

The Recovery of the Jewish Gospel

by [DAN JUSTER](#) FEBRUARY 14, 2019

Why speak of a Jewish Gospel? Isn't the Gospel universal and for all peoples? Yes indeed. We use the phrase Jewish Gospel to speak of the original context of the message. This context was the first century Jewish community. The Gospel not only was first spoken to Jews in Israel, but was taken to the nations by Jews who understood it in that context. This recovery of understanding the Gospel is not the result primarily of Messianic Jewish influence, though we have had some influence, but is the culmination of 100 years of Christian scholarship delving into the original context of the message of Yeshua. This recovery amazingly parallels the restoration of Jewish people to faith in Yeshua. This is God's providence and has enormous consequences for us all.

The Recovery Turning Point

George Ladd's *Crucial Questions and the Kingdom of God* published in 1951 was a great turning point in Evangelical Theology. His later publication, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* was given to me in 1970 by Chaplain Dr. Evan Welsh, my spiritual father at Wheaton College. It has had a formative influence on my understanding of Scripture. The late Ladd was a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. The same orientation is reflected in our book *Israel, the Church and the Last Days*. John Wimber emphasized some of the themes in his preaching. Finally in the 1990s several popular books reflected this theology: Jan Hettinga's *Follow Me*, Scott McKnight's *The Jesus Creed* and Dallas Willard's amazing *The Divine Conspiracy*.

An Inadequate Gospel and the True Gospel

The essence of all these books is that the Evangelical Church of 20th century America (including Charismatics and Pentecostals) has, with few exceptions, preached and taught a partial Gospel. Sometimes, the very essence of the matter has been left out. The essence of the Gospel is the message of Yeshua Himself. It is that the “*Kingdom of God is available to you.*” Therefore the Good News is that in the coming of Yeshua, the Kingdom has come. Since that time men and women have been invited to enter into this Kingdom and to live in and from it. The grace of God makes this choice possible. Not our good works, but the death and resurrection of Yeshua are the foundation of our citizenship in the Kingdom. Saying ‘yes’ to the invitation, is however, a ‘yes’ to Yeshua being our leader. It is a ‘yes’ to a life of obedience, a ‘yes’ to discipleship, a ‘yes’ to community fellowship, a ‘yes’ to elder leadership as well. One leaves the Kingdom of darkness, of self, and of Satan, and enters into the Kingdom of Light.

Yeshua Really Brought the Kingdom

Yes, something really happened with the coming of Yeshua. The incarnation, the Word becoming flesh, brought the Kingdom of God to earth and made it available to us. This is a Jewish Gospel in context because Jews were looking for the Kingdom of God. For our people at the time, this implied the fulfillment of the hopes of the prophets, including deliverance from Rome, peace among nations, and the elevation of Jerusalem as the capital of the nations. They fully expected the re-establishment of David’s throne with his Son the Messiah on that throne. Of course, the fullness of these hopes has not yet been realized. Yet the Gospels themselves are a defense of the thesis that Yeshua in a real sense did bring the Kingdom in what Bible scholars call an “inaugurated sense.” His miracles, His preaching to the poor, and His resurrection are proof that the Kingdom has come. Its manifestation is in communities of his disciples impacting every realm of life. Committing to the Kingdom in the present will lead to the coming of the Kingdom in fullness at His second coming.

What is Available in the Kingdom?

The Gospel of the Kingdom delivers us from a watered-down gospel which both requires less and delivers less, a gospel that does not lead to discipleship and produces carnal believers who are believers in name only. The Gospel of the Kingdom as it is now coming to the fore is the only interpretation that fits the first century context. What is its distinctive importance and benefit? Here are some key points to summarize it. The true Good News of the Bible is an invitation to:

1. life in a new realm of the presence of the King through His Spirit;
2. submission to the leadership of Yeshua, to His Lordship and a life motivated by the most radical love for God and others;
3. fellowship in a new community;
4. the transformation of our lives to conformity to Yeshua and obedience to His commandments. Commandment is a good and positive word. Transformation includes marriage, family, work, and all else in our lives;
5. healing, deliverance, and signs and wonders are part of the manifestation of the extension of the Kingdom.

The Gospel is not an invitation to say a prayer so that we have assurance of heaven. Faith is not merely mental assent, but the right response to a Kingdom invitation — a response which demands faithfulness. In both Hebrew and Greek, one word stands for both faith and faithfulness. Heaven is part of the promise, but the promise is only to those who have submitted their lives to the King and his Kingdom. All of this is possible because of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Why is this so important? Because we in North America, recently, have had an anaemic Christianity that has done little to disciple. This is because we have preached a cheap grace, whereas the true Gospel saves us by a grace that motivates us to keep God's law as taught by Yeshua. This is crucial for a Messianic Jewish understanding.

In my view, only such a gospel will be powerful enough to see a viable movement for Yeshua among the Jewish people. Only a Church conformed to such a gospel can make Israel jealous.