

1 *Jesus Came With A Gospel*

Jesus' Gospel of Salvation

Some who come with a different gospel than Jesus insist Jesus did not come with His own gospel. They claim Jesus merely came to die so a gospel could be preached.¹

However, Jesus said He came to preach the Gospel. “I came to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; that is the reason why I was commissioned.” (Luke 4:43.)

Matthew twice says Jesus was “preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom....” (Matt. 4:23; 9:35.)

Jesus then later tells the apostles that what He had been teaching — what He calls “this Gospel of the Kingdom” — shall be preached to the whole world and then the end shall come. (Matt. 24:14.)

What did Jesus mean by the Gospel of the Kingdom? He meant the message on how to be saved and enjoy eternal life. This was the *good news*, *i.e.*, the Gospel.

1. The tract *The Gospel* (1980) teaches cheap grace. Of Jesus, it says that “He came not primarily to preach the Gospel...but He came rather that there might be a Gospel to preach.” Roy Gustafson defends this, claiming “Paul never discussed the earthly life of our Lord... The fact that the Lord Jesus died to save is one half of the Gospel! The fact that he rose from the dead...is the other half of the Gospel.” Thus, Gustafson is in effect saying the gospel is in nothing that Jesus preached. Because Paul gave the gospel without ever quoting Jesus, the Gospel must supposedly have nothing to do with anything Jesus taught. Gustafson thus believes the gospel is merely that Jesus died and resurrected. The Gospel is allegedly therefore not in anything Jesus taught. For more discussion on this false doctrine that Jesus did not preach the gospel, see Del Tondo, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 376.

This is obvious because Jesus' lessons made an unprecedented focus on a message of how to be saved. Nowhere in Hebrew Scriptures do you find the highly refined and repeated focus on salvation as is contained in the words of Jesus.

Hebrew Scriptures on Salvation

When we examine the Hebrew Scriptures, eternal life and salvation are infrequently mentioned. Hell as a place of torment and punishment is rarely discussed. As Pastor Randy Alcorn notes:

The doctrine of Hell is suggested in the Old Testament, but it is much more clearly revealed in the New. Jesus said more about Hell than anyone.²

Isaiah speaks of Hell. The disobedient have a "worm that dies not" and "their fire shall not be quenched."³ Other than that single reference, which Jesus frequently repeats, there is little emphasis on Hell in Hebrew Scriptures.

The references to eternal life in the Hebrew Scriptures are present but are likewise extremely infrequent. In Genesis, God says that He must remove Adam after he sins so he does not eat from the tree of life. If Adam (who just fell into sin) does eat from it, then Adam will live forever. The verse reads:

And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil;

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2. http://www.epm.org/articles/qa_talk_about_hell.html (last accessed 6/14/06).
 3. Isa 66:24: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the dead bodies of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (ASV)

and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and **live for ever**. (Gen 3:22 ASV.)

Another reference to salvation is Moses' mention of the book of life. Moses in an exchange with God after Aaron led the people into creating the golden calf pleads for mercy. Here we learn that God keeps a book of life. Its purpose is evidently to grant eternal life.

Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of **thy book which thou hast written**. (33) And Jehovah said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will **I blot out of my book**. Exo 32:32-33 ASV

This book that lists the saved is referred to next in Daniel. We read it is a book identifying those to be delivered.

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time **thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book**. (Dan 12:1 ASV.)

In the next two verses, we learn this involves eternal life. In Daniel 12:2-3, it says:

(2) And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to **everlasting life [zoen aionion]**, and some to shame and **everlasting contempt**.⁴ (3) And they that are **wise** shall shine as the brightness of the firmament;⁵ and they that **turn many to righteousness** as the stars **for ever and ever**.⁶

Likewise Isaiah 26:19 refers to the resurrection of the righteous, but only briefly.

(19) Thy dead shall live; **my dead bodies shall arise**. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead.

(20) Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: **hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast**. (Isa 26:19-20, ASV.)

However, Daniel is the passage that refers to eternal life with greatest clarity.

Also, other than Daniel and Isaiah, there are no other passages that in such clear terms refer to a resurrection of the dead. This explains why in Jesus' day there was even some within the reputable Saducean party who denied there was any such thing as eternal life. They apparently thought when you died, you died.⁷

The only other reference in the Hebrew Scriptures to the notion of a final resurrection is in Job. It is more a plea for God to resurrect him rather than a clear statement that Job knows there is such a resurrection.⁸

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4. In the Septuagint, this is the Greek word *aischynen* which means *shame* or *embarrassment*. Here it must mean they rise to everlasting *shame*, which is contrasted with *eternal life* (*zoen ainion*). With the same word, Apostle John exhorts Christians in 1 John 2:28 to stay in Christ to avoid *aischynen* when Christ comes in judgment. Apostle John in 1 John 2:28 says: "And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed (AISCHYNTHOMEN) before him at his coming." Thus, because this *shame* spoken of in Daniel is *damnation*, it therefore should mean likewise in John's epistle.
 5. Cf. Mat 13:43 where Jesus similarly says: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears, let him hear."
 6. Jesus himself alludes to Daniel 12:2 at John 5:28, 29. He combines Isaiah 26:19 and his own paraphrase of Daniel 12:2.

Instead, when Hebrew Scriptures wished to talk of eternal life, it refers to the somewhat ambiguous term of *life* or *living*. It is implied that eternal life is promised, but it is not blatant. For example, the clearest exposition of the principle of salvation in Hebrew Scripture is in Ezekiel 33:12-16. If you sin, you die. If you confess and repent, you will live. If you sin again, all your righteousness is forgotten and you will die.⁹ If you repent once more, all your sin is forgotten and you will live. Obviously, life and death are figurative of damnation and salvation for otherwise there is no explanation of how the dead can repent and live again. Ezekiel 33:12-16 reads:

(12) And thou, son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall

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7. The Sadducees's role in Jesus' day was to run the Temple of Jerusalem. From their ranks the chief priest was always chosen. However, this party did not believe there was any afterlife at all. To prove this, they had invented a logic problem of saying that if there was resurrection to an afterlife, we would have a situation in heaven of multiple husbands for a woman who remarried seven times. (Luke 20:34-36.) The assumption of the argument was that God would not permit such a repulsive situation forever, and thus there must not be eternal life for humans. Jesus rebuffed this by informing the Sadducees that there is no marriage in heaven. Their argument's core assumption was contrary to how heaven works. Yet, this passage reveals how unclear the picture was about eternal life prior to Jesus.
 8. Job 14:12-14 reads: "(12) So man lieth down and riseth not: Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, Nor be roused out of their sleep. (13) Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol, That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! (14) If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, Till my release should come." (ASV.)
 9. The same message is in Isaiah. Once you sin, all your good works are forgotten and become as "filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6.)

he that is righteous be able to **live** thereby in the day that he sinneth.

(13) When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely **live**; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he **die**.

(14) Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely **die**; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

(15) if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of **life**, committing no iniquity; he shall surely **live**, he **shall not die**.

(16) None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely **live**. (ASV)

Thus, eternal life is implied in the promise of *life*. How do we know this for certain? There are two reasons.

First, if *die* and *live* were taken in the physical sense, then God promises you will die the moment you sin. This makes no sense in context because the passage assumes you can sin, still be a *living and breathing* being and then repent and thus *live* again. Thus, sin did not lead instantly to *physical death*. Therefore, *living* and *dying* in this passage must be in the salvation sense.

Second, in verse 15 it says the righteous shall “live and not die.” This expressly promises **life without death**. This can therefore be implied to talk of eternal life. Thus, Ezekiel 33 reflects the clearest exposition of salvation doctrine in the Hebrew Scripture.

Other verses of Hebrew Scripture refer back to the conditions for *life* promised in Ezekiel 33, but they do so in a condensed formula. They too appear to be talking of salvation. For example, Habakkuk 2:4 discusses what leads to life.

Unfortunately, the original Hebrew was mistranslated in the Septuagint Greek translation to say the just live by *faith* when in Hebrew it says the just are *faithful* (i.e., living obedient to God's commands). The correct translation reads:

Look at the proud person. He is not right in himself. But the righteous person will **live** because of his **faithfulness**. (Hab 2:4)(God's Word.)¹⁰

Lo, a presumptuous one! Not upright is his soul within him, And the righteous by **his steadfastness liveth**. (Hab 2:4) (Young's Literal.)

In Habakkuk, the contrast is between the *proud*, who do not repent of sin due to pride, versus those who are faithful to God by steadfast obedience to Him. It is a reference back to the Ezekiel 33 formula for salvation. It is a simple restatement.

Jesus Was Different Precisely Because His Dominant Theme Was Salvation

Thus, prior to Jesus, Scripture was fairly quiet on the topic of salvation. Jesus would dramatically change that. This fact therefore explains what Jesus must have meant by His statement: "I came to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; that is the reason why I was commissioned." (Luke 4:43.) **Jesus was going to preach the doctrine of salvation in clear terms.** He would be the sacrificial lamb that would pay for the sins

10. The Septuagint translation into Greek in 247 B.C. translated *emunah* as *pistis*, and thus changed *faithfulness* into *faith*. The original Hebrew did not mean merely *faith*. The Hebrew word comes from a verb that means to be *steadfast*. The erroneous Septuagint then has been viewed somehow to force us to accept an erroneous version of Habakkuk 2:4. Thus, the King James and American Standard use the erroneous Septuagint version of this verse so they both read that the righteous shall live by *his faith* rather than by *his faithfulness*.

of the world. Jesus knew this was coming in His future. Therefore, He wanted to explain in *no uncertain terms* how you would acquire this atonement for your eternal benefit. Since it would cost Him everything, He wanted to be sure you knew how to appropriate its benefits.

Accordingly, the Gospel we need to find in Jesus' words are the promise of salvation, and all its components. If we find it there, we need look to no others. If any others try to teach us salvation principles, we only can accept them if they line up squarely with Jesus' words. Apostle John tells us that anyone whose teachings "go *beyond* the teachings of Christ," does not have God. (2 John 1:9.) We do not want to fall into that error. Thus, it is no small matter to hold tightly to our Lord's teachings. Apostle John told us that staying in Jesus' teachings is *indispensible* to "have God."