

The Gospel

Galatians 3:26 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

What is the Gospel? There are several ways that the word Gospel is used in the Scriptures. To be clear, it is a synonym for (not separate) from the whole of the New Testament and the doctrine and Law of Christ (1 Timothy 1:8-11). It literally means “Good News”, as used in Mark 1:1. In Galatians 3:8, it generally refers to the means in which God justifies men. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul provides a very specific definition of the word “Gospel”. According to this passage, the Gospel is defined as these events:

1. Jesus DIED for our sins according to Scripture;
2. Jesus was BURIED;
3. Jesus ROSE FROM THE DEAD on the third day, all according to Scriptures.

Those New Testament books we call the Gospels are those letters in which this series of events is recorded. As we know, there are four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Three are by eye-witnesses; two are by apostles, two by prophets. They do not all contain the same events in the life of Christ; as with any history book, they each look at different aspects of the Life of Jesus. Some see that Matthew pertains to Jesus as King, Mark to Jesus as a Servant, Luke to Jesus as a man, and John to Jesus as God. If so, then this lines up with the BRANCH prophecies of the Old Testament, which state that the Branch was King, Servant, Man and God. King (Jeremiah 23:5-6), Servant (Zechariah 3:8-9), Man (Zechariah 6:12-13), and Jehovah (Isaiah 4:2).

When we read the Gospel accounts, we are surprised to their differences in record. Only two contain a record of His birth; one of them does not record the instituting of the Lord’s Supper or the transfiguration. Even in regards to the arrest, trial, execution, burial and resurrection, they have different (not contradictory) pieces of information. Therefore, it is of great interest when they all contain the same point. All four contain the record of the freeing of a criminal named Barabbas. Since the Gospel’s necessarily could not cover all of the events of the life of Jesus (John 21:25), why did all four writers feel his story was necessary to explain the Gospel?

Barabbas witness to the events of Christ’s death is recorded in for places (Matthew 27:15-20; Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:17-22; John 18:39-40). We are told that he was a notorious prisoner guilty of a number of different crimes, all worthy of death. Perhaps Pilate chose him as the alternate to Jesus because of his notoriety; certainly no one would want this man set free, and therefore the crowds would demand Jesus, whom we are told Pilate desired to free (John 9:12). But to his dismay, the crowds demanded that Barabbas, a danger to society if ever there was one, should be set free, and Jesus should die.

Why is Barabbas so important to explaining the Gospel? We might consider these points:

1. He represents those who are rightfully condemned to die (Luke 23:41).

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death.”

2. He represents one whose penalty was paid for¹ by another.

1 Peter 2:24 “... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”

1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust.”

3. He represents one whose “debt to society” has been paid and is now free.

John 19:30 “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” (“it is finished” = Tetelesti, which was used to express “paid in full”)

4. Barabbas’ telling of the Gospel is that for any man who has been saved by it:

Romans 8:15 “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Consider even the unusual nature of the name “Barabbas”. Bar-Abbas: Bar = Son; Abba = Father

We can see that Barabbas = Son of the Father, is the name for any who have been saved by the Gospel!

¹ Not substituted, but removed by their actions