

What is the Gospel - Part 2

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's great to see you again. And see some new faces with us too who weren't here yesterday. For those who weren't here yesterday, I thought I might just begin by catching you up on where we're at.

I didn't say much yesterday, so you haven't missed much. Just two points, basically. I just tried to do a couple of things, and I've only got one point today. So, if you were here last night, do you remember, first of all, what a gospel is?

What a gospel is. Can anyone give me a three-word summary? A gospel? Momentous good news. Thank you. So, it's news. It's the kind of thing that needs to be reported.

It's good news. In the New Testament, the euangelion vocabulary refers to good news. And it's always momentous good news. It's never about trivial things. One thing I didn't mention yesterday about the nature of gospels in general, though, is that gospels mostly refer to, this language mostly refers to momentous good news about victories in battle and the rise and fall of kingdoms.

Right? So, gospel language can be used to kind of describe wedding announcements or the birth of a child or something like that. But mostly, it's used to talk about victory in battle and the rise and fall of kingdoms.

[1 : 20] The typical gospeler would be someone like the sort of famous Greek warrior who ran back from Marathon to Athens to proclaim the Greek victory over the Persians.

Right? That is a gospel. A very typical gospel. And it fits very nicely, right, with the Christian gospel. Which is the second thing we talked about yesterday. In summary, the Christian gospel is the momentous good news that Jesus reigns.

Or that the kingdom of God has been established with the appointment of Jesus as the king. Or something to that effect. So, this morning, I want to pick up where we left off and carry on with a couple of lines of inquiry.

But first, an illustration. See, Catherine and I have been watching a documentary recently about the Cold War. Okay? It's on Netflix. It's called Turning Point, The Bomb and the Cold War.

If you're looking for recommendations, I thought it was pretty good. But anyway, it got me thinking that probably one of the most significant modern gospels was the fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of 1989.

[2 : 26] And someone, was it you, Jono? Mentioned it yesterday. Now, as I said, I was just 10 days old at the time. So, I don't remember it that well. But I've seen a documentary. So, I feel like I understand the situation pretty comprehensively.

And can speak with some authority. Now, the wall came down on November 9th, 1989. And it was a huge moment. David Hasselhoff was dancing on the wall.

And this momentous good news, not his dance specifically, but this momentous good news spread across the whole world. Because in some ways, this very simple thing, just a wall coming down, was actually a massive thing.

Because this wasn't just a back fence. This was basically a wall representing a division that split right down the entire world. And then this wall meant that loved ones could be reunited.

It meant freedom for millions as people poured across the wall out of the Soviet Union. It meant the end of oppression. The end of the Cold War.

[3 : 31] The rise of Western liberal democracy. In fact, famously, around the same time, Francis Fukuyama wrote an essay entitled The End of History.

Where he argued, What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history.

But the end of history as such. The end point of mankind's ideological evolution. And the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. Now that is an extraordinary statement, isn't it? And one that he has had to qualify and walk back and caveat and nuance and so on ever since.

And I'm not particularly here to lay into him again, as so many rightly have. But basically, I think he probably encapsulated well the feeling that was in the air at the time, going into the 90s.

[4 : 37] Basically the feeling that we had won. Which is to say that the American style of democracy had won. And American culture more broadly in terms of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, etc.

That had conquered ideologically. And that sooner or later, all countries would arrange themselves in such a fashion. Right? Fukuyama argued that it might not be a smooth path to this glorious future.

But that eventually, and inevitably, Western liberal democracy would become the final form of human government. Now, as Christians, we have, it seems to me, a very similar announcement. Except for the fact that we're saying exactly the opposite thing. But what we're saying, in effect, is that the end of history has arrived. And the final form of government has been established. Not through the evolution of human ideologies. But by divine mandate. The form of government that has been established is a covenantal theocracy.

[5 : 45] Or maybe a divine human monarchy. I'm not really quite sure what to call it. But you know what it is. So, Psalm 2, verse 4. He who sits in the heavens laughs.

Remember, he's laughing at all the kings. And he's laughing at our liberal democracies, I'm sure. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath.

And terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion. My holy hill. Now, that is the gospel, isn't it?

Jesus reigns. God has established the final form of government. The end to which all of history has been heading. Under his gracious and omnipotent hand. But sometimes it is suggested that the gospel in the Old Testament is different from the gospel in the New Testament.

Or again, that the gospel Jesus proclaimed is different from the gospel that his apostles proclaimed. And not just in terms of the timing of things, the progress of revelation, or the vocabulary that's used.

[6 : 52] All of which is, you know, we would expect to change. But in terms of the very essence of the thing. So, this morning, basically, I want to make one big point. Big. The emphasis big of the word big.

But anyway, one big point. I'll take my time doing it. But the one big point is that there's only one gospel. There's only one gospel. Remember yesterday, Paul says as much in Galatians chapter 1, doesn't he?

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another one. But there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

So, this morning, brothers and sisters, there is only one gospel. What I want to impress upon you, if I can, is that that gospel can be distorted and twisted. We've got to look out for that. As with all news, right?

Gospels can be corrupted. They can be changed. Fake news can creep in. The Christian gospel is a particular announcement that needs to be learned accurately, preserved, stewarded, and passed on faithfully.

[8 : 01] So, first, let's see how this gospel was preached in the Old Testament, or at least promised and anticipated there. Probably the most important place to go, specifically in search of gospel vocabulary, is the latter half of Isaiah.

So, from Isaiah chapter 40 to the end. In Isaiah chapter 52, verse 7, Isaiah says, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news.

Gospel. Who publishes peace. Who brings good news of happiness. Who publishes salvation. Who says to Zion, Your God reigns.

So, here is the classic image of a runner with a gospel, returning from a battlefield. And his message is described in a number of ways. It's a message of peace, of happiness, of salvation.

But notice, actually, that finally, at the end of the verse, in the speech marks, is actually what the message is. The message is, Your God reigns.

[9 : 06] In other words, it's not that he comes back talking about happiness, exactly. Or even talking about salvation, per se. The message is about the reign of God.

And the immediate implications of that, or the character of that message, is that it means happiness, and salvation, and peace, and actually a bunch of other things. Now, in the context of Isaiah, God's people have been oppressed by enemies for hundreds of years.

I hope you know the history. You know, they were ruled by corrupt kings before that, like Ahab and Manasseh, etc. So, at one level, Isaiah is looking forward to simply the end of the Babylonian exile. But even more than that, he is looking forward to the forgiveness of sins, that's going to come through the suffering of the servant, the end of death, a whole new creation, the establishment of a pure and righteous new Jerusalem.

But all of these hopes that he lays out at the end of the book, all fall under this headline, you see. Your God reigns. Because the reign of God means that King Ahab no longer reigns, nor King Manasseh, the Assyrians don't reign, nor do the Babylonians.

[10 : 23] Sin no longer reigns. Death no longer reigns. Satan no longer reigns. The glorious gospel that Isaiah looked forward to was that one day, God would reign over his people.

Now, when we come to the New Testament, this is the same gospel that Jesus preached. In fact, in Mark chapter 1, for instance, I love how Mark leads into Jesus' preaching.

And so, maybe just turn with me there, if you've closed your Bible. I won't put the verses up on the screen this time. If you can imagine the gospel spreading around the Mediterranean, like wildfire, lots of people are hearing it, believing it, lots of people are doubting it, questioning it.

And the gospels were written into that context to try and flesh out and explain the good news that people had heard. So, not everything in the gospels is the gospel, but they provide the backstory and the context that people need to understand the gospel.

The announcement that they've heard. So, at the beginning of Mark's gospel, he tells his readers that he's going to start from the beginning. He says, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[11 : 36] In other words, he's saying to his readers, you know what you've heard? Well, this is how it all started. This is the beginning of the gospel. And of course, he tells us something very important right up at the top, that the gospel is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now, both of those titles, Christ and Son of God, mean king. A mean king. This is always important to remember. I know that we probably know this, that Christ is not just Jesus' surname.

Right? It's a title that means anointed one, which effectively means king. But in practice, at least for myself, I find myself even being too casual about this.

You know, you sort of read Jesus Christ and just package it all up. But what Mark is saying, that this is the beginning of the gospel of King Jesus, the Son of God.

The king you've heard about. Now, the funny thing is, having started from the beginning, Mark immediately goes further back. So in verses 2 and 3, he quotes from Isaiah chapter 40 and actually Malachi chapter 3, though he doesn't mention Malachi explicitly.

[12 : 44] But in other words, from the beginning of his gospel, Mark wants us to know that before the beginning of the gospel, there were these pre-announcement announcements.

And in fact, what they foretold was that another pre-announcer would come as a sort of lead-in man to the beginning of the big announcement. And that's John the Baptist.

So you see how these kind of layers are unfolding and the drum roll is building throughout the Old Testament and as we start the New. And then the gospel itself gets announced only after John is arrested.

Down in verse 14. So let's just skip down to there. Let me read from verse 14. Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. So, this momentous good news has come from God. This is God's gospel, God's message for his world. Notice too, Jesus says, the time is fulfilled.

[13 : 54] Right? In other words, the time for pre-announcements is over. This is not a drill. What all the prophets promised is about to be accomplished. And thirdly, the announcement itself is that the kingdom of God is at hand.

That is what Jesus calls his gospel. Right? God's gospel. This is the momentous good news that he has. And I should say that in Matthew chapter 4, and I will put these up on the screen, hopefully. In Matthew chapter 4, Matthew tells us, he went throughout all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. And healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Or again, in Luke chapter 4, he said to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well. For I was sent for this purpose.

All of the miracles Jesus performed while he was on earth, all of the teaching that he did, was all centered around this one thing, the kingdom. He wanted to teach people about and demonstrate for them the character of the kingdom.

[15:03] The glory and wonder of living under his rule, under God's rule. What would it look like to have a king of perfect power and wisdom and love reigning over you?

So Jesus went around healing the sick, casting out demons. And finally, this is the same message that the apostles preached. So, we've already looked at Acts chapter 2.

Bill's going to take us through Acts chapter 1 tomorrow, so we'll skip over all of that. God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. And then this is the same message that gets preached for the rest of the book.

So, Philip's ministry to the Samaritans in chapter 8 is described like this. He preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, King.

Right? Remember, King Jesus. Right? And Luke tells us in chapter 19 that Paul spent three months in Corinth. He spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

[16:03] Or finally, in Acts chapter 28, I'm not giving you all the references, of course, throughout the book, but in Acts chapter 28, when you get to the very end of the book, what are they still banging on about? Paul is in Rome.

Initially, he's speaking to the Jews, right? As was his usual custom. And Luke tells us in verse 23, when they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening, he expounded to them. So you think my talk's a lot. Okay? But from morning till evening, he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved and so on. Now skip down to verse 28. Therefore, let it be known to you, this is when they've rejected his message, actually, the Jews.

He says, therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen. He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him.

[17:15] and the very last verse of the book, he was proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus, the King, with all boldness and without hindrance.

You see, in other words, right, to Jews and Gentiles and the Samaritans in between and the God-fearers in between, but to Jews and Gentiles, Paul has the same message for everyone. It's a message about the kingdom of God and the king of that kingdom, the Lord Jesus King. It doesn't matter whether you're in the Old Testament or in the New Testament looking at Jesus' ministry or the ministry of the apostles.

There's only one gospel. It's always the same. It's the thread that holds the whole Bible together, the kingdom of God. All right, so that's point number one.

Did I only say I'd have one point? Anyway, it's point number one, sub-point, anyway. Now, I'm not quite sure what to call point number two, but it's something like one gospel, many parts.

[18:21] Or maybe a better title would just be what happened to the rest of it or something like that. So, I want to return to my old friend David Second for help. Here's how he puts it.

He doesn't know me, by the way, but I know him. Anyway, I like him. I run the risk, I run the risk of frustrating my reader with what may appear to be a nitpicking desire to keep a narrow focus for the gospel.

I don't know if that's how you're feeling at the moment. What happened to the rest of it? Why can we not take everything the early preachers said as gospel? Why can't we put together Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, the Holy Spirit, salvation, judgment, second coming, God, and creation, and the rest, call all these gospel and preach the lot?

The answer is that we can if we know what we are doing. But it is possible to preach some of these things, even all of them, and for it not to be the gospel if the lordship of Jesus is absent or out of focus.

Yet it is the gospel and only the gospel which saves people. It is also possible to preach any one of these and for it to be the gospel so long as that crucial declaration of Jesus' kingship is the key note.

[19 : 53] Do you see what he's saying? So far this morning, that's what I've really wanted to hammer home, that there's only one gospel and it's the gospel of the kingdom. There aren't lots of different gospels out there about lots of different things, lots of Christian gospels out there.

You know, a gospel of forgiveness or the gospel of hope or the gospel of the cross or the gospel of the resurrection. Now in the end, there's only one gospel and when you strip it all back to its core, it's about the kingdom of God.

And so even though now, I want to talk about how the gospel has constituent parts to it, your various aspects to it, what I really want to impress upon you is that it's important to understand how these parts are arranged and specifically that there are core things and there are peripheral things. There are central truths and then consequent or contingent truths and we can't just swap them around as we see fit or according to the preferences of our hearers.

Jesus' authority is the integral peg that holds all the other parts together, you see, because that's the gospel.

[21 : 07] So we can preach forgiveness, say, or peace or salvation or anything, the cross. But if we leave out the kingdom of God or the reign of God through his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, if we leave out that crucial bit, then we haven't preached the gospel at all, even if we've been saying wonderful things and our message has no power to save if we don't preach the gospel.

Alright, so how do all these constituent parts fit in? Once you've established what the gospel is, Jesus reigns, then I think perhaps the next question is, why is that such momentous news? and why is it good news? Like, why is the rise of this particular king and his kingdom so significant, so important? And why is it good news?

As opposed to bad news or just news? So, let me offer three quick answers here which are not going to do any justice to this subject. Okay, but number one, this news is such momentous news because Jesus' reign is going to be eternal.

In other words, we have reached the end of history. The rise of this king and his kingdom is never going to be superseded. So, in a sense, you see, this news signals the end of news.

[22 : 38] Thank goodness if you've watched the news. But at least it signals the end of gospels. We will never hear about the downfall of King Jesus and the rise of some other kingdom now.

In other words, we're never going to hear anything more momentous or more groundbreaking or earth-shattering than this. Now, this relates immediately to the resurrection.

The reason Jesus' reign is going to be eternal is because he rose from the dead. And he didn't just get resuscitated, you know, come back to life like Lazarus did, only to die again.

No, when Jesus rose from the dead, he entered into a new kind of life altogether. Through the resurrection, he has become immortal, invincible, indestructible.

The king is dead. Long live the king. That is a classic gospel. And in the case of the Lord Jesus, he is both the king who died and the king that lives, and he is going to live for a really, really, really, really long time.

[23 : 48] Forever. Now, this is why the resurrection is also the kind of key piece of the gospel or of a gospel presentation that proves the truth of the gospel.

And that's why throughout the book of Acts, the apostles always proclaim the resurrection to their hearers, even when they don't explain the cross. They always include the resurrection because they are trying to prove to their hearers that Jesus reigns and his reign is going to be eternal.

Probably the most famous and succinct example of this is in Acts chapter 17 where Paul is talking to the Athenian philosophers and he says, the times of ignorance God overlooked.

Love how he says that to Athenian philosophers. Ignorant. The times of ignorance God overlooked. But now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed the day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. Now, don't get confused because Paul talks about judgment here and not kingship exactly.

[25 : 01] Just think that sometimes maybe in our kind of figurehead monarchies, the connection between judgment and kingship is a little bit lost on us. But of course, in a real functional absolute monarchy, the rise of a new king brings with it the rise of a new law.

He is the supreme court. He is the ultimate judge, for better or for worse. Judgment is the way a king enforces his rule. So in Acts chapter 17, Paul is talking about Jesus as the judge in this context.

But it's the same thing as saying that Jesus has been appointed as king, just different language. Jesus is the one in authority. His word will prevail.

His rule will rule your life eventually. Now, this brings us of course to our second sub-point, which if you're following along in your outline, I'm afraid I'd just like to reword my heading a little bit.

Because I think I can say it better than I had it before. Not absolutely sure about that. Anyway, but I'm going to do the same thing about point number three as well when we get to that. So now, point number two is that Jesus' reign means just judgment because Jesus is full of grace and truth.

[26 : 19] It's a bit of a mouthful, isn't it? But Jesus' reign means just judgment because Jesus is full of grace and truth. So now, I think this point and the next one really revolve around the intermingling of these two things, grace and truth.

Remember John chapter one? John says that Jesus came from the Father full of grace and truth. Or in the Old Testament, God's character is described as one of steadfast love and faithfulness.

It's really the same combination. There's love, generosity, kindness, compassion on the one hand truth in God and then justice, faithfulness, righteousness, truth on the other hand.

And in the first place, what grace and truth does is it motivates a king to judge justly. To judge justly. Because it is both just and loving, it is righteous and loving to root out evil.

Listen for instance to what the Queen of Sheba said to Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 10. This is at the height of the shadow kingdom in the Old Testament. And the Queen of Sheba is just bowled over by everything she's heard and seen under King Solomon's reign.

[27 : 35] And she said to Solomon, Blessed be the Lord your God who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel because the Lord loved Israel forever.

He has made you king. that you may execute justice and righteousness. So on the one hand, the reason the good news is so good is because Jesus is full of grace and truth and therefore he's going to bring a just judgment.

Does that make sense? Okay, on the other hand, now this is point number three, Jesus' reign also means forgiveness because Jesus is full of grace and truth.

And this really takes us to the heart of the cross. And the cross is where God's grace and truth meet, where they get resolved. In a sense, there isn't any tension between the two, but then in a sense there is because God loves sinners.

And so the cross is where God's grace and truth meet and get resolved. The cross is where God tells us the absolute truth about our sin, that it really is disgusting as hell and worthy of his fury.

[28 : 49] And he pours his justice out upon Jesus on the cross. And of course, the cross is where God shows us the abundant riches of his grace, his deep and lavish love for us.

Now imagine if instead, Jesus had established his kingdom on something else other than the cross. Imagine if he had ascended to his throne and established his kingdom on some other foundation. Perhaps he'd established his kingdom on a policy of simply might is right. Or he'd established his kingdom simply on a policy of turning a blind eye to sin, which so many people seem to wish he would do.

Just let everyone in. But then you see, we'd be back to square one, wouldn't we? We'd just have the same kind of ruler that we've currently got. Rulers that are corrupt and install their cronies over their corrupt kingdoms.

The rise of King Jesus would not be good news. It would just be the latest bad news. Without the judgment day, wickedness and corruption would reign.

[30 : 01] Without the cross, and specifically penal substitutionary atonement, that is the fact that Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking the punishment for our sins, peace.

Right? Without the cross, there would be no just basis for God to show mercy or for Jesus to show mercy to his disciples. In other words, this good kingdom could not exist.

How Jesus says it at the end of Matthew, you know, when he's celebrating the last supper with his disciples, is that he is establishing a new covenant. Think of a new covenant like a new national

constitution.

Right? It is a constitution for the new kingdom. And in short, the cross determines the character of this new kingdom. By enduring the cross for us, Jesus has shown his determination to establish a kingdom not built on mere power, right?

Unprincipled power. Not built on just sentimentality, you know, like, oh, I like those people, they can come in. Not built on lies, like they're not as bad as, you know, they really are, but to establish a kingdom built on grace and truth.

[31 : 16] Alrighty. So I want to wrap up this morning with one big implication. The big word, if you like, the word of the hour that I want to focus on, is contextualization.

In the old days, they used to call it indigenization. The argument goes like this. In two stages, at least this is how I heard it put just recently.

I was at a conference. First, the speaker posed the question, is the gospel more like a rock in a pond or like a diamond? Now, what he meant was, is it that there are central truths, you know, a rock, sorry, a rock is sort of dropping into a pond and ripples flowing out.

What he meant was, is it that there are central truths at the heart of the gospel, and then these kind of ripple out into other consequent truths and implications and so on, the fruit of the gospel?

Or is the gospel more like a diamond or a prism with many facets to it, none of which are absolutely dominant? It just sort of depends on which way the light shines on it.

[32 : 30] Sometimes the gospel is about dealing with our shame. Sometimes the gospel is about bringing us hope. Sometimes the gospel is about bringing us forgiveness. Or sometimes the gospel is about Jesus as savior.

Sometimes the gospel is about Jesus as Lord. Sometimes the gospel is about Jesus as the one who satisfies our deepest desires. Now, as you can imagine, this particular speaker was drawn to the latter image.

I mean, who wants a rock in a pond when you can have a diamond? It's almost unfair. But the next step then is to talk about how we communicate the gospel. And basically, so the argument goes, our job as gospelers is to pick the facets of the gospel that will most resonate with our hearers.

That is, we want to communicate in such a way that, well, of course, first of all, that our hearers will be able to understand what we're talking about. But more than that, that they'll be drawn to it or attracted by it, or at least more likely to accept it.

We will try and present the facet of the gospel that will be most, that will make the gospel most acceptable, most palatable. So, if you're trying to bring the gospel to a bunch of African farmers, well, in the first place, right, speak Swahili, right, of course, or whatever it is, that'll help.

[33 : 59] But then more than that, talk about how Jesus came to free us from our fears. And specifically, don't talk about how Jesus offers to forgive our sins.

Because, you know, African farmers don't live in a guilt-innocence culture. They're not at all worried about their sins. They're worried about fear, power dynamics, witch doctors, spirits, and so on.

So, if you want to get traction, you see, if you want to connect with them where they're at, you've got to talk about fear, power, things like that. Or, likewise, don't talk about Jesus as king with Australians.

Because Australians, I don't know if you've heard this, but Australians don't like authority figures. We like to think of ourselves as rebels, outlaws, convicts, Ned Kelly types.

So, if your gospel is all about giving up on rebellion and submitting to an authority figure, it's never going to connect with your average Australian. What you need to talk about is satisfying their deepest desires.

[35 : 12] You know, their search for meaning, their lostness. Now, of course, I'm not saying that all of that is completely and utterly rubbish. And I'm not saying that your presentation of the gospel has to be exactly the same each time you give it, without caring at all about whether it might persuade or excite your hearers, right, or connect with them.

I think that's all important, and we should think about doing it well. And sometimes these people who push this particular agenda, I think, have great insights for us into some of the details of how to do evangelism.

But what I do want to say is that at the big picture level, the whole paradigm, the big picture argument that I've just laid out for you, basically gets the gospel completely wrong.

In terms of point number one, and the nature of the gospel, as I've been trying to say over this whole weekend, the rock in the pond illustration, as unsexy as that one is, is actually a much better picture of what the gospel is really like.

It's much closer to the truth. There are core things that the Bible calls the gospel, and this gospel has a certain rigid structure to it, a hierarchy of ideas, if you like, and in particular, at the heart, is a claim to Jesus' kingship.

[36 : 34] So the idea that you could leave out hierarchy or authority claims from an Australian gospel is just pure blasphemy.

That would totally corrupt the gospel. And secondly, when it comes to communicating the gospel to different groups of people, I think what these sociologists often forget, and I do think they tend to be more fascinated by sociology, their own cultural analysis, than careful exegesis and theology, just as a heads up, what they seem to have forgotten is that all men and women everywhere, and in every age and culture, despite their superficial differences, are not, in the end, all that different from each other.

That's why Paul says, in Acts 17, ironically, I think, a favorite passage of theirs, but that's why Paul says in Acts 17, God commands all people everywhere to repent.

Specifically, I think Romans 1 tells us that all people everywhere know three things. Basically, they know, or they have a sense of, the first three boxes of two ways to live.

Right? Number one, they know that there really is a God, and He deserves our honor and worship. Number two, they know that we all fail to meet God's perfect moral standards.

[38 : 11] And yet they continue to approve of sin. But anyway, they know. And number three, they know that because of this, we all deserve death. That is, we all deserve to suffer under the wrath of our Creator.

Now, all people everywhere suppress this truth. Some of you have heard me before speak about it. I think it's like they're trying to hold this ball underwater. You know, if you've ever been in a pool and you've been trying to push a ball down, you know, push something down.

They're all suppressing this truth in their hearts. But deep down, the Bible says that they all know these things. They have a sense of them in their hearts, in their consciences.

They act as if they know them. And so, a gospel that addresses these things will, by its very nature, be comprehensible and relevant to all people everywhere.

A gospel that speaks into this context will make sense to everyone you talk to. So, listen to what Broughton Knox wrote about this subject many years ago. Because he said it much better than I can.

[39 : 20] A gospel which contains judgment as a prominent strand, as does the New Testament gospel, is relevant to men and women everywhere and in every age and culture.

It does not need indigenization. So popular a catchword today. And of course, the word has changed. The catchword today is contextualization.

And it seems to me to have become more and more popular. So Broughton didn't seem to win the argument. But anyway, so popular a catchword today. It doesn't need indigenization, but requires only clarity of language and faithfulness in proclamation.

The sense of right and wrong is universal in the human race. And so is the knowledge that we fall below, I would say here actually, God's standards.

Romans 1. So is the knowledge that we fall not just below our own standards, but God's standards of what is right. And that this entails death. Thus, the gospel that contains judgment and salvation from judgment, read the assertion of God's rule and salvation from the punishment that we all deserve for our sins, is a gospel that is always relevant to the hearer, no matter to what stage of civilization he may have attained.

[40 : 44] Such a gospel does not need to be assimilated to the culture of the people who are hearing it. A theology that proclaims the God who saves from judgment by forgiveness through faith in the Lord Jesus, the King, does not need to be adapted for Australian audiences or to be turned into a black theology for the blacks of North America.

However, Asian Christians and Western Christians need the same gospel and the same theology which is based on it, and all are able to understand it, no matter how different the cultural backgrounds of the hearers and preachers may be.

So long as the proclamation is true to the New Testament gospel of judgment and salvation from judgment. All right. So let me wrap up, and I'm just going to try and summarize what I've been saying.

Okay? I know it's taken me two days, but basically I've only had three points. Point number one was that a gospel is a piece of momentous good news. Point number two was that the Christian gospel is the momentous good news that Jesus reigns.

And point number three, what I've been trying to say today, is that there really is only one gospel. Whether in the Old Testament or the New, whether in the gospels or in the epistles, Jesus' death, his resurrection, forgiveness, and I'm sorry we didn't get to justification by faith and new birth and the new creation and the Holy Spirit and all of those wonderful things.

[42 : 21] But these things are not all different gospels, just because they're good news. But they're not all different good newsmen. They're not even different but equally important facets of the one gospel.

No, they all fit in and around the central claim of the gospel that Jesus reigns. And they unfold in a specific order. There is a hierarchy to the truths of the gospel.

The gospel is all about hierarchy. And the really tragic thing is that it is possible to preach some of these things, even all of them, and for it not to be the gospel if the lordship of Jesus is absent or out of focus.

So we need to make sure that we preach this gospel clearly because it is the gospel and only the gospel which saves people.

So brothers and sisters, let's make sure that in our hearts, in our families, in our churches, we honor Christ as lord. That it is the gospel that we love and adore and we keep banging on about.

[43 : 36] A crucial declaration of Jesus' kingship. Let's pray. Loving Father, thank you for our precious Lord Jesus.

Especially his death for our sins. His resurrection to new life. His eternal rule of grace. And truth. In your mercy.

Fill our hearts with this gospel. Help us to live and breathe it. To live by faith. In the son of God. Who loved us and gave himself for us.

Please father, transform us into the likeness of our king. Give us his same love for you and for your glory. And a deep love for the lost. Fill us with boldness and courage to proclaim your kingdom.

So that many might be saved. For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.