

# Is there more than one gospel?

## SoundWords

© SoundWords, online: 20.10.2020, updated: 18.01.2021

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Question: Have there been distinct gospels preached at different times? Are there differences in the content of the gospels which have been preached?

Answer: It is unmistakable that there are different facets related to the word “gospel” in Scripture. Depending on which subject the word “gospel” is added to, different aspects of the gospel are emphasized. Some people might think we would teach that we find two different gospels in the Bible. But it is not enough if we assume the Bible just teaches two different gospels. We can not only distinguish between the “gospel of the kingdom” (Mt 24:14) and the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) but also between the “gospel of the glory of Christ” (2Cor 4:4), “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Tim 1:11), the “gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15) or the “everlasting gospel” (Rev 14:6–7). Beside this, the Scripture talks about the “gospel of God” (Rom 1:1–4), the “gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27), the “gospel of the uncircumcision” and also the “gospel of the circumcision” (Gal 2:7). They all follow the same principle: they are all good news focused on a specific aspect of the revelation of God.

If God tells us “good news”, we must look at the actual context, where the gospel is mentioned and must ask who the recipient is. Even to the people of Israel in the desert, “good news” (in Greek *euaggelion*) was preached. In the book of Hebrews, God’s intention to liberate Israel from their slavery in Egypt and to “give them rest” (Heb 4:8) in the country of Canaan, is called “good news” (Heb 4:6, NASB). The Lord Jesus proclaimed in the beginning of His ministry “the gospel of the kingdom” (Mt 4:23). The context of Verse 17 shows us that this happened while He was preaching that this kingdom “is at hand” (Mt 4:17). There is no doubt about it: This message was for the Jews because they were expecting a kingdom of peace and it was to them that the Lord was sent (Mt 15:24).

These two examples show that we cannot apply every gospel to us as Christians and the term “gospel” not necessary deals with Christianity. Because of that we should not be surprised that the “gospel of the kingdom” is not directed to us. The context indicates that the Jews are addressed. The passage talks about the completion of this age and the time close to the visible coming of the Lord Jesus on this earth. The time “is at hand” again when the kingdom will be raised up publicly, because the King is about to come back to His people. [In our book *Der vergessene Reichtum* we prove in section § 18 and § 17.4.1.3 why this “good news” applies to the Jewish people, which becomes clear when we see this gospel in the context of the Daniel’s 70th week.]

By stoning Stephen, Israel had forfeited the opportunity that the kingdom would have been raised up in their day (see book § 3.7). The gospel of the kingdom could no longer be preached in that way. Paul preached about the “kingdom” (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31) but we no longer read, that he preached the “gospel of the kingdom.” In the context of “kingdom”, the Holy Spirit does not have Paul use the word “gospel”. Nevertheless “the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8) were still preached, and this especially in its mysterious form: our Lord has an invisible kingdom on this earth where He is expecting obedience regarding His word and which contains a precious treasure for Him. Even today we preach these things regarding the moral aspect of this kingdom where “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” will be found (Rom 14:17).

When Philip started to share the gospel after Stephen was stoned (Acts 8:12), we do not have

the same Greek term for the “gospel of the kingdom” as we find it in Matthew 4:23. Rather we find the verbform “proclaiming-good-message-about” followed by the term “*peri tes basileias tou theou*” which was also used by Paul in Acts 19:8 (there it is translated as “things concerning the kingdom of God”).

When we read however, of the “gospel of the glory of Christ” (2Cor 4:4, NKJV) clearly the Holy Spirit is not focusing on “good news” about a kingdom on this earth. Furthermore, the “good news” is that Christ is sitting highly exalted at God’s right hand, crowned with glory and honor. Nevertheless, in a sense the “gospel of the glory” is contained in the “gospel of the kingdom”. Christ has not received His visible earthly kingdom and is not sitting on “the throne of His glory” on this earth (Mt 25:31), yet He is at God’s right hand on the throne of His Father (Rev 3:21). He has received – as the Lord who went on His journey (cf. Mt 25:15) – a kingdom, which He is ruling from heaven, while He is away; in Matthew 13:11 the Lord Jesus calls this kingdom a mystery. The special thing about it is, that we belong to this hidden, mysterious kingdom on this earth and at the same time we are joined with Christ in His glory in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6).

Also, how big is the difference between the “gospel of the glory of Christ” (2Cor 4:4, NKJV) – respectively the “glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Tim 1:11) and the “everlasting gospel” (Rev 14:6–7)! The first is focusing on the glorification of the Lord our God, in its fullest extent, in the way it became possible after the work was accomplished on the cross. During the tribulation, the angel will preach the “everlasting gospel”. It is all about honoring God as the creator.

The apostle Paul makes it clear how different the gospel he preaches is compared to the gospel of the 12 apostles. He calls the gospel, he had received by revelation, “my gospel” (Rom 16:25) and “my doctrine” (2Tim 3:10) and showed the gospel, which he has preached “among the Gentiles” (Gal 2:2) to the other apostles. In this regard, to assume Paul and the apostle have preached one and the same gospel – although the foundation of 1. Corinthians 15:1–5 might be the same – would be careless and ignore the differences between the content of these messages. Paul’s gospel includes all other gospels. Therefore, Paul can write: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:18).

Just because always a different aspect of the gospel is highlighted, we should not assume that we can separate them too much from each other. In every form, the gospel is a blessing for those to whom it is addressed, when they recognize it. Today when we preach the gospel, in the way Paul received it, we should not forget that Paul not only preached the “gospel of the grace of God” and the “gospel of the glory of Christ”, but also the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25) where Christ is the Lord (Acts 28:31). Unfortunately, those who preach intentionally nowadays the “everlasting gospel”, preach a shorted gospel based on their lack of understanding of dispensational truth.

Just focusing on the good news which describes how to avoid hell, means that we ignore the other meanings of the gospel. The good news of the gospel includes much more, and the Holy Spirit uses – like we have seen above – various phrases to highlight different aspects of this message.

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*Der vergessene Reichtum* by D. Schürmann | S. Isenberg. Chapter 22.27, p. 694–697

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