

What does it mean that the gospel is good news?

The gospel is the “good news” because it contains the exceedingly wonderful message of God’s redemption of sinful humanity through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. The gospel is the heart, the central core of Christian preaching.

The English noun *gospel* comes from the Anglo-Saxon term *godspell*, meaning “glad tidings.” It is translated from the Greek *evangelion*, which means “good message.” Originally, the word was related to news of military triumph. But when the New Testament was recorded, its writers assigned the term *gospel* to the “good news” of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The gospel encompasses the entire communication of redemption and salvation to humans as preached by Jesus Christ and His followers (Matthew 4:23; Romans 10:15). Later, the term *gospel* was also applied to the four historical records of Jesus Christ’s life written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These four men are the original “evangelists,” or writers of the *evangelion*.

The announcing of good news began with an angel heralding John the Baptist’s birth to his father, Zechariah: “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news” (Luke 1:19). John the Baptist was the first to preach the gospel (Mark 1:1–4). After John baptized Jesus, God’s Spirit and anointing rested on the Lord “to bring Good News to the poor . . . to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free” (Luke 4:18, NLT) and to “proclaim the good news of God” (Mark 1:14).

“The time has come,” Jesus began. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). The gospel Jesus proclaimed focused on the arrival of God’s kingdom (Luke 10:9; 17:21). Through Christ’s coming to earth, God’s rule would be completed (Matthew 6:10), His righteousness established (Isaiah 9:7; 32:1), and His people glorified (Romans 8:17–18; Colossians 1:27). After Christ’s resurrection, the gospel was preached by those who had witnessed His life (Acts 5:42; 8:4–5, 35; Romans 1:1–4, 9), and today it continues to be preached throughout the world by His followers.

The gospel is good news because in it we find God’s promise of forgiveness from sin. John testified that Jesus is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” (John 1:29; see also Luke 24:46–47; Isaiah 53:4–6; Acts 13:38; Hebrews 9:28). Through the gospel, we receive God’s power to live a new life in the righteousness of Jesus Christ: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (Romans 1:16–17; see also Romans 3:21–26).

According to the gospel, sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 4:18). But when Jesus died on the cross, He paid the price and canceled the debt of sin for all who would believe in Him. He was “pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him” (Isaiah 53:5; see also Colossians 1:20). The gospel is good news because, through faith in Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God and brought near to Him in fellowship: “Since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us” (Romans 5:1, NLT).

The gospel is good news because “to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12–13). Everyone who believes in the gospel and submits to its demands receives new life in Jesus Christ. We are adopted into God’s family (Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 3:26). We are “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5–8) and receive the “gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38; see also John 7:37–39), who guarantees our heavenly inheritance (Ephesians 1:13–14).

The gospel is the greatest love story ever told (John 15:13). What could be more excellent news than its promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ?: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16–17; see also John 11:25).