



Is the Gospel Relevant?



Is the Gospel relevant to the Jewish people?

Written by
Keith Parker.

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Keith Parker explores what the scriptures have to say about the relevance of the Good News to Jewish people starting with Paul's declaration] "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek"

The Pope issued a statement in December 2015 that Jews do not need to put their trust in Jesus to be forgiven - but is this true?

Romans 1:16

The most important thing in the world today is the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. That is why it is so strongly attacked by the humanist establishment in the west, by the Islamic establishment and by Jewish ultra-orthodoxy. The gospel is the only hope of salvation for Jews, Moslems and, come to that, people of every religion or no religion at all. The gospel is working powerfully in the Moslem world today; why else are Christians being imprisoned and killed in Shia Iran and in ISIS controlled Sunni Moslem areas? It is working mightily amongst Jews: hence the harsh opposition from the ultra-orthodox Jewish community in Israel.

Sadly in the church at large there is a growing confusion as to what the gospel is. I am not merely talking about liberal Christianity or ritualistic churches, but the churches that claim to be evangelical.

What then is the Gospel exactly?

We can do no better than the explanation of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans.

1. It is the gospel of God (v.1); it originates in the eternal counsels of the Triune God. It is no human invention. That is why finally to reject it is the very worst kind of sin.
2. It was promised in the Hebrew prophetic writings (v.2); it is not a new idea propounded by Paul or by any other apostle. It has its roots in the Old Testament.
3. The subject of the Gospel is Jesus Christ (v.3); Jesus is the Son of God, which makes Him divine; He is the Christ (the Messiah), which makes Him the fulfilment of the Old Testament hope.
4. He is "made of the seed of David", which means He is human and Jewish to boot. He is the God-man.
5. His Sonship is declared by His mighty resurrection (v.4); there is no resurrection without a death, so Jesus's death is part of the Gospel. The denial of His resurrection cancels out any hope of salvation as Paul says: "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The denial of the resurrection

is common amongst liberals. The man-made religions of the Gentile world deny the specialness of Jesus and therefore exclude their adherents from any hope of salvation.

There is no Gospel of salvation apart from Jesus the Messiah

The true Gospel makes exclusive claims for Him. No other god or saviour can exist alongside Him. The gods of the nations are devilish and not the same as the God of Israel and the Church. If you think I'm being harsh, read what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:20: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils and not to God". Moses said that when Israel worshipped strange gods: "They sacrificed to devils and not to God" (Deuteronomy 32:17). So we see that Paul was quoting Moses with approval. So this concept was believed by both Old Testament and New Testament authorities. It follows that 'Interfaith', which tries to say that all gods are the same, is a lie, which no true Christian can subscribe to. This returns us to the headline verse of this article:

Romans 1:16 Paul was “not ashamed” of this true and exclusive Gospel.

1. It is in fact "the power of God unto salvation". There is no salvation outside the Gospel. Peter the apostle to the circumcision said to the Sanhedrin, composed wholly of Jews: "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we [Jews] must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
2. It is "to the Jew first". Paul had never heard of a dual-covenant theology, which teaches that Jews are saved on a different basis than Gentiles. The Jews also need Christ, who is the very heart of the Good News. Jesus died and was raised first of all to save Jewish people.
3. It is "also to the Greek": to the non-Jew. The selfsame Gospel saves both Jews and Gentiles. The Gospel may have to be explained in different ways for different audiences, but the content of the Gospel is the same, and the salvation it brings is the same.

The need for the Gospel is witnessed in Creation (Romans 1:17-32)

1. The Gospel brings salvation, but the rejection of the testimony of the created order brings "the wrath of God revealed from heaven". How key it is for us to affirm that the universe and all its contents was created by the power of God.
2. Rejection of the testimony of Creation puts mankind on a slippery slope which leads to deeper and deeper degradation. This passage is so relevant to our own corrupt generation, where even to quote and affirm it can lead to legal action for hate crime.

The need for the Gospel is witnessed to in the Torah Law precedes Gospel.

1. In Romans 1 the Gentile world rejects the witness of creation, and thus is guilty, lost and in need of the Gospel of Christ.

2. In Romans 2 the Jewish world rejects the witness of the Torah, the law of God, and thus is guilty, lost and in need of the Gospel of Christ.
3. What causes Gentiles and Jews to reject the light which God has given them? Paul explains in Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the kingdom of God”. David says “I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). Jeremiah says “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9); “By one man [Adam] sin entered into the world” (Romans 5:12). It is original and indwelling sin that makes it impossible for man to live a consistently holy life.

The Gospel requires a substitutionary atonement (Romans 3)

1. Mankind’s sin and rebellion demands the wrath and judgment of God: “that all the world may become guilty before God” (3:19).
2. The one remedy is that “God hath set forth [Jesus] to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” (3:25). Only the suffering of Jesus on the cross can purchase pardon for sinful mankind.

The Gospel is received by faith alone in Christ alone (Romans 4-5)

1. Just as Abraham was, we are justified by faith (4:3); “It was not written for his sake alone that it [righteousness] was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (4:23-24) Faith is the instrument by which we lay hold on the salvation Christ gives in the Gospel.
2. But faith itself is only effective because of what Jesus did for us on the cross: “being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (5:9) (my emphasis;). So faith lets us into the salvation, which was bought with the blood and sufferings of Christ.
3. Romans 3:24 says that we are “justified freely by His grace”. What begins in grace is brought into being through Christ’s blood and received through faith.
4. By the way, repentance is implied by the word ‘faith’. For you cannot turn to God in faith without turning from self and sin in repentance.

This precious Gospel needs to be defended

The apostle Jude in the very last epistle before Revelation warns of those who wheedle their way into the church and teach subversive things: “For there are certain men crept in unawares... ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ”. (v 4) Therefore we need to resist them: “ye should earnestly contend for the faith once given to the saints”. (v 3b) This faith is the Gospel, precious and powerful, hated by the world and Satan,

but to be fought for by Christians.

