

The message of the Bible

The Creator God remains faithful to his covenant promise to Abraham and his descendants to redeem the world by sending his Beloved Son and then his (Jew + Gentile) Church, which is God's One New Humanity "in Christ" and filled with God's Spirit, until all is accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Summary

1. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified for the sins of the world, died and was buried.
 2. But then the God who created the world and everything in it raised this same Jesus bodily from the dead on the third day as promised and made him the King or Lord of the world. God came to reign over the world in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!
 3. This same Jesus will return as the Judge of the world to vindicate all—whoever you are—who believe in him by faith. As Jesus was raised bodily from the dead, so too all who have faith in Christ will be raised bodily from the dead to live on the renewed Earth where God will dwell with his resurrected people forever.
 4. God now summons all peoples everywhere to *repent* of their false loyalties to other powers and to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, living in the world by faith as his One New Humanity doing deeds consistent with repentance. There is now forgiveness of sins for all who repent and believe.
 5. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. So call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ now and become his life-long follower as a baptized member of his Body, which is the Church.
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This Gospel differs from some contemporary understandings of "gospel" in that its focus is on God and what he has done to redeem the world in and through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said that the Gospel is "the gospel of God" and "concerning his Son" and that it aims to bring about the obedience of the peoples of the world (Rom 1:5-6 and 15:18; cf Gen 49:10).

This Gospel is thus not a "plan of personal salvation" *per se*. Nevertheless, this Gospel addresses and requires a response from individuals everywhere: *Repent* and *believe* this Gospel.

But note well that this Gospel brings individuals into the ever-growing Church, the redeemed new community. Baptism is thus an initiation ritual.

This is the Gospel that "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Rom 1:16; 1:1-5). See this basic pattern as what the early Apostles preached: *E.g.*, Acts 2:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:22-31. See also Paul's statement of "first importance" in 1 Cor 15:3ff. Compare this to what Jesus himself tried to teach his disciples as he was heading to Jerusalem, that he will suffer, die and be raised on the third day: Mark 8:31-38; Mark 9:30-32; and Mark 10:32-34. The pattern of the required response to the Gospel is found in Acts: 2:38; 3:19f; 10:43; 17:29-31; 26:19-23. "Repent and believe," "repent and be baptized," "repent and turn to God". See too what Jesus said in Luke 24:44-49.

To what extent do you have confidence in the power of this Gospel?

How would you communicate with others this Gospel?

How can you help them respond to this Gospel and be initiated into the Kingdom of God?