



INTRODUCING
THE GOSPEL

An overview of the good news of the Kingdom of God





Introduction

Welcome to this overview of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a summary of the message recorded in the Bible, and which the prophets and apostles of those times taught.

The word 'Gospel' literally means 'good news' or 'good message'.. In this case, the good news is that Jesus Christ died and was raised from the dead in order that we might have our sins forgiven, and enjoy a place in God's coming Kingdom.

The Gospel has the benefit of consistency and is supported by a large body of evidence, but that is not what this paper seeks to set out. To learn more about why we can trust the Bible and about the many prophecies which have both been fulfilled and have yet to happen, please look at the 'What next?' section at the end of this course.

This course presumes no knowledge of the Bible or its history, and makes no assumptions of teaching from any Christian group.

It does not set out arguments about the existence of God or other issues like the origins of the universe. This course is designed to set out clearly the Gospel message, and there are further links to explore these wider questions set out at the end of the course.

Overview

This course consists of 10 'lessons' to follow through which introduce the Gospel message as taught by Jesus and his apostles. It is up to you how you complete this; whether you want to print it and go through it as a workbook, or whether you are content to simply read.

We would recommend having a Bible handy - either physical or as an app or online version. We have provided references and extracts where appropriate, but building familiarity with wider context is important for growing knowledge and understanding over time.

Other than that, there is no additional equipment you need, and no obligation to do anything further at the end of the course.



What Bible do I need?

There are many different translations of the Bible. The references in this course are given in the English Standard Version (ESV), but there are other widely-available translations which are also suitable, such as the King James Version, or the New King James Version for more modern language.

Here are some suggestions for digital Bibles if you are using a mobile or a PC. These are usually free to download.

Apps (for phones, tablets and other mobile devices):

- Olive Tree
- YouVersion - The Bible App
- Blue Letter Bible

PC:

- e-Sword

Online:

- Biblegateway.com
- Biblehub.com

Understanding Bible references

Throughout this course, we use a standard form for Bible references. We write the book, followed by the chapter, and then the verse/s afterwards.

For example: **Romans 3:1-4** means the book of Romans chapter 3 verses 1 to 4.

If you are using a physical Bible, you may find it easier to use the list of books - usually found in the front few pages - as a way to locate the page number of a particular book.

A note on chapters and verses

The books of the Bible were divided up into chapters in the Middle Ages by a scholar called Stephen Langton in 1227, and the chapters were divided up into verses in Renaissance times between 1551 and 1555 by a publisher named Rober Etienne. It's important to remember that



although the book divisions are a feature of the original Bible, the chapter and verse divisions are the work of human scholars. Nonetheless, they are very convenient for helping identify and navigate Bible references, and are unchanged in all the different editions and translations of the Bible.

The structure of the Bible

The Bible divides naturally into two main sections; the Old Testament and the New Testament. Each of these sections contains many books. The word 'Testament' means a statement of belief or proof.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament is made up of 39 of the total 66 books of the Bible. These were written a long time before Jesus, with the oldest coming from around 1,400 BC, shortly after the Israelites left their Egyptian slavemasters. There is some debate about the book of Job, which may be even older than this.

The most recent books in the Old Testament are Nehemiah, Malachi and 2 Chronicles, all of which were written in about 420 BC after a small part of the Jewish people had returned from exile in Babylon to settle around Jerusalem.

The Old Testament was mainly written in the Hebrew language, although some parts of it were written in the related Aramaic language.

In Christian Bibles, the Old Testament books are grouped into four main sections:

1. **The Law of Moses:** The first five books of the Bible, sometimes called the Pentateuch, or what the Jews call the Torah.
2. **The historical books:** These cover the history of Israel, from entering the land of Canaan in about 1,400 BC, to the middle of the Persian period around 400BC.
3. **The writings:** This part is made up of songs, poetry and philosophy books.
4. **The prophets:** These are books written by individual prophets, and each contains an important message of universal importance. There are still a number of prophecies which have yet to be fulfilled, and many which were made and which have been fulfilled across history since they were written.



The real value of the Old Testament is that it introduces themes which are taken up and explained further in the New Testament.

The New Testament

The New Testament was written shortly after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It contains 27 books which were written mainly in Greek, although there is a little Aramaic still, mainly in the Gospels.

The New Testament was written over a much shorter period of probably no more than 20 years. The first book was written shortly after the first major spread of the teachings of Jesus Christ to non-Jewish areas in around 48AD, and the last book was written as the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire grew in momentum, although the Revelation was possibly written later than this.

The New Testament also has four sections:

1. **The Gospels:** These are the accounts of the work and teaching of Jesus, from his baptism to his crucifixion and resurrection.
2. **The Acts of the Apostles:** This is a book which gives a historical account of the acts and teachings of the Apostles - or followers - of Jesus from his resurrection in around 33AD to the spread of the Gospel message in around 62AD.
3. **The letters:** These are a collection of letters from the Apostles to various congregations - or churches - and individuals. The earliest of these was written in 48AD and the last before 67AD. Sometimes, these are called 'Epistles', which is just an old-fashioned word for letters.
4. **The Revelation:** This is a book which contains predictions from the time of the Apostles to a future day of judgement and beyond. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, John, the writer of Revelation, saw many strange things which were symbols - or representations - of things that were yet to happen.

The New Testament contains a complete picture of the teaching of Jesus, and is therefore the bedrock document of Christianity. Although it may be called 'new', both the Old and the New Testament are important, and it is impossible to gain a proper understanding of one without the other.



Lesson overview

Lesson 1: What is the Gospel?

Lesson 2: Introducing Jesus Christ

Lesson 3: Introducing the Bible

Lesson 4: Forgiveness of sins

Lesson 5: God's plan

Lesson 6: Life after death

Lesson 7: Abraham and the promises

Lesson 8: Sin and temptation

Lesson 9: The way to be saved

Summary questions

At the end of each chapter is a list of questions based on what you have learned. These are optional, and are designed to encourage further thought and study around the topic.

Should you have questions about any lesson, please reach out to your tutor, or gospelonlineuk@gmail.com who will be able to explain further, or give additional resources to help.