

# A Gospel Summary...

By Jeffrey C. Nesbitt

(excerpted)

The Great and Holy One of the Bible is virtually unknown among the various and myriad people of the earth. And most tragic is the ignorance of the God of the Bible among those who make claim to being His children; Christians. Thus we must begin our presentation of the Gospel with the presupposition that our listener has little or no knowledge of the True God of the Bible. I love to speak of God to others by describing Him in all His attributes; His holiness, majesty, omnipotence, love, eternality, aseity (independence of His creation), sovereignty, immutability, faithfulness, goodness, patience, grace, mercy, wrath, omniscience, omnipresence, loving-kindness (covenant faithfulness), etc.

This is a most important foundation to build upon, for we are making known the Living God in Whom we live, move and have our being. It is to Him that we must look for our every desire here on earth and our hope for the ages to come. A wrong understanding of God will inevitably lead to a wrong understanding of all that follows. Just remember, that God inspired men to write the 39 books of the Old Testament to make Himself known in all His glory. He then took on human flesh and fully “declared Him.” (Jh. 1:18) And finally God added 27 more “books” to complete His self-revelation.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). All things are according to His eternal plan to bring glory to Himself and the salvation of all them that believe on Christ the LORD. No one receives that which he doesn't deserve. Clearly, God is long-suffering toward all men, for He has reserved the meting out of His perfect judgment until the last day (2Pet. 3:9). Each and every day is an expression of His benevolence towards us that we might repent and turn to Him in faith in His Son. (1Tim. 2:4)

Although we have said that the Gospel is “good news”, that God is reconciled to men in Christ, it must be pointed out that outside of Christ all men are by nature, lost, with no natural affection for God nor do they have the ability to even seek Him. From birth, we are all under the just condemnation of God. Otherwise, even after presenting Christ's work, many will think that there may be another way of being found acceptable before God if they do certain things and work hard enough at it. The nature of sin and depravity must be presented in such a way that it is clear that this is an impossibility and the their situation is utterly hopeless if they are outside of Christ. (Rom. 3:10-18; Eph. 2:2, 3; 4:17-19)

How are we to do this? By first showing that God in the beginning, made man in His own image with true knowledge (Col. 3:10) righteousness and true holiness. (Eph 4:24). And because man is made in God's image, he is capable of receiving revelation from Him; and this is shown in the book of Romans: “Because what may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it to them.” (Rom. 1:19). In other words, inherent within each person is the knowledge of what God is like. And it says, “For the invisible things from the creation of the word are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20). So even the creation shows that God is sovereign. But men, being sinners, reject God's testimony about Himself and they substitute the truth for a lie, “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain the their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). They worshipped the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Thus all men by nature know that God is and He is the Sovereign Ruler and Creator of all things, but these same men reject the testimony which is within them and which is clearly shown around them and substitute a “god” after their own liking. The result is that all men are idolaters; they refuse to worship the one true God Who alone is worthy of our worship; worshipping those things which are no “gods”, e.g. . . . money, sex, jobs, material possessions, religion, etc. It has well been said, “In the beginning, God made man in His own image, and ever since that day, man has been trying to return the favor.”

The Fall of man was great indeed, for our rejection of the One True God has resulted in God's rejection of us and He has thus allowed us to live out our lives in an ever accelerating downward spiral; living out our lives

according to the dictates and imagination of our reprobate minds, doing those things which are abominable to Him. We are indeed responsible for our actions and will suffer the just punishment for them. Our nature is corrupted; we are bondservants to it and love to do its bidding. We love the darkness and hate the light (Jh. 3:19). There is no good thing within us (Rom. 3:10-18), and if not for the gracious hand of God restraining each and every one of us, we would commit those things which even the most heinous of individuals would consider horrible. The world would be in a state of complete chaos and we would more than likely annihilate ourselves in a very short time.

The “bad news” is that even though men know that their words, thoughts and deeds are not acceptable even by their own standards, they are incapable of changing themselves to do that which is right and good. Our condition is pitiable and hopeless and God is wroth with us because we refuse to do that which He has commanded and shown to be right and good.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me!” (Jh. 14:6) And the Scriptures, long before His birth, prophesied that He would be the one to come and be the human substitute to pay the penalty for sin. In that way He could be the ONE WAY men can come to God. Isaiah wrote that God “shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by the knowledge of Him shall [His] righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities” (Is. 53:11).

This is what the death of Christ means. He paid the penalty for sins by bearing those sins in Himself, so that sinners could be made righteous (2Cor. 5:21). But if He was but a finite man, how could He then be a substitute for more than just one man? We then bring forth the glorious truth that it was God Himself Who came to earth and became man in the one person Jesus of Nazareth (Jh. 1:14; Phil. 2:6-8, Col. 2:9). Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour, God with us Who saved His people from their sins. (Matt. 1:21) Jesus, being the Eternal God was able to be a substitute for all those Whom He came to save. (Jh. 6:37-39) His death is infinite in its sufficiency to save all those who come to Him in faith.

That great chasm which existed between the Holy God and sinful man was removed through His shed blood. (Rom. 5:8-10) In Christ men are brought back to God, because His righteousness is imputed to their account. And not only are we brought near unto God but we are made sons and daughters by adoption through Christ’s work for us. (Gal. 4:4, 5; Heb. 2:10) We can now reign with Christ right here on earth and experience God’s love and fellowship in Him. Further, we are given the power to overcome our sinful natures which can enable us to live lives that are pleasing to God; though it be only in principle yet there is still a dramatic change which takes place in us (2Cor. 5:17; 2Pet. 1:4).

This is where we bring together all that we have said before.. How is this reconciliation which Christ has accomplished through His death applied to us? How does a person become cleansed of his sin and receive God’s forgiveness and the power to lead a new life? The Scriptures are clear that a person must be born again/born from above. God must initiate a mighty work in a person. That person’s wicked and evil nature must be changed or he “cannot enter or even see the kingdom of God” (Jh. 3:3,5). And without this new birth, that person will never come to Christ (Jh. 6:44, 65). We need to make this fact known. The ability to become born again is not within man’s ability to accomplish. There is absolutely nothing which we can do to even initiate this supernatural work within us. Yet, it is absolutely necessary that it happen.

What then are we to tell them beyond this truth? Well, the Scripture is clear, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” (Isa. 45:22). And again the Scriptures say, “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:21). All men everywhere are to repent and believe on Christ. They are to trust God Who promises to save all those who come to Him in faith. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (Jh. 6:47). Thus we have the two requirements; repentance, which is the turning from sin and the world with all its sinful ways; hating the very sin within us and desiring those things which God has commanded; to do them out of a heart of gladness and thankfulness — and faith, which is a trusting in God’s Christ and depending upon His work as being done in our place.