

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Jesus Christ began His work in Galilee after John preached of baptism:

ACTS 10:36-37 “**The word which God sent** to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— 37 “that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and **began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:**

That work was the foundation of the ministry of Christ and is called the Gospel:

MARK 1:14 Now after John was put in prison, **Jesus came** to Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,**

Just what is the *gospel*? The Greek word translated gospel is *evangelion*, meaning ‘good message’. An evangelist is one who preaches the ‘good message’. However, English Bibles most often use *gospel*, which is not the same thing. Back in the 14th century when the Bible was translated, they used the old English word *godspel*, the combination of *god* + *spel*. In those days, *spel* was the word for story. Today, the letter ‘d’ has been dropped so most think *gospel* is ‘good news’; however, the word literally means ‘God’s story’; i.e., it is a tale of—and from—God.

Gospel = Godspel = a story FROM God and ABOUT God.

But God’s story is more than *news* of the “Kingdom of God.” It has been around for a very long time so, in a sense, it is not ‘news’ (which implies NEW information). Notice what Paul said:

ROMANS 1:1-2 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the **gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,**

God’s story has been told for at least as long as there have been prophets. This means it goes back to the time of Adam because Enoch, who was alive at that time, was a prophet: “Now **Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied** about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.” (Jude 1: 14). But over the ages God’s story was frequently forgotten. For this reason, it has been repeated over and over again through prophets, apostles, and preachers. In that regard, it is news to those who hear it for the first time even if the story is old. Paul reflected on this in his epistle to the Romans:

ROMANS 10:14-21 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him **of whom they have not heard?** And **how shall they hear without a preacher?** 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of **those who preach the gospel** of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” 16 But **they have not all obeyed the gospel.** For Isaiah says, “LORD, **who has believed our report?**” 17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, **have they not**

**heard?** Yes indeed: **“Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.”** 19 But I say, **did Israel not know?** First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” 20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” 21 But to Israel he says: **“All day long I have stretched out My hands** To a disobedient and contrary people.”

Even though the story is old and has been repeated countless times, what exactly is God’s story?

MARK 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching **the gospel of the kingdom of God,** 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God** is at hand. Repent, and **believe in the gospel.**”

It is one about God’s Kingdom. While the story seems simple enough, Jesus said it is something one has to BELIEVE. But believe what—that God exists? Not likely:

ROMANS 1:20-23 For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,** 21 because, although **they knew God,** they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God** into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

The universe is vast and complex. Most of it has no purpose other than as irrefutable testimony of God’s existence and power. So, no matter what atheists or agnostics claim, they absolutely know about God. However, they knowingly deny Him because they are simply God-*haters*<sup>1</sup>.

But what is there about the godspel that must be *believed*? To answer that requires understanding God’s story and the purpose for it:

REVELATION 14:6-10 Then I [*John*] saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting **gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—** 7 saying with a loud voice, **“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him** who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” 8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” 9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **“If anyone worships the beast** and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 **“he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God,** which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 1:30.

The message of the first angel will be for people to turn to God and worship Him. The message of the second and third angels will be to all God-haters of their pending destruction. As hard as it might be to imagine, there are many who have the audacity and impudence to believe they can escape God's judgment:

ROMANS 2:3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those **practicing such [evil] things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?**

The other reason for preaching the godspel is:

1 PETER 4:6 For this reason **the gospel was preached** also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but **live according to God in the spirit.**

God's story is one about Him and His coming Kingdom. Those who hear and take heed will be saved whereas those who do not will be destroyed. When a warning goes out of a storm such as a hurricane, some will evacuate and some will remain. Even though everyone knows how destructive hurricanes can be some, for reasons that are baffling, they utterly refuse to listen. In other words, some will believe the warning and others will not.

MARK 16:15-16 And He [*Jesus*] said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 **He who believes** and is baptized **will be saved; but he who does not believe [unbelievers] will be condemned.**

For those who believe, God's story is more than just a simple warning or prophecy of His Kingdom. There is a depth to it that tells of the great works of God through the loving sacrifice of His own Son to bring many children into His Kingdom.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4, 11, 20, 24-28, 56-58 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you **the gospel** which I preached to you, which also you received and **in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved,** if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: **that Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, 4 and **that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures, ... 11 Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so **we preach and so you believed.** ... 20 But now **Christ is risen from the dead,** and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ... 24 **Then comes the end, when He [*Jesus*] delivers the kingdom to God the Father,** when He [*Jesus*] puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He [*Jesus*] must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 **The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.** 27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under *Him,*" *it is* evident that He [*God*] who put all things under Him [*Jesus*] is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him [*God*], then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him [*God*] who put all things under Him, **that God may be all in all.** ... 56 The **sting of death is sin,** and the strength of sin *is* the law. 57 But thanks *be* to **God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Those who refuse to believe the godspel will be destroyed; however, it is a Way out of death unto Life for those who believe it. In all regards, God's story has been—

and always will be—preached throughout the ages. Still, there are many who have not yet heard the story:

ACTS 17:22-23, 30 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 “for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, **the One whom you worship without knowing [ignorantly]**, Him I proclaim to you: ... 30 “Truly, these times of **ignorance** God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Those who heed the godspel are called *Believers*, those who refuse it are called *Unbelievers*, and those who have not yet heard it are called *Ignorant*. Eventually, however, there will only be Believers and Unbelievers.

God’s story is a simple message of the coming Kingdom of God. But it is also profoundly deep because it is the story of a Creator who has such a longing for children that He sacrificed His first Son for them. Believers of the godspel are those with *faith*. Biblically, there is no difference between *belief* and *faith*—they are the same Greek words—so Believers and the Faithful are one and the same. But it is not belief or faith that distinguishes those who hear the godspel. In fact, there are only two reasons it is preached:

MATTHEW 11:5-6 “... **the poor have the gospel preached to them.** 6 “And **blessed is he who is not offended** because of Me.”

It is preached as a hope for life as well as a warning of death. Believers humble themselves when they hear it whereas Unbelievers scoff at it in their pride:

PSALM 10:4 The wicked **in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.**

PROVERBS 16:18, 20 **Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. ... 20 He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts [believes] in the LORD, happy is he.**

The godspel is God’s story to the world about who He is and what He has purposed for mankind. It is an ancient tale that has been around since the beginning and will continue until there is nothing left of this physical age. For Unbelievers, it is a warning of a storm of destruction that they will ignore in their pride. True Believers, however, will humble themselves upon hearing it. For them, the story begins with the heartbreak of sin and death but ends when God’s agape love triumphs in a glorious victory of Life. It was written before the world began and is the greatest love story of all. And the best part? You and I are among the main characters in it!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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