdom with one single sin to your charge.*** One sin is a violation of God's nature and worthy of eternal separation from Him.

Romans 3:23 - 23 for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** NASB
Psalms 130:3 - 3 If Thou, LORD, **shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?** NASB
Matthew 5:20 - 20 "For I say to you, that **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.** NASB
Hebrews 12:14 - 14 Pursue peace with all men, and **the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.** NASB
1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - 9 Or do you not know that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** 11 And such were some of you; but you were

washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

God commands mankind to repent

The gospel calls people to repentance. Repentance is to turn away from sins and to God to obey Him. *This is the active obedience that comes from true faith in Christ. Repentance is a required element in salvation.* Without the outward evidence of repentance, the reality of faith in the heart is lacking. Repentance is the fruit of faith and the vehicle by which it is applied. It is further the product of regeneration, the divine act of God in salvation. (Matt 3:2, 3:8, Matt 4:17, Mark 1:15, 6:12, Acts 2:37-38, Luke 15:7) **God grants repentance – (Acts 5:31, 11:18, 2 Tim 2:25)**

Acts 17:30 - 30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, **God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,** NASB

Acts 20:20-21 - 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks **of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

Acts 26:20-21 - 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that **they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.** NASB

Matthew 7:21-23 - 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but **he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.** 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' NASB

God will judge the world with justice

The Lord will come again to the earth in judgment. This judgment is said to be “at the last day.” God will judge men and women based on their deeds. The bible clearly states that God will judge the world and that with justice, according to His perfect standard of righteousness, to give to every man the “recompense of his deeds.”

Acts 24:24-25 - 24 But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as **he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come,** Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you." NASB

Romans 2:16 - 16 on the day when, **according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men** through Christ Jesus. NASB

Hebrews 9:27 - 27 And inasmuch as **it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,** NASB

Revelation 20:12-13 - 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; **and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.** 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and **they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.** NASB

God has provided a sacrifice, a replacement

God has sent His Son into the world to die in the place of those who believe. According to God’s justice, someone must die for sins committed. So in order for mankind to be relieved of this penalty of death, a blameless one, one not dying for his/her own sins, must die as a replacement, a sacrifice. *Christ died in our place so that we won’t have to experience death* (eternal separation from God).

Isaiah 53:5 - But He was pierced through **for our transgressions**, He was crushed **for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him**. And by His scourging we are healed. NASB

Hebrews 10:14 - 14 For **by one offering He has perfected for all time those** who are sanctified. NASB

1 Peter 3:18 - 18 For **Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust**, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; NASB

1 Timothy 2:5-6 - 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 **who gave Himself as a ransom for all**, the testimony borne at the proper time. NASB

Hebrews 9:28 - 28 so Christ also, having been **offered once to bear the sins of many**, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. NASB

God offers salvation and eternal life freely by His grace through faith

God offers eternal life and salvation as a free gift to them that will repent of their sins and put faith (the way the bible defines it) in Jesus Christ. *Through faith in Christ mankind can be declared righteous and justified before God, not based on any merit of His own, but based on the merit of Christ.* All of the benefits of a right relationship to God are offered through Christ, including all of the promises which, God has made through Jesus, the prophets and Apostles.

Romans 3:22-24 - 22 even the **righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being **justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption** which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

Ephesians 2:8-9 - 8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. NASB

John 3:36 - 36 "He **who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life**, but the wrath of God abides on him." NASB

John 6:29 - 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.**" NASB

2 Corinthians 1:20 - 20 For as many as may be **the promises of God, in Him they are yes**; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. NASB

God JUSTIFIES those who have faith in Jesus Christ

This justification is a complete work of God whereby He declares the sinner righteous. In this work God.....

- satisfies and appeases the divine requirements of justice - **Propitiation**
- completely removes the guilt of our sins, - **Expiation**
- credits the righteousness and merit of Christ to the believer – **Imputation**
- restores relationship and rightstanding with God - **Reconciliation**

It is clear from scripture that in the death of Christ upon the cross, that God's wrath because of sin has been satisfied by Christ's payment of death. This is called **"propitiation."** Because Jesus was without sin, His was qualified to pay the debt for all sin by His death. He died as a substitute or in place of sinners, and bore the wrath of God Himself. It means that the death of Christ affected a real and fundamental change in our relationship to God by taking our place and bearing the guilt of our sins as an offering to appease the holy wrath of God.

1 John 4:10 - 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and **sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**. NASB

Jesus paid a very real price.....He literally bore the penalty for our sins! Our chastisement became His! He carried our griefs....and our sorrows! Let's look at how this was expressed by the prophet Isaiah.....chapter 53...

Isaiah 53:4-6, 11-12 - 4 Surely **our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried**; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He **was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed**. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the **LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him**. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, **My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities**. 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet **He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors**. NASB

Further, the actual guilt of sinners has been removed by Christ's payment, because He paid the full price of that guilt. This is called **"expiation."** Jesus removed our guilt having paid the full price of redemption for sins. Christ made a fundamental change in our relationship with God by expiating our guilt. Having paid the full price of our sin by His death, **our guilt was removed**. We were bought with a price, a ransom.....we were redeemed by the price of the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ. Our guilt has been canceled because the debt of it has been paid. All of this was done by God.....it is God who justifies.....and so the scripture says...

Colossians 2:13-14 - 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us** and which was hostile to us; and **He has taken it out of the way**, having nailed it to the cross. NASB

Romans 8:33-34 - 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? **It is God who justifies**. 34 **Who is he that condemns?** Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

1 Timothy 2:5-7 - 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 **who gave Himself as a ransom for all**, the testimony borne at the proper time. NASB

This is why the scripture can say, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The guilt of our sins has been removed.

Romans 8:1-2 - 8:1 There is **therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. 2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. NASB
Now having our guilt removed and God's wrath because of our sins satisfied, we also have the righteousness of Christ credited to us. This is called **"imputation."** Jesus perfect righteousness has become ours through faith in Him. We can stand in God's presence because Jesus has imputed His righteousness and holiness to us through His sacrificial death on the Cross. It is clear from scripture that Christ's perfect righteousness is now ours by faith, and why the scripture addresses believers as blameless.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 - 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption**, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

Hebrews 10:14 - 14 For by one offering **He has perfected for all time** those who are sanctified. NASB

Romans 5:19 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so **through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous**. NASB

2 Corinthians 5:21 - 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**. NASB

Colossians 1:21-22 - 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to **present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-** Therefore when we say that the sinner is *“declared righteous”* by God it is because the sinner is not actually righteous in himself but in Christ has received a *foreign righteousness which is not his own, but is from God in Christ*. Since Jesus life was one of sinless perfection, this righteousness which is received is also therefore perfect.

Philippians 3:8-10 - 9 and may be found in Him, **not having a righteousness of my own** derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the **righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith**, NASB

Romans 3:21-24 - 21 But now apart from the Law **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASB

And all of this has brought about Justification before God.

Romans 5:9- 9 Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him**. NASB

Here now is the reason why Jesus is the only way to the Father, as He states in...

John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father, but through Me**. NASB

The gospel must be preached

Because the gospel is the only means by which mankind can be reconciled to God, it must be preached. This was a clear mandate from Christ which was fulfilled by the Apostles and early church. The commandment is no less relevant and greatly needed today. Paul asks, *“How can they believe in Him whom they have not heard?” and further “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”* It is imperative if people in our generation (And every subsequent generation) are to be saved, we must take the gospel to our neighbor and also to the ends of the earth.

Mark 16:15 - 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and **preach the gospel to all creation**. NASB

Acts 1:6-8 - 6 And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**" NASB

Romans 10:12-17 - 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 **How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ**. NASB

There is a false Gospel –

Scripture clearly states that there are different gospels, different messages than the one that brings mankind to true saving faith. *If these essential truths of the gospel are compromised, the divine means by which one is saved are also therefore compromised and do not afford the promises held out in the gospel*. Paul writes to the Corinthians and

speaks of false teachers in the church as having “preached another Jesus” and “a different gospel” and in this speaks of the great need to hold fast to the true gospel.

2 Corinthians 11:4 - 4 For if one comes and **preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached**, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or **a different gospel which you have not accepted**, you bear this beautifully. NASB

Consider what is at stake in these matters:

1. If man is generally good by nature, than why does he need a Savior? What is there to be saved from? How important then is it that we get the message right? (**Romans 3:23, 6:23**)
2. If God will not judge the world with justice and condemn those who reject Christ, there is no need to receive him. If God will judge the world and condemn those who do not obey the gospel, then should we fear this judgment? What is the condemnation of God? (**John 3:18, 3:36, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10**)
3. If one can come to Christ without repentance from sins, then there is no verifiable evidence that one has truly become a child of God. Where then is assurance of salvation? (**Acts 26:20, 1 John 3:8-10**)
4. If we are taught that salvation can be obtained from good works, then we rely upon our own good deeds to be justified before God, but without the sacrifice of Christ to cover our sins, we will be damned. Who then is the “good person” whom God will accept because they are good? (**Romans 3:19-28, Galatians 2:16**).

The message of the gospel therefore, is of paramount importance, and its accuracy and purity was vehemently defended by the Apostles, and has been continually counterfeited from their day forward. Because the gospel is the means of salvation, the devil seeks to distort and pervert its accuracy as to rob it of its power. If we compromise the person and work of Jesus Christ, **OR** the means by which it is applied, we compromise our ability to lay hold of eternal life. (**John 14:6, Acts 4:12**)

Galatians 1:6-9 - 6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, **for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another**; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you **a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you**, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. NASB

This is what **separates Christianity from all other world religions**. Man cannot help himself in any way except to trust in and rely upon God, who is the Self-Existent source of life and breathe and everything else. It portrays the truths of...

- God’s divine nature – One, Self-existent, Holy, Omnipotent
- Man’s fallen nature – Depraved and wholly unable to help himself from SIN and DEATH
- God’s righteous judgment – Eternal damnation OR eternal life
- God’s gracious provision of a Savior by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone offered freely to all
- Mankind’s responsibility to repent and believe

Christians are called to contend for the faith –

Jude 3-4 - 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing **that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.** 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons **who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** NASB

Christians are called to pursue the purity of the gospel message -

2 Timothy 4:1-5 - 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 **preach the word;** be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For **the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.** NASB

Christians are called to reject the so very prevalent false gospels -

2 Peter 2:1-2 - 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as **there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies,** even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; NASB

What is it that you believe Christian and why do you believe it?