



Rev. James  
de Costobadie

# What is the Gospel?

**It is sometimes said that it takes 3 generations for the church to lose the gospel. The first generation believes it; the second assumes it; the third no longer believes it; the fourth denies it.**

If there is any truth in this then it is the second generation that is at fault, for not articulating what it knew to be true. The way we guard the good deposit is not to lock it in a secure vault as we might earthly treasure, but by continually teaching and proclaiming it as publicly as possible.

So what is the gospel we should be speaking? There are many different 'gospels' currently in circulation – including ones which focus on social justice, forgiveness, fulfilling our potential – which should indicate that not all are agreed.

**This message is summarised as: Jesus is Christ our Lord. He is the man who is the long promised King who saved his people by dying and rising, and who today is the Lord of all. God commands all people everywhere to repent and believe in him.**

Wonderfully God has not left us in the dark. The consistent NT assertion is that the gospel is the message that *Jesus is Christ the Lord*. But what does this mean?

We learn in Romans 1:2 that this gospel was promised in the OT.

In Genesis 12:3 God promised that all nations would be blessed through Abraham the man of faith. This gospel would bring blessing (it is good news) and would be wide in scope (it would be for people far beyond the reaches of Israel).

In Isaiah 40:9-11 we learn that this blessing will come when God comes to earth to rescue his people. He will come in great power yet will treat them as lambs in his arms. In Isaiah 52:7 we are told this will be a day of good news, when peace is established and salvation is brought. The following chapter makes clear this will happen

through the servant of the Lord who will die on behalf of his people to take the punishment of God and atone for their sins.

The New Testament describes the fulfilment of these promises through God's chosen servant Jesus. It does so through the paradigm of the gospel – the announcement that God makes to earth.

## **This gospel announces who Jesus is.**

He is, according to Romans 1:1-6, Jesus Christ our Lord. That is, he is a human being, Jesus – Jesus the man who really lived in 1st Century Palestine, who was of a certain height, weight and hair colour, with certain parents and siblings – he is the man Jesus.

This Jesus is the Christ – the long promised Saviour King, who has come to rescue his people from their sins and restore them to relationship with God.

And Jesus who is the Christ is now – courtesy of his resurrection and ascension - the Lord of all, to whom every knee must bow and which every tongue will confess.

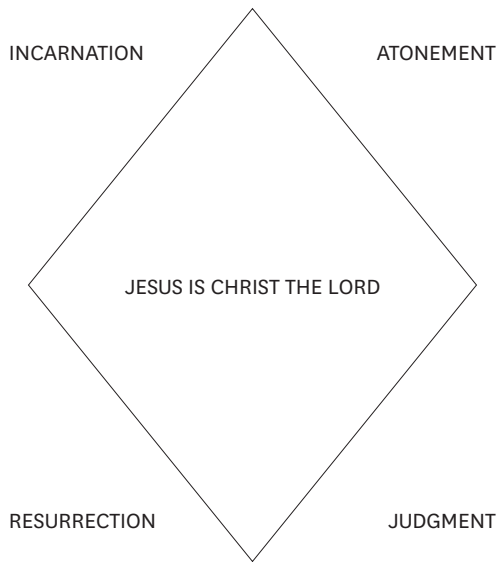
## **The gospel also announces what Jesus did.**

The apostle Paul wrote to remind the church in Corinth of this gospel by speaking of what Jesus Christ did.

First he died for our sins – according to the Scriptures, his death evidenced by the fact he was buried. Secondly, he was raised – again, according to the Scriptures, evidenced by his appearances to the Twelve and others.

This message is summarised as: Jesus is Christ our Lord. He is the man who is the long promised King who saved his people by dying and rising, and who today is the Lord of all. God commands all people everywhere to repent and believe in him.

This may be presented by the 'gospel diamond':



The Lordship of Christ is expressed through his incarnation (what he did on earth eg his power over sickness, disease and death); through his atonement (what he did on the cross, stripping Satan of his power completely); through his resurrection (where he burst through death to break its hold); and through his final judgment (which according to Revelation 14:6 is part of his gospel announcement as the ultimate expression of his Lordship).

**This 'gospel' is the most precious possession we have, for it is God's message to this world. We must believe it; we must teach it to Christians and unbelievers; and we must contend it.**

In our context we should note that the gospel can never be divorced from the person at its heart – Jesus Christ. It is not doing good things, nor is it something that God is doing outside of Christ. We should also be careful to note that the gospel cannot be divorced from the Scriptures' own description of Christ. He is the Lord of all.

This explains the appropriate response that Jesus himself calls for: repentance and faith in him. They are two sides of the same coin. Faith is trusting in Jesus Christ. Repentance is turning away from trusting in ourselves or anything else.

In putting our faith in Jesus we are given salvation; in turning away from our sins we show that we are his people and not our own, who seek to live under his protection and direction and for his glory.

This 'gospel' is the most precious possession we have, for it is God's message to this world. We must believe it; we must teach it to Christians and unbelievers; and we must contend it. It is a message that we naturally shy away from, yet it is the only message that can bring light and life to a dark world.