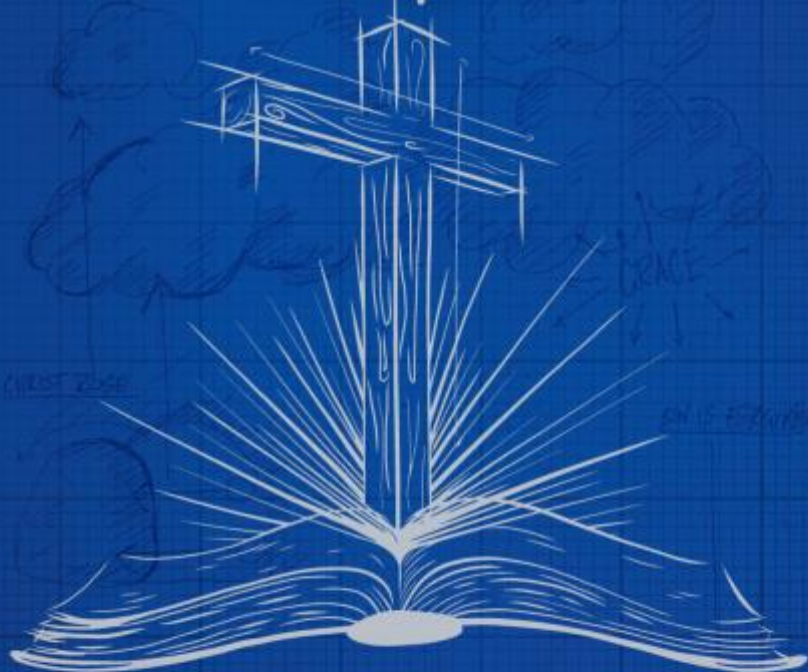


The  
BIBBLE

Blueprint



Our Gospel Creed

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*The Bible Blueprint: Our Gospel Creed*

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## Introduction

### *The Gospel According to Islam*

As I sat in the back of the taxi, I knew what was coming. Mahmoud was excited to have a foreigner as a passenger. You could see the dollar signs dancing in his eyes, although they dimmed some when I gave directions in Arabic. But his eyes did light back up when I brought up religion. In the West, we are taught to avoid talking with strangers about religion and politics. I learned quickly in the Middle East that if we didn't talk religion and politics, we would not have a whole lot to say to one another! I inquired of Mahmoud about his Islamic beliefs, and he responded by inquiring about my Christian beliefs. Our conversation was spirited and enlightening and we laughed and argued for the entire ride. Then came the expected question I heard many times before. "You are a good man, why don't you become a Muslim?" Mahmoud sincerely asked me.

I cannot count the number of times I have been asked to become a Muslim. With deep sincerity, Muslims want me to join them. It always astounds me how comfortable they are in sharing their faith and inviting me to share in it. These taxi drivers, shop owners, businessmen, and doormen probably have never had a course on "How to Share the Gospel of Islam." I suspect not one has memorized an Islamic salvation presentation. Yet each one of them is comfortable knowing what they believe and

what they want me to believe. You see, Islam rises and falls on a simple message: *la ilaha illa Allah, wa Muhammad rasul Allah* (there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah).

This Islamic creed, I believe, is the reason Muslims are so comfortable sharing their beliefs. I have spoken with Muslims around the world and, whether from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, or the United States, they all say the same thing: “Recite the *shahada* (testimony) three times to become a Muslim.” There is no variance in their gospel creed, no one adds to it or takes away from it. It is the same unifying message proclaimed by Muslims around the world and it is powerful.

### *The Gospel According to Christianity*

Contrast this with the way Christians present their Gospel. I have been taking personal surveys for over ten years, asking Christians from a variety of backgrounds, “What is the Gospel? What is the creed or core teaching we must believe in order to be saved?” I have administered these surveys in churches, seminary classes, small-group meetings, pastors and missionary conferences, and the results are always the same. Not once have I asked this question where I did not receive multiple varying answers from amongst the group. Those surveyed have been pastors, seminary professors, Sunday school teachers, students, yet consensus is elusive. Is it any wonder so many Christians have difficulty sharing their faith when they

ultimately cannot boil down their beliefs into a simple message?

Once I was discipling five young pastors; all graduates from a reputable conservative evangelical seminary. When I asked them about the Gospel, as usual the responses were varied. But more troubling than the fact that they could not agree on the Gospel was their rejection of the idea of the Gospel being reduced to a single statement. They scorned the notion of a simple Gospel statement as enlightenment reductionism, claiming postmodernism has shown such reductionism to be folly at best. Each departed the meeting no more unified on the Gospel than when they had arrived.

### *We Must All Be on the Same Page*

So if you were to ask a Muslim, “What must I do to enter paradise?” the answer will come straight away. You will be told to recite the testimony (*shahada*) three times and believe it. Now of course this will be added to with the other works in Islam, but this is the starting point. You do not fast during Ramadan (*som*) until you believe and recite the *shahada*. Giving alms to the poor (*zakat*) counts for nothing until you first become a Muslim. Their starting point is clear and concise.

It is time for Christians to work together in unity to identify our creed; the starting point of our salvation as given to us in Scripture. All denominational differences, all doctrinal arguments need to flow out of an agreement from this starting point, because ultimate unity in the Body of

Christ must reside in the Gospel. Coming to this agreement will not be easy since satan and his minions hate the idea of unity in the church, especially concerning something as vital as the Gospel Creed. The beauty of the Gospel is its simplicity, and Christians agree that God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), yet many unwittingly contribute to the confusion of the Gospel even, as will be seen, when they are trying to defend it.

## The Simplicity of the Gospel

### *Confusing the Gospel*

When I teach theology courses, I usually begin with a simple illustration. I place on a table a large-print Bible. Next to it I place an eight-volume set of books on systematic theology by the founder of the seminary I attended. I then pause for a moment to let the visual comparison sink in. The contrast is obvious. In one volume is the revealed Word of God. It contains everything the LORD wanted us to know about Him, His creation, and His plan. On the other hand, in eight volumes, is the human explanation of a few doctrines from the Word of God. The conclusion is clear: What God has made simple, humans tend to make complex!

Now, this is not to denigrate work that probes the depth of theology, but oftentimes, the beauty of the Gospel and theology is lost in the details. An expansion of the Gospel is certainly needed, but it must be that, *an expansion*. A clear starting point must always be established before expanding on something, or potential for confusion greatly increases. Too many books and articles do not set this starting point in stone, leaving the audience to feel like they need to fully understand substitutionary atonement or the minute details of corporeal resurrection in order to be saved. And while these points are true and need at some point to be explained, they are just that, *explanations of the Gospel*. But in our explanation, we must always be pointing



back to the starting point of the Gospel. For just like violin virtuosos will always return to scales in mastering their art, so also must Christian theologians always return to the definition of the Gospel in order to master theirs.

### *So What Is the Gospel?*

It is always wise to answer a theological question with Scripture as it is best to let people wrestle with the Word of God, not human opinions. Scripture gives a shockingly simple answer found in the first five verses of First Corinthians chapter fifteen, which states clearly the Gospel that Paul the Apostle preached. The full passage reads:

*<sup>1</sup>Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup>and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

Do not miss what Paul says in the first two verses: this is the very Gospel that he preached and the Corinthians received, resulting in their salvation. Take notice also in verse three where Paul mentions receiving the Gospel. From whom or where did he receive it? Galatians 1:12 tells

us he received it “through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul then goes on to explain in Galatians that he submitted this Gospel to the leaders in Jerusalem (Peter, James, and John) and they accepted the Gospel Paul was preaching. The acceptance of this Gospel message by the leading Apostles to the Jews reveals two points: Paul was teaching the true Gospel and there is one unified Gospel for both Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 2:7).

So simply put, the Gospel is:

**Christ died for our sins and was resurrected on the third day.**

That, my friends, is the heart of the Gospel. That is the basic Creed, the starting point for Christianity. It cannot be reduced any more than that. However, it surely can be expanded upon, ad infinitum!

As always, there is a tendency to resist such simplicity of the Gospel. “Are you telling me, that’s it? What about God and His nature? What about Love? What about the gospel of the kingdom?” And the objections continue that it cannot be this simple. But it is hard to argue against this passage. Paul clearly says this is the Gospel he preached and by which the Corinthians were saved. And even the grammatical structure Paul uses helps us understand the essence of the Gospel. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner summarize brilliantly how the verse structure in this passage points to this being the essence of the Gospel:

Paul uses four key verbs to summarize the gospel: He died, was buried, was raised, was seen (or appeared). The most prominent verbs are the first and third (died and was raised): the two modified by ‘in accordance with the Scriptures.’ The second and [fourth] verbs (was buried and was seen) each seem to serve to reinforce and confirm the verb that precedes. Christ’s burial reinforces the fact that he had truly died. The fact that Christ was seen by witnesses after his resurrection confirms the fact that he had truly been raised from the dead.<sup>1</sup>

The grammatical structure Paul uses confirms the essence of his Gospel message: that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected on the third day.

Again, this is the starting point and foundational statement to the Gospel. As a theologian, I am the first to advocate for exegetical resources expounding on the Gospel and we certainly need more resources! But nothing more needs to be added to the Gospel for salvation. Our work as believers in this Gospel message is to help those who don’t follow Jesus to understand and believe the very meaning of this Creed.

### *The Gospel That Saves*

You cannot enter the kingdom of heaven by believing anything less than the above Creed. You cannot be born again and believe that Jesus was just a man. When you

made the decision to become a Christ follower, you might not have had your Christology figured out. You probably had no idea what the hypostatic union was, but you knew that Jesus was more than a man. Most likely you did not even know the words corporeal resurrection let alone know that there are people who deny this. Yet you knew your life was wrong, you did wrong, and you needed help. Not relenting, you pursued truth in order to find peace and hope in your life. You never thought that Jesus died for you and that He was still dead. You knew He was alive and could help you. So you cried out to Him and your life was changed. Paul, who preached this Gospel, knew that this simple *Creed* was the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16).

**Mirror Time:** Stop for a moment and look in the mirror. That last section either put a smile on your face or it did not. You cracked a small smile because you remember how little you knew, but you knew your life was changed when you received salvation. Because you knew you were not right (theologically, you were a *sinner*). And you heard about this Jesus and that He could help your “not rightness” (theologically, He could *save* you). And so you cried out to Him and placed your faith in what He did on the cross. You didn’t know much, but you knew enough, and your life was changed.

But if you did not crack a smile and if reading that paragraph seemed confusing or made you want to argue with it, perhaps you are believing that your saying a prayer

saved you. Or going forward during a service saved you. Or your good works saved you. Perhaps you think there is more to salvation than simply believing that simple statement. Perhaps . . . it is time for you to reconsider what salvation really is.

## Who Do You Say That I Am?

### *The Great Confession*

The pressure was on. Jesus was inquiring of Peter what people were saying about Him. Peter responded by giving safe answers, that some people said Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or a prophet. These were all *men*, and to claim that Jesus was a reincarnate man, well that might have been thought strange, but not blasphemous.

Peter must have felt the pressure when Jesus looked at him, along with his friends, and said, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered for the group, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In his confession, we have Jesus’ first proclamation of the Church (read the account for yourself in Matthew 16:13–20). Let us not miss the reason that Jesus made the proclamation. He proclaimed He was going to build His Church because *Peter got it right!*

John is the only Gospel that does not record this historic event. However, John places the emphasis on the confession of Jesus as the Christ in a powerful way. He does not use an apostle to proclaim it. He does not even use a man to proclaim it. He uses a woman with a sketchy background to declare the identity of Jesus. If you have never read the story of the woman at the well in John chapter four, I encourage you to set this booklet aside and read this amazing narrative. You will see how one person recognizing Jesus is the Christ can change a community.

Getting the Gospel right starts with the confession Peter or the woman at the well made. Did you notice that Paul does not say that *Jesus* died for our sins, but instead said that *Christ* died for our sins? Have you ever wondered why? Is the difference really that important? Yes! Because when you confess Jesus as *Christ*, you are summarizing all the Old Testament theology in a single word. Saying *Jesus* is to proclaim a man. To proclaim Jesus as *Christ* is to proclaim the Son of God, the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Suffering Servant, the Conquering King of Kings. Again, Peter got it right, and Jesus blessed his answer.

### *The Christ*

Another survey I love to do with Christians is to ask, “Why is Jesus called *Christ*?” The answers are startling. Many people think it is His last name. Others know that it is a title, but have no idea what it means. For those who are astute, they recognize that it is the New Testament term for the Old Testament word *Messiah*. But again, they are unsure what *Messiah* means or the theology behind it.

The beginning of the Gospel is to proclaim Jesus as *Christ*. The title *Christ* is indeed the New Testament term for *Messiah* and the basic meaning of both terms is “the Anointed One.” Every pastor and teacher worth their salt would instill in their people this knowledge that Christ is equivalent to Messiah and both mean the Anointed One.

So what? Now this is always a good question to ask

when listening to a preacher. Why is it important that Jesus is called *Christ* or *Messiah* in Paul's definition of the Gospel? Because it seems that common sense would dictate that people who call themselves Followers of Jesus should know fully who Jesus is. Many people claim to be Christians but are not. They are not because they follow a Jesus who is not the Christ. To them Jesus is an angel, or a prophet, or an evolving god. But that is not who Jesus is. He is what Peter proclaimed Him to be, "*the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.*"

### *The Theology of Christ*

This booklet is not a treatise on the deity and humanity of Jesus. The historic Church has always proclaimed from the earliest creeds that Jesus is fully both. Where did they get this idea? Can we really believe some ancient people held a meeting, determining to invent this crazy idea about Jesus being fully God and fully man and then be willing to die for it? No, they searched the Scriptures and saw a verse like Zechariah 12:10, where the LORD says, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn" (NASB).

They contemplated a verse like Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin



shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” What are they to think when it says this person is born a son, meaning He’s human, but He’s also born of a virgin and He’s called, *Immanuel* which means “God with us?” They also read other passages such as Psalm 2 and 110, Isaiah 9, and Daniel 7, and concluded that the Messiah was indeed the Son of God. But they also read Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 12 and saw that this Messiah was human, would suffer, and die. Obviously God cannot die, so they rightly concluded that the Messiah was also a man.

Again, I am not trying to prove this point, but no born again Christian, from the time of Peter and Paul until today has ever denied this fact. It is the foundation of the Gospel. If a person denies that Jesus is fully God and fully man, he is denying that Jesus is *the Christ*. He is denying the Gospel. But confess that Jesus is the Christ, and the foundation for the Gospel has been laid. It was no ordinary man who died for our sins and rose again. It was Jesus *the Messiah, the Son of the living God*.

By confessing Jesus is the *Messiah*, you are confessing that He is the great Prophet, Priest, and King. Remember, *Messiah* or *Christ* means “the Anointed One.” Now consider for a moment who was anointed in the Old Testament. As priest, Moses anointed Aaron as High Priest (Exodus 40:13; Leviticus 8:12). As king, Samuel anointed David as king (1 Samuel 16:13). And as prophet, Elijah was called to anoint Elisha as a prophet (1 Kings 19:16). We know that Jesus is now our High Priest (Hebrews 8–10). We also know that Jesus is the Son of David, the King

(Matthew 1:1, 6; Luke 1:32). Interestingly, other priests and kings were anointed in the Old Testament. But we have only one instance of a prophet being anointed, Elisha. And the New Testament clearly makes the connection between Elijah and John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14). It is no surprise that Jesus insisted that John baptize Him “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:14–15). He understood that this baptizing was His anointing for ministry (For a thrilling study, compare the miracles of Elisha with the miracles of Jesus).

Why am I telling you this? Because we need to encourage each other not only to learn the Bible more, but to learn the Jesus of the Bible more.

My wife loves to read. Sometimes she will read one of her favorite books four, five, six times. When I ask her how she can read the same book again, she responds she is always seeing new things and loving the story even more. So too, our falling deeper in love with Jesus is proportionate to the time we spend getting to know Him better in His Word, in addition to spending daily time in worship, prayer, and Scriptural meditation.

## The True Missing Piece in Our Gospel

### *An Apparent Contradiction*

If I were to ask you what the largest religion in the world is, how would you answer? About half of those whom I ask this question get it wrong and say Islam and about half get it right. The correct answer is Christianity. But think about this for a moment: Jesus said the path to destruction is wide and many enter it, but the gate to life is narrow and few enter it (Matthew 7:13–14). How is it that the statistics seem to say that many enter life, but Jesus said few? Perhaps the answer is that not all who call themselves Christian really are. How can this be since they all name the Name of Jesus? All believe that Jesus is the Christ. They believe He died on a cross. And they also believe He was resurrected. We can see this in the celebration of Easter. So it seems they believe the Gospel and thus, Jesus' statement seems to present us with an apparent contradiction.

Or does it?

Did you catch my mistake in the paragraph above? It is easy to miss and be fooled. To believe that *Jesus is the Christ*, who died on a cross and rose again is not the Gospel. As part of my surveys the thing that surprises me most is the number of answers that are *almost* right, just like the statement above. But there is something missing. And for many people sitting in a church service week after week, it is the piece that has been missing all of their lives,

and there is no salvation without it.

### *Why Is It Always Hitler?*

If you have ever shared the Gospel before, you will easily be able to relate to this scenario. You sit with a person and he looks pleasant enough, smiling and enjoying the talk until the conversation comes around to the topic at hand, the Gospel. He agrees that Jesus was who He said He was. And he also agrees that Jesus was crucified and rose again on the third day. So far, so good. But once the idea comes that he himself is a sinner who needs a Savior, the discussion becomes awkward. “Yeah, I’ve done some bad things,” he admits, “everybody has.” And you agree. But then he says those famous words I have heard countless times, “But I’m no Hitler,” he exclaims, as if that ends the awkwardness. Unfortunately, you need to lean in and help him understand that at the heart level, he is as lost as Hitler was. He’s just as separated from God, just as hopeless apart from Christ.

It is not difficult to get a person to admit they have flaws (unless they are a true egotist!), but to get a person to admit *they are flawed* is another matter. Hence, the reason many use the Hitler defense as a scapegoat. It is their weak attempt to say, “I’m really not that bad.” Such flawed understanding of sin and the depravity of humans is the reason so many “Christians” are not born again. It is as if they have never stopped and looked fully at themselves and admitted, “I’m messed up, I need help.” When a person

admits they have sins that is one thing, but when a person admits they are flawed, messed up, spiritually dead; i.e. *a sinner*, the story changes. For most people in churches, Jesus is safely at arm's length, existing *out there*; close enough to help when needed, but they keep Him far enough to protect themselves against personal conviction. In order for salvation to occur, Scripture tells us He desires to dwell *in us*. The paradox is many "Christians" want Jesus to fix their sins, solve their problems, but not necessarily fix *them*.

### *Personalizing the Gospel*

Not to be overdramatic, but if there is one key word in Paul's definition of the Gospel, my bet would be the word "our." Because the person who confesses this Creed has brought the reality of what Jesus did on the cross down to his or her own personal life. Let us remember our grammar as well as our theology: I am part of "our." *I* must confess that *I* am a sinner. *I* must confess that Jesus died for *my* sins. Receiving salvation is a humbling experience because you must walk through the process of being born again.

Have you ever watched a baby be born? I have had four of them and it is a pretty traumatic experience (okay, I admit it was harder on my wife than on me). Seriously, the birth of a child is such an intense and powerful experience, and being born again is just as intense. Just like you watch the mother warring with the pain, you watch the person warring in her soul as satan is doing everything in his

power to keep her from making that final decision, telling her she is not that bad, there are other ways, or to wait for another day. Yet the Holy Spirit is beckoning her to come and see Jesus as the only answer, not just for her problems, *but for her*. And just like that moment when the baby is laid on its mother's chest, you sit there witnessing the pain of original sin give way to ultimate love, and like a newborn baby, nothing is more beautiful than when the process is complete. Everything started at the moment the person admitted she had problems. And then admitted she had an inherent problem, and then realized Jesus did something about that problem. He died for it. He died for your inherent problem as well.

## **This Is Not the End**

### *Plato Was Wrong*

The novelist Pearl Buck was a child of missionaries in China. She recalls how her infant brother took fever and died as happened with so many missionary children living in primitive areas. When friends attempted to comfort her mother by saying, “It is only his body that is gone,” the mother practically flew at them, crying out in her distress that she had conceived and born this little body, dressed and fed and cared for it, and that she loved *this body*.<sup>2</sup> Pearl Buck’s mother had good theology, better in fact than some Christian theologians. She understood that Platonic dualism has no place in Christianity. So did Jesus. The idea Plato taught, that spirit or mind is good and material or body is bad, contradicts everything in Scripture, from God proclaiming material creation good (Genesis 1:31) to the final resurrection of the body (Revelation 20). That is why, even though Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He wept (John 11:35). His anguished tears flowed because the death of the body is the most harrowing of earthy experiences. That is why Paul calls death the last enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26); it is satan’s little victory in a war he has lost. The death of a loved one hurts so much because we miss the presence of the body with its spirit. This is precisely the reason why death needed to be conquered.

The separation of the spirit and the body was not how

God created us. Adam's rebellion against God and his disobedience brought about this separation. I hope Pearl Buck's mother, in all her grief and sorrow, knew there was the hope of seeing that little body again, *alive*. The only reason she could have that hope is found in the Gospel: Because Jesus was raised on the third day, death does not have the final say. To not believe in the Gospel is to have no basis of hope. I cringe at funerals when I hear non-followers of Jesus talk about seeing their loved ones again. I politely keep silent out of respect, but I want to ask, "On what basis do you believe you will see your loved ones again?" In reality they have no basis for their belief, only wishful thinking.

### *Two Plus Two Does Not Equal Five*

Paul whittles down the Gospel to two verses (1 Corinthians 15:3–4), yet then spends the next fifty-four verses defending one aspect of the Gospel: the resurrection. But why? Because seeing a resurrected person is not an everyday occurrence! So Paul lists names of people who could testify that they saw Jesus resurrected. Many of these people were still alive when Paul wrote his letter to the church in Corinth. It was not a myth, nor was it wishful thinking. It was historical fact. Can you imagine Paul's reaction today if he were alive to hear there are people who use the name Christian yet deny the physical resurrection of Jesus? To Paul, it would be like describing a square circle or claiming two plus two equals five; it would not make



sense.

Paul strongly emphasized the resurrection because the Christian hope of heaven and the afterlife is not based on blind faith or sentimental desire. It is based on historical truth. It assures us what Jesus predicted about Himself did indeed happen. If it did not occur, the simple result would be to close up shop and go home. We are either blind fools or pie-in-the-sky sentimentalists. Or to put it in biblical terms, “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19). The implication is clear: if we are going to be resurrected, we must think a bit about eternity while here on earth.

### *Lacking Power*

When I take surveys asking people what the Gospel is, there are many who are close in their answers. They correctly call Jesus the Christ, and they often mention His substitutionary work on the cross. But surprisingly that is where they stop. They bury Jesus with no thought in their answer of getting Him out of the grave! For many evangelicals, it is also the way they live their lives. They know the forgiveness of their sins and have assurance of salvation, yet their lives are off, just like their answer to another question I ask on my personal survey.

Once I have had the chance to explain the Gospel to a person or group of people, I like to do a follow-up question. I usually ask it this way: “Before Jesus ascended to heaven, what did He promise the disciples they would receive?”

Nine times out of ten people blurt out, “The Holy Spirit.” While this is in a sense true, it is not what Jesus emphasized. In Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8, Jesus promised His disciples they would receive *power* when the Holy Spirit came to them. Too many Christians fail to make this connection, debating about secondary issues when it comes to the Holy Spirit. The real issue is *power* and that is the point all Christians should agree upon. Jesus has promised us resurrection power to defeat the spiritual forces who wage war against us. This same power enabled Jesus to perform the miracles He performed. That is why He could make the outrageous claim that we, His disciples, would be able to do greater works than even He did while on earth (John 14:12).

Unfortunately, too many followers of Jesus lack this resurrection power, failing to see strongholds broken in their lives (2 Corinthians 10:4–5) and powerful answers to their prayers (Mark 11:22–24). It is not only individuals who lack supernatural power, but many institutions and even entire denominations that once burned bright for Christ now barely have a spark. They have lost their power, reducing their burning flame to the flicker of a powerless religion. As the old preacher Samuel Chadwick reportedly said, “The world will never believe in a religion in which there is no supernatural power. A rationalized faith, a socialized church, and a moralized gospel may gain applause, but they awaken no conviction and win no converts.” The Gospel is not only the power of salvation; it is the power to live as well.



## Conclusion

### *Could It Be?*

Recently I watched a television special on the Roman Empire. It correctly portrayed Rome as the center of Western civilization at the time. Many Christians are startled to hear that the Jews were a despised people group and Jerusalem was some outcast city; a forgotten place when compared to Rome. Yet God, in His infinite wisdom, chose a disputed city in a tiny country on the outskirts of the Roman Empire to launch His New Covenant through His Son, the Messiah. Many Romans rejected it as absurd to think salvation for the world could come through Jerusalem when Rome was the power-center of the known world. Could it really be so?

But even today the sophisticated Romans are still around us and some are even in our churches. They bristle at the idea that salvation could come through such a simple statement. They mock that one only needs to believe the truth of a simple statement to receive a new life and assurance of heaven. In actuality, it must be that simple because Jesus said His kingdom is for those of child-like faith. He calls adults to become like children because children understand simple things (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17).

### *What Will You Do with Jesus?*

It is time to end this discourse on the Gospel. While this booklet is about the Gospel and the great need for a basic Gospel Creed to use as a concise and powerful starting point for Christianity, we must always remind ourselves: the Gospel is about Jesus. Jesus *is* the Gospel! He is the Messiah. He is the One who died for our sins. He is the One who rose from the dead. What we make of the Gospel is what we ultimately make of Jesus. A beautiful picture of the Gospel appears in the following story.

In the prologue to the book, *Leadership Jazz*, Max De Pree writes:

*“Esther, my wife, and I have a granddaughter named Zoe, the Greek word for life. She was born prematurely and weighed one pound, seven ounces, so small that my wedding ring could slide up her arm to her shoulder. The neonatologist who first examined her told us that she had a 5 to 10 percent chance of living three days. When Esther and I first scrubbed up for our first visit and saw Zoe in her isolette in the neonatal intensive care unit, she had two IVs in her navel, one in her foot, a monitor on each side of her chest, and a respirator tube and a feeding tube in her mouth.*

*To complicate matters, Zoe’s biological father had jumped ship the month before Zoe was born. Realizing this, a wise and caring nurse named Ruth gave me my instructions. “For the next several months, at least, you’re the surrogate father. I want you to come to the hospital every day to visit Zoe, and when you come, I want you to*

*rub her body and her legs, and her arms with the tip of your finger. While you're caressing her, you should tell her over and over how much you love her, because she has to be able to connect your voice to your touch.*"<sup>3</sup>

This is a beautiful parable of the Gospel. God saw our desperate need. He knew we needed not only His voice, but also His touch. So He sent Jesus, the Son of God who came to touch and speak into our lives. He showed us the nature of God the Father by His compassionate miracles and healings, thus proving He was the Christ, the Son of God. He touched our lives through the blood shed at the Cross (for our sins) and the Empty Tomb (for our new life), which cries out to us over and over again, "This is how much I love you."

So it is time to ask, have *you* placed your faith in this Gospel? Have you realized that *you* are a sinner and that *your* sins have separated *you* from God? Was there a time in your life when you came to the conclusion that there was nothing you could do to earn heaven? And after coming to this conclusion you did the only thing left to do, trust in God's mercy and believe He sent Jesus for *you*; that Jesus died for *your* sins; that God rose Jesus from the grave for *you*. Or, to put it very succinctly, do you, right now, believe God is deeply in love with *you*? I mean really, really loves *you*? He does! Romans 5:8 says that God did not just **say** He loved *you*, He **showed** you how much He loved *you* by sending His Son, Jesus the Messiah to die for *you*.

If you have never experienced this love and felt the

freedom of having all the things you have done wrong forgiven by God; if you have never experienced resurrection power or never known for sure you are going to heaven to be with Jesus one day, then today is your day. Drop to your knees and call out to God right now and confess your need for Him and believe in the Gospel: **Christ died for my sins and was resurrected on the third day.**

Welcome to your new life.

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If you have made a decision to believe in the Gospel or would like further information, please write me at: [dpley@servingbb.org](mailto:dpley@servingbb.org). I would be honored to pray for you.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 746.

<sup>2</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Discipline*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, 83.

<sup>3</sup>Max Depree, *Leadership Jazz*, Second Edition, NY: Doubleday, 2008, 1-2.



It is such a simple question, yet the answer has eternal significance: What is the Gospel? Amazingly, too many Christians do not know the answer to this question. In this small but powerful booklet the reader will discover the clear life-changing statement of the Gospel. It is the blueprint for living a life of power and the ultimate unifying call of the Church upon which all Christians must agree.

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