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# The Gospel: God's Good News

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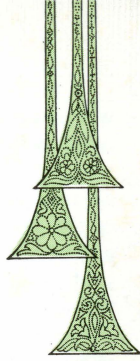
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# The Gospel: God's Good News



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# The Gospel: God's Good News

When Isaiah, the prophet, foretold the coming of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the "gospel" or "good news" about this Messiah, he urged Judah, "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for Jehovah hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem." Hundreds of years later, with Christ's appearance an accomplished fact and His gospel being preached, Paul, an apostle of Christ, wrote, "For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is God's powerful method of bringing all who believe it to heaven" (Romans 1:16, *Living Letters*). The word "gospel" as used in both the Old and New Testaments means "good tidings," "good news," and "joyous proclamation" of God's love, life, peace and salvation now offered to all men in Jesus Christ.

Last week I suggested that "when a man hears the gospel" he hears the best news of our time. I also indicated that the man who hears God's good news for him sees Jesus Christ and comes to know Him as the central truth of this great message. The "gospel" of Jesus Christ, the "good news" which He announced with His life and ministry, is that through His sacrificial death, burial and resurrection God's forgiveness and God's life are given to all obedient men and women. The story is told of a minister

who worked in London's slums with wayward girls and others whose lives had been darkened by sin and immorality. A trip out of the city took him to a Yorkshire inn for an overnight stop. Upon learning of his work, the lady of the inn showed him a picture of her daughter, a pretty girl who had long since run away from home. Her mother said to the minister as he looked at the daughter's picture: "O sir, take with you this last memento of one we loved so well, and if ever in your great city you see her face, go to her and tell her that her old home still waits for her, and her mother's heart still yearns for her." This is Christ's message to all of us who have not accepted God's loving offer to become His sons. This is the "Gospel," and it is the greatest news mankind, in any age, has ever heard. If you have never thought much about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or if you have never known what this good news was all about, please stay tuned to this station for the next few minutes as we discuss "The Gospel: God's Good News."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the timeliest news of our day. The angel that announced John the Baptist's ministry of preparation for Christ emphasized the timely character of John's ministry: And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him" (Luke 1:17). His ministry resulted from the awareness that "the dayspring from on high shall visit us," as his father Zacharias had said (Luke 1:78). John the Baptist appeared at the right time in relation to Christ's ministry to prepare for Him and for the message Christ would bring us from heaven.

Jesus Himself sensed and taught the timeliness of His own ministry and message. "Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14, 15).

Israel of the Old Testament era longed for the final revelation of God's righteousness. Throughout the late history of the Jewish nation, before the time of Christ, this yearning prominently displayed itself. Isaiah says, "Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" (Isaiah 56:1). At the right time in God's eternal purpose, a new visitation would occur and His will for man would unquestionably be published or proclaimed. This is what happened in Jesus and in His "good news" for us.



Christ's appearance occurred at God's good pleasure. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Colossians 1:19, 20).

His coming was not happenstance. Paul says that Christ appeared in clarification of "the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things." This means that "the manifold wisdom of God" is now made known to men through the Church "according to the eternal purpose which he (God) purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:8-11).

When every factor in divine and human history cried out for the fulfillment of God's intentions for man, or, in Paul's words, "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4, 5).

The "Word" became flesh and dwelt among men in the person of Jesus the Christ, thus providing all men the power and the right, upon their obedient belief, to become "sons of God" (John 1:1-3, 12, 14). It couldn't have happened at a better time! A common language united the world while faltering Judaism and failing paganism gave the men no hope. The greatest totalitarian power to that time ruled the world in such a way that men had little purpose in life. The heavy hand of government, the condemning hand of Old Testament perfectionism, the lascivious hand of paganism, the fat hand of material prosperity, made the world of Jesus' day cry out for help!

The Apostles of Christ made the formal, "grand opening," announcement of the complete "good news" that God would help man in Christ. On the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, fifty days after the crucifixion and approximately ten days after Christ's ascension, Peter and the other apostles spoke to Jews gathered for this festival from all over the world. Peter's announcement and the crowd's reaction are recorded by Luke, the New Testament historian, in *Acts* 2.

Peter first says, "This is the right time." This is the very time Joel mentioned in his prophesy, "the last days" (Acts 2:17-21). Furthermore, Peter states, "This is the right message." It is the result of God's Spirit received into our lives so that we, as Jesus promised us, have guidance for all that we say this day (Acts 1:4-6; 2:1-4; 16-21). The last verse Peter quotes from Joel shows the nature of the message they proclaimed that day: "And it shall be, that

whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Then Peter asserts, "This is the right man — Jesus Christ." Listen as he says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know . . ." (Acts 2:22). There is no successful repudiation of what He did and who He claimed to be, the apostles charged. But, their announcement continues, "You did the wrong thing by him." "Him, being delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: . . ." (Acts 2:23). "God, however, corrected your grave error in His resurrection from the dead," they said. "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). In this mighty demonstration of divine power and approval of Christ's ministry, David's prophecy of Christ's resurrection was fulfilled, the apostles also said (Acts 2:25-31). "So, today," the announcement continues, "this resurrected Jesus sits at the right hand of God exalted, directing all that you see and hear" (Acts 2:33). Then came the concluding statement of this "good news." "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36).

The "Gospel" had been preached — Christ's death, burial and resurrection proclaimed. The result of this announcement was immediate and significant for our lives today. That leads me to say that "God's good news" for today's man requires a decision with eternal consequences.

The Gospel preached at Pentecost in *Acts* 2, by all modern standards, was presented to the wrong audience at the wrong time by the wrong spokesmen. This crowd had come to Jerusalem for an Old Testament festival. Some of that very crowd had clamored for Christ's death just fifty days earlier. Peter, one of the spokesmen that day, had publicly denied the very Jesus he now presented as man's only hope. But the "Gospel" is God's power, Paul later tells us, and here we see that power demonstrated.

When Peter concluded the lesson by announcing Christ's resurrection and ascension, which events proclaimed the divinity and lordship of Jesus the Christ, the crowd reacted in this manner: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

In the *Acts of the Apostles* we read of repeated and similar response to God's good news. When "the Lord

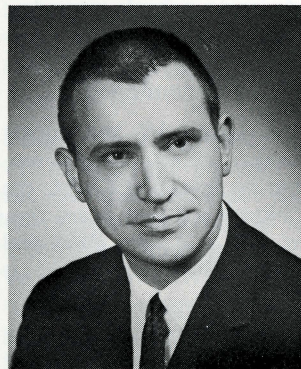
Jesus" was preached at Antioch, "a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:20, 21). The prisonkeeper at Philippi, following a late-night encounter with Paul and Silas asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). And Saul's meeting with Christ on the Damascus road caused this dedicated enemy of Christianity to humbly ask, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10).

Even more important, however, than the inevitable response of all men who hear God's good news, is the answer given to their questions, the directions provided for acceptable response. John the Baptist instructed those who heard his preliminary "good news," "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance . . ." (Luke 3:8). When the Gospel of Christ was fully presented for the first time at Pentecost, Peter and the other apostles gave specific directions to those who inquired. "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). At verse forty-one of the same chapter, we read that three thousand persons "gladly received" these instructions, being baptized that same day. Reading through the rest of *Acts* one discovers that similar instructions were given other inquirers. Complete faith in Christ as developed by hearing and accepting the gospel testimony (John 20:30, 31); genuine repentance from all sin, the result of seeing oneself in the light of Christ's life and God's will (Luke 13:3; I Corinthians 7:10); public acknowledgement of faith in Christ and acceptance of His Lordship over one's life (Romans 10:9, 10); and baptism into union with Christ, with His death and resurrection, were the prescribed methods of surrender to and acceptance of God's forgiveness, life, and power (Acts 8:12, 13; 36-38; 9:18; 10:44-48; 16:30-34; Romans 6:1-7; Colossians 2:12; 3:1-4).

Carefully consider your response to Christ's "good news." John the Baptist was beheaded; Christ was crucified; Paul and other gospel preachers in the first century were ridiculed by some who heard their message of hope and salvation. The Jews saw the Gospel as a stumbling-block, while the Gentiles branded it foolishness. But those who obediently and faithfully responded to the announcement of God's love and life found therein "the power of God unto salvation." Speaking of His Gospel, Jesus says, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Matthew 11:6).







John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.