

1. Your Gospel Is Too Small

Your Gospel is too small.

Wait, what?

That's right. The Gospel of Jesus Christ that we have preached in modern times is woefully incomplete. I don't mean that what has been shared with you is insufficient. Even a portion of the Gospel is sufficient for someone to put their trust in Jesus. The thief on the cross was justified through a simple declaration of faith that doesn't sound anything like the sinner's prayer. I mean that if the Gospel, as it is typically preached today, was in the form of a book, entire chapters would be missing.

If you ask a Christian today what the Gospel is, the answer will invariably point in some way to the content of 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 ESV

Some will extend this through verse 8 to include Christ being seen after His resurrection. I have seen a few extend the meaning of the Gospel through verse 19 so that the resurrection of believers is included. Better, but still incomplete.

Others may point to a confession, such as the Apostles' Creed or the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

1. Your Gospel Is Too Small

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of the saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Even more detail, but still incomplete.

What is the Gospel?

So, what is the Gospel? To be clear, the Gospel *is* the content of 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and the content of 1 Corinthians 15:1-19, but it is also so much more than that. So what's missing?

First, let's figure out what the Gospel is called. Is it the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1)? Or the Gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14)? Or the Gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15)? Is it Paul's Gospel (Rom. 2:16)? Is it our Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14)? Paul says in Galatians 1:7 that there is only one Gospel. If there is not another one, then all of these names must refer to the same Gospel. So, why all the confusion around the name?

Have you ever wondered what Gospel Jesus preached? If the Gospel message is centered around Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, then what does Matthew mean when he says Jesus went throughout Galilee "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23)? If Jesus hadn't died yet, what gospel was He preaching? We know He wasn't preaching openly that He would die and rise from the dead because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8 that if "the rulers of this age understood" the secret and hidden wisdom of God "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

What about Jesus' statement that if the Temple was destroyed, he would raise it up in three days (John 2:19)?

Well, that's certainly cryptic, isn't it? The only people Jesus openly told that He must die were his disciples, and even they didn't want to believe Him (Matt. 16:21-22). Strangely, He also told the disciples *not* to tell anyone that He was the Christ (Matt. 16:20). When the demons recognized Jesus as the Son of God, He also rebuked them and told them to be quiet (Luke 4:41). If you were a Jew listening to Jesus preach in a synagogue or from a boat, what gospel was He talking about if He didn't mention His death and resurrection or even that He was the Christ?

Clearly, He was talking about the kingdom of God. I'm not sure that I've ever heard a Gospel presentation that was centered on the kingdom of God though. Now, Paul says there is only one Gospel, so whatever Jesus was preaching must be part of what the Gospel is. So what was the content of that message?

1. Your Gospel Is Too Small

And if Jesus could preach the Gospel without mentioning His death, burial, and resurrection, could the Gospel then have been preached even before the time of the Messiah on earth?

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham...

Galatians 3:8a ESV

Wow! God Himself preached the Gospel to Abraham. I would love to hear that sermon. Who wouldn't show up to hear God be the guest speaker? What did God say?

...saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."

Galatians 3:8b ESV

Seriously? That's it? God Himself preaches the Gospel, and that's all that He had to say? I guess it makes sense, though. Jesus is a descendant of Abraham. This Gospel message that God preached is just a prophecy that Jesus would come from Abraham, right?

Thankfully, God is more interesting than that. A lot more. And in the shortest sermon ever, He packed in all the clues to the most epic story ever told.