



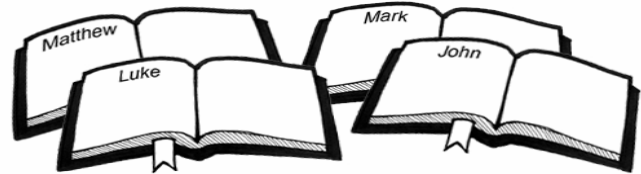
THE GOSPEL

Reading: Isaiah 55

Good news

Everyone enjoys hearing good news, and the Gospel message is good news! Indeed, the word 'Gospel' means 'good news'.

The first four books of the New Testament are often called The Gospels because they contain the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ.



*These Bible books are just **a part** of the good news!*

Jesus is the Son of God. His mother was the virgin Mary. By the way he lived Jesus showed us the character of God, especially God's love and kindness. He also showed the great power of God in the miracles he performed. But the most amazing thing about Jesus is that he never sinned. Even though he was tempted throughout his life he did not sin. One of his greatest temptations was to avoid the shame and terrible pain of dying on the cross, but he accepted this as God's will (part of His plan). He knew that if he won the battle against sin his Father would raise him from the dead and give him everlasting life. The Lord Jesus is the only person who has been raised from the dead and stayed alive.

This is good news! Jesus has opened up a way for us to have our sins forgiven and receive everlasting life. He lived a perfect life and died in obedience to God's will to make this possible. So the good news is that God has provided the way for us to escape from sin and death. We have good reason to be very thankful!

But there is more!

After his resurrection the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11) to be with his Father, and he is still there. However, he will soon return to this earth. Revelation 1:7 looks forward to the return of the Lord Jesus:

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."

When he returns, Jesus Christ will set up the Kingdom of God here on earth. God's kingdom will cover the whole earth, and the world will be a very different place. Eventually there will be:

- no more war
- no more pain and suffering
- no more sorrow
- no more sin
- no more death.

Isaiah 25:8 speaks of this time:

*"He (God) will **swallow up death for ever**; and the Lord GOD will **wipe away tears from all faces**, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken."*

God offers us a place in this kingdom on earth. It is a wonderful offer, and He wants us to accept it. Of course, there are conditions attached, so we need to read God's Word, the Bible, to find out what God wants us to do with our lives now.

The Gospel was known to people in Old Testament times

The Gospel is the good news of the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament tells us that the Gospel was preached to Abraham:





“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’ ” (Galatians 3:8).

God made promises to Abraham because of his faith and obedience. Abraham was told that he would inherit the land of Israel **for ever**. But Abraham grew old and died without owning any of the land that God had promised him.

Yet we know that God always keeps His promises. In order to receive the land that God promised him, Abraham must be raised from the dead, and we are told that he believed in resurrection:

“He (Abraham) considered that God was able even to raise him (Abraham’s son) from the dead ...” (Hebrews 11:19).

Also, in order to receive the land of Israel **for ever**, Abraham must be given everlasting life. The land of Israel will be at the centre of the future kingdom. Abraham will be raised from the dead and given a place in God’s kingdom on earth when the Lord Jesus returns.

So Abraham knew the good news about life after death and looked forward to God’s kingdom:

“For he (Abraham) was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

You will learn more about God’s promises to Abraham in later lessons.

When will Jesus Christ come back to the earth?

We do not know exactly when the Lord Jesus will return to the earth. However, we do know, from things which are happening in the world today, that he will return soon. For almost 2,000 years the Jews had no land of their own but were scattered among the nations the world. Many Jews have now returned to the land of Israel. The Bible prophesied thousands of years ago that the Jews would return to their land before Christ’s second coming.

The world today is full of violence and crime, and people do just as they please, without self-control. There are wars, famines and dreadful diseases all over the world. People are frightened of the future. Jesus said that there would be *“people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world”* (Luke 21:26). Jesus also said that when all these things were happening, his return would be very near. You will learn more of this in later lessons.

Jesus Christ will come back to be king of the world

Jesus told Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, that he was born to be a king. Over his cross was written: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”. But when Jesus returns 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. The writer of Psalm 72 looked forward to this time. Verse 8 says:

“May he (Jesus) have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!”

The city of Jerusalem in the land of Israel will become the capital of God’s future kingdom. Jesus Christ will reign from Jerusalem as king over the whole earth. David, Israel’s second king, looked forward to the time when his descendant, Jesus Christ, would reign from Jerusalem.

What will happen when Jesus Christ returns to this earth?

Christ will raise from the dead those who have understood the Gospel. Then he will judge everyone who has understood the Gospel – both those alive when he returns and those who were raised from the dead. Only those who have made their lives right with God will be given everlasting life and a place in God’s kingdom on earth.



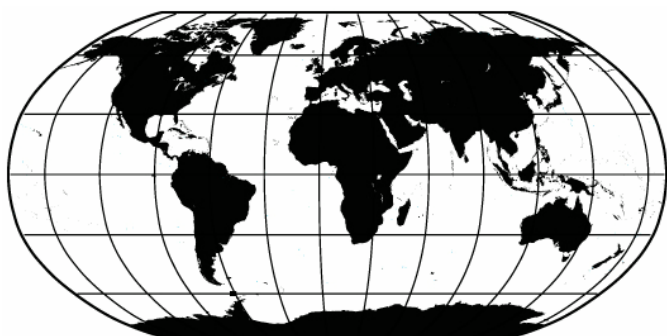


God's kingdom will be a time of great happiness, but it will not be perfect until Christ defeats all God's enemies. Only then will there be no more sin and death. God will be "all in all" and the world will finally be perfect – just as He planned from the beginning. Jesus told his disciples that they should pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Notice that the Gospel is not about going to heaven when we die – that is not Bible teaching. It is about everlasting life on earth.

The apostle Paul looked forward to this time when he said:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).



"For the earth will 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 God's kingdom.

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

We need to recognise how sinful we are and do something about it. When the apostle Paul was in Athens he said,

"God ... commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30,31).

God commands everyone to repent. This means to decide to change your life – to please God instead of yourself. We are all sinners, so we all need to repent and be baptized in water. We must try to live as the Lord Jesus showed us. To those who do this, Jesus Christ will give everlasting life when he returns.

Summary

1. The word 'Gospel' means 'good news'. The good news is that God has provided the way for us to escape from sin and death.
2. People in Old and New Testament times knew the Gospel.
3. Jesus lived a perfect life and died in obedience to God's will to make it possible for us to be saved.
4. God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him everlasting life. He ascended to heaven to be with his Father and he is still there.
5. The Lord Jesus will return from heaven to set up God's kingdom here on earth.
6. He will judge everyone who has understood the Gospel. Those accepted will be given everlasting life and a place in God's kingdom on earth.
7. If we want to be part of God's kingdom on earth, we must repent and be baptized, and try to live as the Lord Jesus showed us.



A verse to learn: Isaiah 25:8

He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

Verses to read:

Isaiah 45:18

For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other."

Zechariah 9:9 – This is a prophecy that Jesus would ride through Jerusalem on a donkey, and that one day he will be a king.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Matthew 25:31-34 – This passage refers to the time of judgement after Christ returns to the earth as king.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Isaiah 55:1-11 – This is an invitation to learn the Gospel. It is freely offered to us.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

