

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSETutor's Name: Date: Student's Name: Ref No.: **LESSON 4 • THE GOSPEL**

Reading: Galatians 3:6-16

Good News

Everyone enjoys hearing good news. And that is just what the gospel is. The word "Gospel" means "good news" The good news of the gospel is about the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming Kingdom of God. It is good news to you and me, because it tells us how we can share in that Kingdom.

The story of the life of the Lord Jesus is written in the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are often spoken of as 'gospels'.

In the beginning

the gospel was first told thousands of years before Jesus was born - right back in the Garden of Eden.

When God made this world, the angels were so impressed with its beauty that they sang and shouted for joy (Job 38:7). God also made a man and a woman, Adam and Eve, to live in the world and enjoy its beauty. Sadly, one day they disobeyed Him, and brought judgement on themselves. As time passed they grew old and died. All men, ever since that time, have died, and during life have many sorrows.

If that were all, what a sad story it would be. But it is not all! Because God is loving and caring towards His world, and the men and women He has made, He already had a plan to save them. There in the Garden of Eden God spoke of His plan to undo the evil brought about by the serpent's lie and the sin of Adam and Eve. This plan is centred in the Lord Jesus Christ, as will be discussed later in the course (see Genesis 3:15).

The gospel had begun!

The gospel was preached to Abraham

That sounds rather surprising, but you will find it written in the New Testament, in Galatians 3:8, as you have read. At a time when nearly all men worshipped idols, and cared nothing for God, Abraham was one on his own. He believed in God, and trusted him. God made great promises to Abraham.

What was the gospel, or good news, which God gave to him? First, he was to be the father of a great nation - the nation of Israel who in years to come would live in the land of Israel. You will learn more about Israel later in the course. Abraham himself was told that he would own that land and live in it for ever!

But Abraham grew old and died, without owning any of the land promised to him. Yet we know that God always keeps His promises. So, to live in the land God has promised him, Abraham must be brought back from the dead, or 'resurrected'.

Secondly, he was to have a descendant (called in the Bible a 'seed') who would bring great blessings to all the earth. That was good news! His descendant was, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ:

"And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (that is, will overcome his enemies); and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 22:17-18).

The promises God made to Abraham He repeated to his son Isaac, and to his grandson Jacob.

Another great promise

David, the great king of Israel, is called in the Bible, "a man after God's own heart" He too, was promised a very important descendant, who would reign on his throne in Jerusalem for ever. Not only that, but this descendant was to be God's very own son - it would be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. God said to David:

"I will raise up thy seed after thee which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom ... I will be his father .. I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for evermore" (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

When Jesus comes back, he will rule the world from Jerusalem.

The coming of the promised Saviour

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given... of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The prophet Isaiah wrote these words some time after David's death.

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The Jews waited with great longing for the coming of this promised Saviour and king. Then, one day an angel called Gabriel came from God to a young woman living in the land of Israel. Her name was Mary. He said to her:

"Thou shalt .. bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

These were "glad tidings of great joy". When Jesus was born, the glad tidings were told by an angel to some shepherds who were out in the fields at night, watching over their sheep. And then - just as they had sung for joy when God first created the world, the angels came to earth and sang for joy again. (You can read about this in Luke 2:8-18.)

Jesus tells the good news

Jesus, the promised Saviour, had come at last. And Jesus preached the gospel. He "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23). For three and a half years he went up and down the country teaching the people about God's coming kingdom, and telling them how God wanted them to live. At the end of this time, he willingly offered his perfect life as a sacrifice, and died on the cross, so that all who believe in him might have a hope of everlasting life. He became "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). So was fulfilled God's promise to Eve that He would send a Saviour.

God raised Jesus from the dead

The Lord spent forty days with his disciples after he had been raised from the dead. Then he went up to heaven, to be with his Father

Jesus will come back to the earth

As the disciples watched Jesus going away, two angels said to them, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Act 1:11).

He will come back. This is all part of the good news.

When will he come?

We do not know the date of the second coming of Jesus. But we do know, from things that are happening in the world today, that it will not be long before he comes back. For almost 2000 years the Jews had no land of their own. Now they are back in their ancient country, and in 1948 the State of Israel was set up. That was something that had to happen before the return of the Lord.

The world today is full of violence and crime, and people do just what they please, without restraint. There are wars, famines and dreadful diseases all over the world. Men are frightened of the future. just as Jesus said they would be:

"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26).

He went on to say that when all these things were happening, his return would be very near. You will learn more of this in later lessons.

Jesus will come to be King of the world

Jesus told Pontius Pilate that he was born to be a King. Over his cross they wrote: 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews'. But he will not only be king of the Jews. He will be king over the whole world. God spoke of this thousands of years ago. He said:

"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8).

What will happen when Jesus Christ returns to this earth?

He will raise the dead and judge them. Only those who are right with God will be given eternal life and a place in that Kingdom on earth. They will then help Jesus in ruling the world.

At that time, Jerusalem will be the capital city of the world, and Jesus Christ will reign over the whole earth. It will be a time of great happiness. Jesus told his disciples to pray for this time. He said, When you pray, say:

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven... For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" (Matthew 6:10-13).

After a thousand years, there will be no more sin and no more death. God will be 'all in all' - just as He planned from the beginning:

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

The wonderful Gospel message is that we can be part of this Kingdom

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How can we be given a place in God's future Kingdom on earth?

We need to recognise how sinful all men are. and to do something about it When the apostle Paul was in Athens he said: "God . commandeth all men everywhere to repent. because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30).

God commands all men to repent. To repent is to stop pleasing yourself and to try to please God. We are all sinners, so we all have to repent and be baptized in water. We must try to live as Jesus said we should. To those who do this. Jesus Christ will give everlasting life when he comes back.

(You must have noticed that the Gospel is not about going to heaven - that is not Bible teaching. It is about everlasting life in the Kingdom of God on earth.)

Summary

1. The Gospel is the subject of the whole of the Bible; it is Good News.
2. The Gospel centres around the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
3. The Gospel was understood by all the faithful men of all ages, in Old and New Testament times and ever since.
4. The Gospel is the answer to sin and death.
5. The Gospel concerns God's provision for the desperate needs of men. God provided a Saviour, the Lord Jesus.
6. To save men Jesus lived a perfect life and died a willing death.
7. God raised Jesus from the dead - and a little later he ascended to heaven.
8. Jesus will come back to rule the world and establish God's Kingdom on the earth.
9. He will raise his followers from the grave for judgement; and those accepted by him will be given everlasting life in his Kingdom.
10. We must believe the Gospel and accept the challenge to try our very best to live according to the example and teachings of the Lord Jesus.
11. Believing the Gospel means accepting that we are sinners in need of salvation; that we cannot save ourselves; that Jesus will save us if we repent, are baptized and strive to follow him.

Verses to read: Genesis 3:14-15; 9:11; Isaiah 45:17-18; Zechariah 9:9;

Matthew 25:31-34; 1 Corinthians 15:28

Learn by heart: Genesis 12:1-3

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."