

Characteristics of the Gospel

Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 24:14, Mark 1:15, Luke 4:43, 8:1, 9:2 – 6, Acts 20:24 – 25). The fact that an eternal Kingdom of God would be established was Good News to Jewish people, and was a “witness” (24:14) to all the nations. So, this seems to have two applications. (1) God fulfills His promises. (2) God governs the world. This would be good news to all living under self-serving governments (which, to greater or lesser degree, characterizes all governments). The appeal is to look beyond physical existence.

The poor have the gospel preached to them (Matthew 11:5, Luke 4:18, 7:22). Jesus cited this fact as a hallmark of the gospel and an accomplishment of a prophecy of Isaiah. Historically, the poor have been the prey of religion. The good news is that God includes all of society in His Kingdom (Mark 13:10, 16:15, Acts 15:7, Ephesians 3:6).

The gospel of grace (Acts 14:3 – 7, 14:15 – 22, 20:24 - 32, Galatians 1:6 – 11, Philippians 1:7). In most religions, the point is to manipulate the god, either to purchase favor or avoid wrath. The gracious nature of God is good news in that God is good, has our best interests in mind, is not spiteful or capricious, and truly cares about us as individuals.

The gospel of reality (Romans 1:1 – 6, 1 Corinthians 15:1 – 4, Galatians 2:14, Ephesians 1:13, Colossians 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Timothy 2:8). The good news is that this religion is based on evidence, not legend, philosophy, or fanaticism.

The gospel of salvation by faith (Romans 1:15 – 17, 2:16). Preaching that God forgives is not in itself good news. It could mean that God has rejected justice, or that the message is false. Paul’s gospel was based on faith, not that God simply passed over sin. This is particularly good news to those who can see through performance-based religion. Then the question becomes the nature of faith.

The gospel of planning (Romans 11:28, 2 Corinthians 4:3). God is not just reacting to what people do. He has a plan.

The gospel of glory (2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, 1 Timothy 1:11). The objective is to have the character of Jesus, who is the image of God.

The gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). Life is not intended to be a struggle with God, but peace with God.

The gospel of hope (Colossians 1:23, 2 Timothy 1:10, Hebrews 4:2 – 6). This is an assured hope, not a feeble hope. This hope encompasses all of the above ideas; God is in control; we are not adrift.

Peter’s definition of the gospel (1 Peter 1:3 – 25). Mercy: reborn; hope: eternal inheritance; kept: despite trials; joy: now; planned: now revealed; redeemed: Jesus’ sacrifice; Word: endures.