

I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

By Chris Perry

Postmodernism; Denominationalism; Murder; Political corruption; Terrorism; Rising gas prices; and Unemployment. We have had our fill of bad news, haven't we? If you are like me, you would rather stare at a blank TV screen than watch what the evening news so often has to offer. If you listen close, you can almost hear an entire generation of people asking, "Where's the good news?" Well, friend, here it is, and it's called the Gospel.

The Greek word for gospel is euangelion, akin to the root word from which we get our English words evangelize and evangelist. The word is a compound of two other Greek words, and literally means good message. In Luke 2:10 and Romans 10:15, the same word is translated "good tidings" and "glad tidings," respectively. And what, exactly, is so good about the gospel? Well, the Gospel centers around the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice I was careful to say it "centers around"—the Gospel is not only the death, burial, and resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Paul explains the basis of what he delivered to the people of Corinth, stating in verses 3 and 4: *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."* However, the events that unfolded at the end of Christ's time on earth would be of little use to man unless there was some way to apply them to mankind's situation. Thus, the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as the means to access the saving power of those events. For instance, notice Philip, an evangelist who went to Samaria during the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. He *"preached Christ unto them"* (Acts 8:5), and many might see this as only preaching the death, burial, and resurrection. But it is of interest what the people learned: *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women"* (Acts 8:12). If preaching Christ is only preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, how is it that the people believed Philip preaching on the kingdom (or church, Matthew 16:18-19), the name of Jesus (or His authority, Acts 4:7), and the means of salvation (note that they were baptized, something they could only have learned from Philip's preaching)? Thus, the good news of the Gospel is that there is a Savior who died, was buried, rose again, and ascended to sit on the

right hand of the throne of God, and that Savior has clearly set forth what we must do to be and remain saved. Good news, indeed. Imagine walking in the shoes of someone who did not live under the New Covenant. Job, for example, longed for what only the Gospel provides. He asked on one occasion, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14), a question that was answered once and for all when Christ arose as the "firstfruits" (I Corinthians 15:20-23). He also bemoaned, "*Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both*" (Job 9:33), a statement indicating that before Christ there was no go-between to forever close the chasm between God and man. Before Christ, there was no hope (Ephesians 2:12-13) and, ultimately, there was no salvation (Hebrews 10:4, 12). For all mankind, from Adam to Job to you and me, the Gospel is the best news ever heard.

But herein lies the paradox: the good news is also the bad news. If the Gospel is God's only means of saving man, and it is (Romans 1:16), then what about those who do not obey the Gospel? Paul would strongly charge:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there is some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

There is only one system of good news, and any attempt to follow any other system brings only bad news. Again, Paul does not hesitate to describe just how bad the news will be, for he states that the Final Judgment will find God "*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

For those who accept its precepts, the Gospel is reason to "*rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*" (Philippians 4:4). Even in hard times, those who are obedient to the Gospel can "*rejoice, and be exceeding glad*" (Matthew 5:12). We have hope, and we should act like it. But the bad news will hang like a thundercloud over those who reject the Gospel, and in judgment there will be no way to change the channel. Tune it now, before it's too late.