

What Is the Gospel?

Commentary for January 1, 2019 — ... and Answers to Errors

The "[January 2019 Newsletter](#)" introduces two articles this month. The first is "Memory in Luke" and the second is "Further Decline in the Churches." Both relate to the *gospel* (or as some prefer to term it, the *Evangel*). Luke is the third of four canonical Gospels, compiled completely from collected oral and written testimony from eyewitnesses from before Jesus's birth to after His resurrection. Luke, a Gentile, was not one of those witnesses. The reason the decline of the churches continues is that the fullness of the gospel is not being preached and taught in churches, although they think they are doing so.

What Is the Purpose of the Gospel?

Alfred Edersheim in the "Preface to the First Edition" of his book [The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah](#) wrote:

"The title of this book must not be understood as implying any pretence on my part to write a 'Life of Christ' in the strict sense. To take the lowest view, the materials for it do not exist. Evidently the Evangelists did not intend to give a full record of even the outward events in that History; far less could they have thought of compassing the sphere or sounding the depths of the Life of Him, Whom they present to us as the God-Man and the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father."

In his personal copy of Edersheim's book *Life and Times*, Dr. Martin highlighted the phrase 'Life of Christ' in the above paragraph. He also wrote a note about that phrase:

"The evangelists did not mean to portray a history of Jesus. They wrote their narrative only to show His prophetic fulfillment of the Old Testament; to show His doctrines; to show His example; to show His salvation. If they wanted to show His history, the evangelists would have recorded His life from 2 years of age until the commencement of His ministry. There, then, is no such thing, actually, as 'the life of Christ.'"

• **John 21:25**

Edersheim's and Dr. Martin's comments are both true. The Gospels and other New Testament writings present to the reader the gospel of Messiah, God's gospel. The focus is not historical details. The New Testament documents are controversial. They go against human nature. When the person hears the gospel proclaimed, he or she by nature rejects the message.

As I said before, it is not enough just to hear the Word of God. It must be received. It must be absorbed. It must be "kept" (Deuteronomy 4:2), which means it must be remembered:

"... a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the paps which you have sucked.' But he said, 'Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.'"

• **Luke 11:27–28**

So, What Is the Gospel?

This is actually easy to answer because the apostle Paul tells us he **“fully preached the gospel of Christ”** (Romans 15:19), which means he taught the completed gospel of Christ. That gospel is condensed in 1 Corinthians 15:1–11. The 15th chapter of First Corinthians is remarkable. Please read it in several different translations. Most Bible outlines separate the text (with minor variations) as follows:

The resurrection of Christ	verses 1–11
The resurrection of the dead	verses 12–34
The resurrection body	verses 35–58

In my opinion this understanding and topical outline are accurate. Writing to those of the *ekklesia* at Corinth, here is the gospel Paul preached and what you should believe. **The gospel is about the resurrection of Christ**. Keep it in your memory:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel

- [1] **which I preached unto you,**
- [2] **which also you have received, and**
- [3] **wherein you stand; By which also you are saved,**

if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.

For **I delivered unto you** first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ**

- **died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that**
- **he was buried, and that**
- **he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that**
- **he was seen of Cephas,**
- **then of the twelve:**
- **After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present,¹ but some are fallen asleep.**
- **After that, he was seen of James;**
- **then of all the apostles.**
- **And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.**

For I am the least of the apostles, that am **not** meet [fit or worthy] to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church [*ekklesia*] of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Therefore whether it were I or they, **so we preach, and so you believed.**”

• **1 Corinthians 15:1–11**

What Paul preached and what you believe is the gospel he set forth in verses 1–11. It is

¹ Some of these that Luke met while with Paul were able to, and some likely did, provide information to **“the beloved physician.”**

fascinating to me that the message of the gospel can be set out and examined to reveal its great simplicity and clarity. Remember, the audience of Paul's writings at the Corinthian *ekklesia* listened to his epistles read aloud to them by a person skilled in doing so. In our modern day we have the luxury of inspecting the sentences and phrases in writing. The complete thoughts when put together are pregnant with meaning.

What Is Spiritual Meat?

As you will note in the article "Further Decline of the Churches," most Christian teachers present only milk. They do this because they truly believe and teach unbiblical and heretical doctrines that Scripture does not teach — namely: **1.** the trinity, **2.** an immortal soul, and **3.** Eternal conscious torment in "hell." These erroneous "fundamental teachings" change the Gospel, boring people so they decrease attendance and fellowship. Questioning those three errors is not allowed. Insisting on answers to questions leads to exclusion from fellowship.

1. **Regarding the trinity**, simply read 1 Corinthians 8:5–7:

"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge."

What part of "**one God, the Father**" do the "orthodox" Christian churches not understand?²

2. **Regarding the immortal soul**, note Ecclesiastes 9:5–6:

"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten [they are unconscious with no memory]. **Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever [olam, for the eon] in any thing that is done under the sun."**

Every human being will live again because everyone will be resurrected at some time in the future, some to immediate glory, others to later glory after judgment which will have punishment, but more importantly a time of education about God and reconciliation with others. Eventually all will be saved and all will be glorified to be as Christ is now.³

We are not souls in a receptacle of a body, sometimes expressed as "a ghost in a box." This is gnostic teaching that Paul strongly opposed. Our body combined with the spirit of man together form the soul. In death the spirit leaves the body (and returns to God) and the soul

² This identification of who God is in 1 Corinthians 8:5–7 obviously does not describe a "trinity." If it is supposed to be "trinitarian" then why does it omit any mention of supposed "person" of the Holy Spirit? If the "trinity" is true, why is there no detailed discussion of this (supposedly) foundationally important doctrine found anywhere in Scripture? Why are there only "hints" or "allusions" to a trinity?

After all, the purpose of Scripture is to reveal God to us. Jesus said He came to reveal the Father (Luke 10:22). He did not come to reveal a trinity, but Jesus came to reveal His Father and our Father.

³ To learn more, read or listen to the book [ABCs of the Gospel](#), free online (not for purchase in print) and the most in-depth understanding of Dr. Martin's teaching about the Gospel in his book [Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#), online free to read and listen to, or for purchase in print (557 pages).

dissolves. All three are dead: body, spirit, and soul. You are not a trinity of body, soul, and spirit. Adam did not become a living soul until God breathed the spirit of man into him.

It is actually comforting for us who are alive at present to consider. There is no passage of time for you in death. You will not “exist” until you are resurrected, either to glory or to judgment/education. Then a resurrection to glory will later occur. God will breath His Spirit into us when we are glorified and we will become living Children of God with spiritual bodies, just like Christ has at that moment (1 Corinthians 15:12–34, part 2 of First Corinthians).

3. **Regarding the eternal conscious torment in hell**, consider 1 Timothy 2:3–7:

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.”

Christ’s ransom will be **“for all,”** at a time of God’s choosing — **“in due time.”** For the vast majority of human beings, their acceptance of Christ’s ransom will come after, during their judgment. John 3:16–17 uses the phrase **“the world”** four times in those two verses. **“The world”** will be saved, not just part of it. If not all, then **“the world”** will not be saved.

“Objection!” Someone might say, “What about free will?” My reply to the objector: Only God the Father ever has free will, not even Christ Jesus. Read 1 Corinthians 15:28. Just before God the Father becomes **“all in all”** Christ Jesus submits all authority to His Father. Everything Christ does is in line with the will of His Father (review Matthew 12:50; John 5:30, 14:13). You certainly do not have free will. You never had, you never will have free will.⁴

“Another objection! Paul meant that God ‘wishes,’ ‘desires,’ or ‘hopes’ for all men to be saved, not that they shall be saved. After all, people reject God’s will all the time.” No, that is not true. God’s will can be opposed but not thwarted or denied in the end. What God wills (or even “wishes” or “desires”) will be accomplished. We are told by the apostle Paul that God:

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will.”

• **Ephesians 1:9–11**

As you enjoy this month’s articles **“keep in memory”** the simplicity of God’s gospel.

david@askelm.com

⁴ If you think you have free will, then freely “will” yourself to fly around the room by your “will” alone. Let me know the outcome; please send photos.