

The Good News of Hope

in a

Troubled World

The last thing Jesus said to His disciples before His ascension was, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”* (Mark 16:15).

What is the gospel? The word “gospel” comes from a Greek word which means good news. In the Bible the good news refers to something that God has done for us to resolve the very serious predicament in which all of mankind finds itself, without exception.

Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned (Romans 5:12).

This is not good news, it is bad news because it tells us that the sin problem we are born with has placed us under a death sentence: spiritual death and separation from God. It means that every member of the human race is born with a flawed nature, a nature that manifests itself in personal sins.

But personal sins are not the issue here, the issue is the fact that we are actually born spiritually dead. As members of the human race we have all inherited the spiritual death received by Adam when he sinned. Therefore at the moment we were born there was a barrier between us and God.

God is perfect and therefore He cannot accept anything that is less than perfect. Consequently He cannot have anything to do with sinful mankind. The principle is found in Isaiah 59:2, *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear.* As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one* (Romans 3:10). *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23).

The good news, the gospel, is the news that God has seen man’s helpless state and has provided a solution in the form of

a free gift. It is something that is not earned or deserved but given as a gracious gift to all.

But God demonstrates his love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died [as a substitute] for us (Romans 5:8). For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believes in him is not condemned; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16-18).

Instead of us paying the price for our sinful state, Jesus Christ paid it for us. He went to the cross and was judged by God the Father for our sins. He was our substitute. *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). Who in his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).* When Christ was hanging on the cross all the sins of the human race were poured out upon Him and judged by God the Father. Sin is no longer an issue, the issue is believing in Jesus Christ, and what He has accomplished on your behalf.

But we can contribute nothing towards our salvation, we are totally helpless. We are in our natural state spiritually dead and powerless to attain acceptance with God on our own. Salvation is a free gift, courtesy of the Lord Jesus Christ. *For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9). Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us (Titus 3:5).* You cannot contribute anything that is acceptable to God. He is not interested in anything that is not as good as His own perfect righteousness. There is not a thing in the world that you can do

to impress Him.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Your good deeds are not acceptable, they are not even an issue. God is offering a gift, not something you pay for or contribute to. He offers you salvation as a gift of grace, not by works. Jesus Christ is the one who provides salvation and He is the one who has done the work to accomplish it, not you.

Faith is the operative word in salvation. Jesus Christ has died as your substitute and to be saved you must believe. You must make a choice and decide either for Him or against Him. *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him* (John 3:36). So you must make a decision, the most important one in life. Will you believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him as your saviour?

But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:12).

There is a terrible judgement waiting for those who die without believing in Jesus Christ. At the point of death the unbeliever's name is blotted out of the book of life. The eventual scene is described in Revelation 20:12-14. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to those things which were written in the books, according to their works ... and they were judged every man according to their works ... and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

God only accepts the perfect work of Jesus Christ. If you do not accept the work of salvation that Jesus Christ has provided for you then you will stand before the Judge on that terrible

day, and all you will have to stand on will be your own good works. And remember, your good works fall short of the mark. They do not measure up to God's perfect righteousness, they do not compare with the perfect work of Jesus Christ, therefore there can be only one verdict. Guilty! You will be condemned to the lake of fire forever.

But there is no need to ever be at that judgement. The debt has been paid, salvation has been provided. Why not accept what Christ has done for you as a free gift? Believing in Jesus Christ means that you will be able to say with all believers: *There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1). There is only one way of salvation, and that is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said: *I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved* (John 10:9).

The Bible declares: *And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son has not life* (1 John 5:11,12). There is no other way: *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts 4:12). Jesus said: *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me* (John 14:6).

The gospel is good news. It tells us that despite our condition inherited by physical birth Jesus Christ has provided us the means for the new birth by which we can enter God's kingdom forever. But He told a religious Pharisee of His day: *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (John 3:3). The transition from spiritual death to eternal life occurs at the moment of faith in Christ.

Why not receive Him as your saviour right now? In your own words, tell God the Father that you are believing in His Son. Receive Him as your saviour and receive eternal life.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved (Acts 16:31).

Approximately twenty-seven per cent of the Bible deals with future things. Many prophetic Scriptures have already been fulfilled, such as the Old Testament passages foretelling the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, at His first coming. But there are also many things which are still to be fulfilled and many of them have to do with His second coming.

After His crucifixion and resurrection, and prior to His ascension, Jesus gave His disciples an assurance that applied not only to them but to all who in the future would trust in Him for salvation:

In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:2, 3).

Jesus came the first time to die on the cross and provide salvation for all; He comes on a future day to judge the unbelieving world. The apostle Paul wrote:

God is now declaring to all men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man [Jesus] whom He has appointed ... (Acts 17:30, 31; cf. John 5:22).

Jesus spoke of that day: *There will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall... For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not think He will (Matthew 24:21, 44).*

Those who have believed in Christ and are saved will never see the terrible judgments of those days because just before they occur He rescues them:

I will also keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth (Revelation 3:10).

This is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep [already died] in Jesus ... we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

The Bible warns, *that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking ... and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation...*

Why has God waited so long?

The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night ... (2 Peter 3:3, 4, 9, 10).

We need to be ready; tomorrow may be too late. *Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2).*

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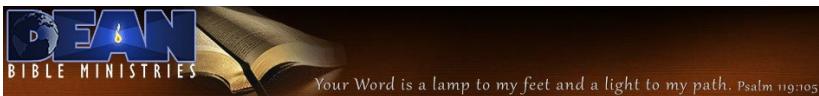
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