

# God's Great Story

Advance in Faith 101



## Lesson 6 The Gospel

## What is “The Gospel”?

Have you ever heard any of the following phrases?

- Just give me the Gospel
- We’re a full Gospel church
- Of course we want to take the Gospel to them

If they could just understand the Gospel they would see how God loves them. At the heart of most Christian’s thinking about their faith is this word ‘gospel’. But what exactly is the ‘gospel’?

The Greek word that is used for gospel or good news is εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*). The term is used for the proclamation of the news of victory. It was used for *good* news.

The NT records the word being used 95 times in 89 verses.

‘Gospel’ is good news not ‘good advice’. If the heart of the Christian story is the gospel and we find the gospel story within the pages of the Bible, then the heart of the Bible should be the Gospel.

The central message of the Bible is not simply that we are sinners, but through Jesus God is rescuing us from the sinful world so that we can be with him in heaven. That’s part of it, but it’s not the whole biblical story. The Bible is not about the rescue of humans *from* the world but about the rescue of humans *for* the world, and indeed God’s rescue of the world *by means of* those rescued humans. ...

... Yes, Jesus was and is fully divine and fully human. But the *point* of his divinity in the Gospels is that in him and *as* him the living God is becoming king. And the point of his humanity in the Gospels is that, in him and as him, human beings are at last taking up again their God-given vocation of being the royal priesthood through which God brings his wise, redemptive ordering to the garden. And yes, the good news is good news of salvation. But in the Bible we are saved not simply so we can go to heaven and enjoy fellowship with God but so that we can be his truly human royal priesthood in his world.<sup>1</sup>

## Jesus Preaches the ‘Good News’

Matt 4:23

Matt 9:35

Matt 11:5

Luke 7:22

Mark 1:14, 15

Luke 4:18

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright, *Surprised by Scripture* page 32

## 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Before we start into this chapter it is important to ask some questions of context;

- When was this letter written? – Written around 55 AD by Paul
- To whom is the letter written – To the church in the city of Corinth. This church was begun by Paul during his travels.
- Why was the letter written? – The letter was written to address some problems that Paul became aware of in the church and to answer some specific questions in regards to the Christian life and church life: questions about marriage and divorce, eating food offered to idols, spiritual gifts and the resurrection. It is in the section answering this last enquiry that chapter 15 falls.
- What is the context of chapter 15? – Paul is answering a question in regards to the resurrection, is it real?

### *Verse 1*

*Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.*

Paul’s purpose in writing the next section of his letter is to remind the Corinthians about the good news that they received when he told it to them.

### *Verse 2*

*By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

This is a very strong verse. Paul makes it clear that if they change the gospel that he first preached then they actually will not be saved.

Paul makes a similar observation when writing to the Galatian churches;

<sup>1:6</sup> I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News <sup>7</sup> but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

<sup>8</sup> Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. <sup>9</sup> I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

## Advance in Faith Level 1 – God’s Great Story

### *Verse 3*

*<sup>3</sup> I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.*

So where is it that the Scriptures say the Messiah was to die for our sins and what does Paul mean by sins?

Let’s rephrase: The Messiah died because of our rebellion...

The story of the Scriptures, the Old Testament, is the story about the ongoing rebellion of humanity towards God. Adam and Eve rejected the authority of God and chose to live under their own authority, they rebelled. This rebellion brings death to them.

- Cain rebels and kills Able.
- Humanity rebels and murder becomes the crime of the day – the flood results.
- Nimrod builds a city, a kingdom, in rebellion against the true king Yahweh.
- Yahweh chooses Abraham and his descendants to be his subjects; to live in Yahweh’s land, the land of the king.
- Just as the Scriptures said...

Isaiah reworks the promise of rescue through the king into the promise of rescue through the ‘Messiah’, the rescuer. Is 53:5

*<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our rebellion,  
crushed for our sins.  
He was beaten so we could be whole.  
He was whipped so we could be healed.*

Romans 5:12-18 – Jesus’ death reverses death that came through rebellion.

The only way that Jesus could defeat death was from the inside out. He could not defeat death without entering into death.

### *Verse 4*

He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

It is important to remember that Paul did not approach the Scriptures with a ‘proof text’ mentality. He did not go looking for specific verses

## Advance in Faith Level 1 – God’s Great Story

but rather saw the overall sweep of the scriptural story. Tom Wright puts it this way:

It (*the phrase ‘as the Scriptures said’*) meant that the Scriptures had been fulfilled, that the kingdom of God had arrived, that the new age had broken in to the midst of the present age, had dawned upon a surprised and unready world. It all happened “according to the Scriptures”; which, as I have argued elsewhere, does not mean that Paul could find a few biblical proof-texts for it if he hunted hard enough but that the entire biblical narrative had at last reached its climax, had come true in these astonishing events.<sup>2</sup>

### **Verses 5-8**

Here Paul offers as proof of the resurrection the fact that Jesus was seen by a wide section of people.

## **Good News about What?**

If Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:2-5 constitutes the announcement of good news, then what is the news and why is it good?

1. The story of Scripture, especially the Old Testament, is a story leading up to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the climax.
2. This story was to climax in the renewal of the lost kingdom. Mt 21:42 Mt 22:29, Mt 26:54, Mk 12:24, Mk 14:49, Lk 24:27, Lk 24:32, Lk 24:45, Jn 5:39,
3. Jesus’ death came about because of the rebellion humans chose to be in towards God.
4. He really died, the tomb was empty.
5. Our decision in regards to these events has significant consequences.
6. His resurrection was a historical event and he was raised bodily and visible.
7. This means that our resurrection, if we come under Jesus’ Lordship, will be just as physical and visible.
8. We are resurrected to become what Humanity was created for – to be the image of God in the created world.

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<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 142.

Scot McKnight’s “What is the Gospel?”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vgkfx1QMqA&index=2&list=PLF09FNd-pDxjaQ0\\_L0ZNGwibjcvNNYbqq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vgkfx1QMqA&index=2&list=PLF09FNd-pDxjaQ0_L0ZNGwibjcvNNYbqq)

## **Scot McKnight’s Language**

### *The Biblical Narrative*

This is the story of Scripture and the Church and of all Christians.

### *The Gospel*

The Gospel is the announcement, the declaration, the heralding that Jesus is Messiah and he is the point and goal and telos (the end of the story) of the narrative. He is the Messiah and he is the Redeemer and he is the Lord. He lived and he died and he was buried and he rose again and he is coming again. As the raised and ascended one he is Lord of both Jews and Gentiles.

### *The Plan of Salvation*

This is what evangelical Christians normally mean when they use the word gospel but it is not The Gospel.

These are the essential elements of the plan of salvations;

- God’s love and grace and holiness
- Our creation as icons and our sinfulness
- Our standing under the judgement and wrath of God
- Jesus stepped in as a substitutionary, atoning death to forgive us of our sins and reconcile us to God
- We can respond to this in faith and be saved

### *The Method of Persuasion*

What we say when we ‘evangelize’.

## **Conclusion**

Over the last 6 weeks we have looked at how God has acted throughout the history of humanity, at what the real good news is, and at what the Christian story says about our past and what is in store in the future.

I think that the best way to conclude is with the conclusion to the Narnia stories, written by C. S. Lewis to be an allegory regarding the Christian faith.

## Advance in Faith Level 1 – God’s Great Story

*And as He (Aslan) spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every Chapter is better than the one before.<sup>3</sup>*

### **Group Questions:**

- How might you “spread the gospel”?
- Are there any changes that might need to be made in the way we do ‘church’ to bring it into line with what the gospel is really?
- Does this view of the gospel change the way in which you see your role as a Christian?
- Tom Wright spoke of being an example of the new Kingdom of God right now. What might that look like?

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis, C. S. (2009-05-05). *The Last Battle (The Chronicles of Narnia, Book 7)* (Kindle Locations 1917-1921). HarperCollins Publishers. Kindle Edition.