

Intercontinental Church of God

14. Gospel

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The gospel is the message preached by Christ and by His Church about God's coming Kingdom, the restoration of His government on earth, and how mankind can enter that Kingdom and government. It includes the message of what Jesus has done, is doing, and shall do—and ultimately is the message of the entire Old and New Testaments. The primary purpose and commission of the Church is to proclaim this gospel in all the world as a witness to all nations, and to baptize and teach those who respond.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

The word "gospel" means simply "good news." The gospel of Jesus Christ is the *good news* that He is coming again to establish His Kingdom on this earth in place of man's governments, and the *good news* of how we can become part of that government as sons of God. Hence, the gospel is called "the gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14), and it is this gospel which Christ came preaching (same verse). As Jesus went on to say, repentance and belief in the gospel go hand in hand (Mark 1:15).

In its broadest sense, the gospel includes the whole story of the Bible—the whole panorama of what God is doing with mankind, especially God's plan of salvation and forgiveness of sins.

The true gospel is a message of hope given to a world in danger of destroying itself. Christ's return is the essential component of the biblical message. The reason for His return is the establishment of His Father's Kingdom on earth, putting an end to man's unhappy and unsuccessful rule. Hence, Christ's return and coming Kingdom is the subject of the message that He commissioned His disciples and Church to preach to all nations until His return.

In John 18:33 Pilate asked Christ, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." That is the true gospel. Christ, destined to rule this earth as the King of God's Kingdom, was to preach this message the good news to the world. He came to bear witness to the truth—to tell the world that God's Kingdom is going to rule this earth whether mankind believes it or not.

The disciples of Christ had no doubts about the message Christ was preaching. They understood He was coming again to put an end to this present evil age and to replace it with the glorious Kingdom of God that Daniel described (Dan. 2:7). The fact that the apostles asked Christ *when* His Kingdom would be set up proves that they knew about that coming Kingdom and had great expectation of it. Christ's answer to their question was that His Kingdom would not be set up until the gospel of that Kingdom should be preached to all the world as a witness (Matthew 24:14).

The message of the coming Kingdom of God includes, as an integral part, the preaching of spiritual salvation for all through Jesus Christ—that He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-3) and that He was resurrected (v. 14). The only person who has already been saved is Jesus Christ, who was resurrected from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God the Father. He is the pioneer of our salvation, the one who has gone on ahead and shown the way (Heb. 2:10). When He returns, at the end of this age, those who have died in Christ in previous years shall be raised from the dead and given eternal life to rule with Him. Previous to His return, salvation shall have been offered only to a minority; at His return, it shall be made available to all.

Thus, the true gospel is God's message to man through Christ about His coming Kingdom and how humans may enter it. It includes the ultimate purpose of human life and the plan devised by God to bring it about. This is the true destiny of man—to *become members of God's family*. This potential of being born of God as His children in His family is universally applicable to all mankind—It is the potential of men and women, Jews and Gentiles, all races and peoples, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

This gospel was understood in part by the Old Testament patriarchs and the prophets. It has been preached "since the world began" (Lk. 1:70). Hebrews 11 states that these men died in faith—not yet having received the "promises" (i.e., of the Kingdom of God and eternal life, v. 13)—"but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" waiting for God's Kingdom. Those who acknowledge the temporary physical existence of this life "declare plainly that they seek a country" (i.e., the goal of God's Kingdom, v. 14).

Likewise, many Old Testament verses show plainly that those with whom God was dealing then knew of His coming Kingdom.

"For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders: ... of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth and even forever" (Isa. 9:6-7).

Only God's government and Kingdom could be eternal—the Kingdom referred to in these verses (see also Dan. 2; Mic. 4; Zech. 14; etc.).

The gospel of the Kingdom of God can be traced from the patriarchs of Old Testament prophets, through the ministry of John the Baptist, and finally to Jesus Christ who greatly expanded our understanding of His coming Kingdom and showed how men might enter it as members of the God family. Christ commissioned the disciples to preach it in all its important aspects. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

The early disciples followed Christ's command to preach this gospel of the kingdom as a witness to all nations. The Church of God also follows this command and views as the primary reason for its existence the commission to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations in accordance with Jesus Christ's instructions. The church today strives to continue fulfilling that commission with ever-increasing effectiveness, following in the tradition of Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist (Mal. 4:5-6), by preparing the way for Christ's return through the *announcement* of that gospel message.

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This publication is intended to be used as a personal study tool. Please know it is not wise to take any man's word for anything, so prove all things for yourself from the pages of your own Bible.

The Intercontinental Church of God
P O Box 1117
Tyler, Texas 75703
Telephone: (903) 561-7070

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