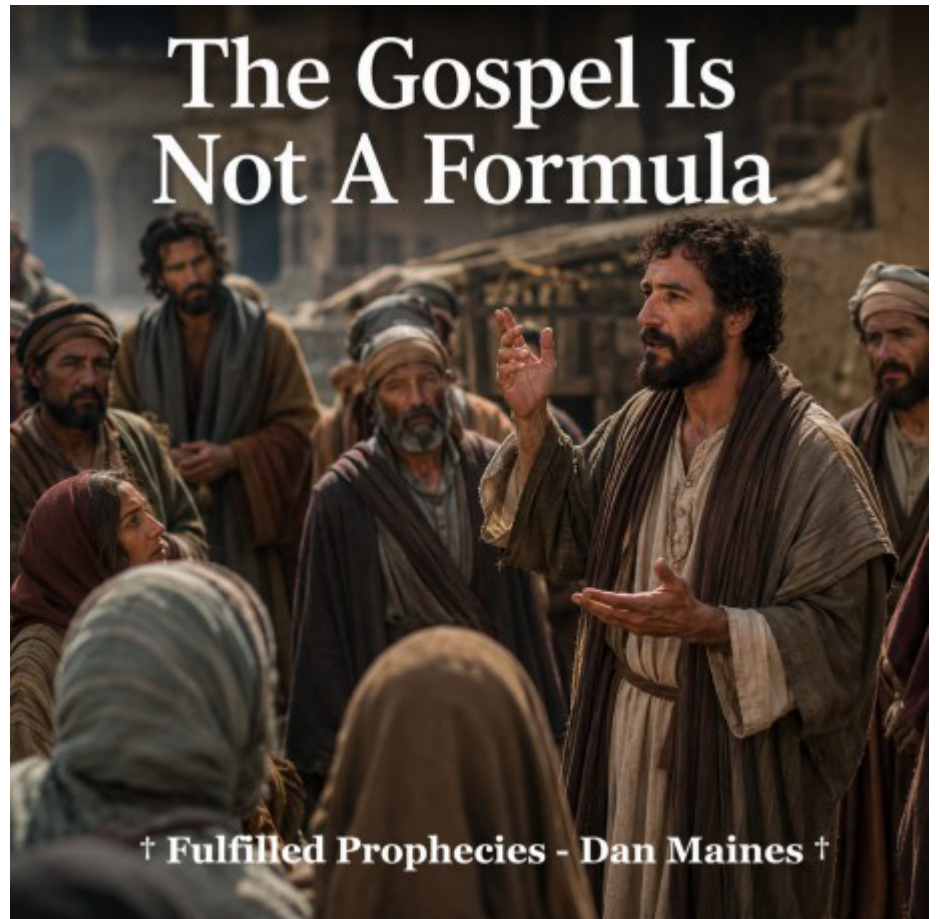


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The Gospel Is Not A Formula



By Dan Maines

The Gospel Is Not A Formula

Introduction

† Many modern evangelism methods attempt to reduce the gospel to a simple formula, diagram, or scripted presentation.

† While some of these methods may contain elements of truth, we should always ask whether they present the gospel the same way Jesus, Peter, and Paul presented it.

† When we examine Scripture, we discover that the gospel was not a formula to memorize. It was the proclamation that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the King of God's

kingdom, and that through His death, resurrection, and exaltation God fulfilled His covenant promises. (Luke 24:44-47; Acts 2:29-36)

† The apostles preached a person, not a diagram. They preached a King, not a formula.

Mark 1:14-15

Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the gospel."

† Jesus began His ministry by proclaiming that the time was fulfilled and the kingdom of God was at hand.

† The gospel was the announcement that God's promised kingdom was arriving exactly when the prophets said it would. (Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:13-14)

† Jesus did not begin by presenting a formula. He proclaimed the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. (Luke 4:17-21)

† The gospel centered on who He was and what God was accomplishing through Him. (John 20:30-31)

Acts 8:12

But when they believed Philip as he was preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were being baptized.

† Philip preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

† The gospel message was centered on God's kingdom and God's King.

† Scripture does not say Philip taught a formula. It says he preached Christ and the kingdom.

† This is consistent with the message Jesus Himself proclaimed throughout His ministry. (Mark 1:14-15)

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Now I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you

also stand, by which you also are saved, if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

† Paul defined the gospel by focusing on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

† He rooted every aspect of the gospel in the fulfillment of Scripture.

† The phrase according to the scriptures appears repeatedly in this passage.

† The gospel was not merely about human sin. It was about God's faithfulness to His promises through Christ. (Romans 1:1-4)

† The death and resurrection of Jesus confirmed that He was the Messiah foretold by the prophets. (Acts 13:29-33)

Acts 2:36

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-this Jesus whom you crucified.

† Peter's sermon on Pentecost focused on the identity of Jesus.

† He proclaimed that Jesus had been raised, exalted, and enthroned as Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:32-35)

† The central message was not a formula but a declaration of kingship.

† The good news was that the crucified Jesus now reigns over His kingdom. (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23)

Romans 1:1-4

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus

Christ our Lord,

† Paul said the gospel had been promised beforehand through the prophets.

† The gospel was not a new invention. It was the fulfillment of what God had promised throughout the Old Testament. (Luke 24:25-27)

† The focus was God's Son, His kingship, His resurrection, and His authority.

† The gospel tells us what God accomplished through Christ, not merely what man must do. (Colossians 1:13-18)

Luke 24:46-47

and He said to them, So it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

† Jesus connected His death and resurrection to the fulfillment of Scripture.

† The message of repentance and forgiveness flowed from what He accomplished.

† Repentance was not the gospel itself. Repentance was the response to the gospel.

† The gospel announces what Christ has done. Faith and repentance are our response to that announcement. (Acts 20:21)

Acts 28:23

When they had set a day for Paul, people came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

† Paul spent an entire day testifying about the kingdom of God and persuading people concerning Jesus from the Law and the Prophets.

† Notice that Paul's message centered on the kingdom and Jesus, exactly as Jesus had taught from the beginning. (Mark

1:14-15)

† Paul showed that the Old Testament pointed to Christ and His kingdom fulfillment. (Luke 24:27)

† There is no evidence here of a formula or evangelistic system. Paul simply opened the Scriptures and preached Christ.

Acts 28:31

preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

† The book of Acts closes the same way it began, with the preaching of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.

† Paul's gospel was not different from the gospel Jesus preached.

† The consistent theme throughout Acts is Christ and His kingdom.

† The gospel message remained centered on the reign and authority of Jesus.

Galatians 1:6-9

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel, which is not just another account; but there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, even now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

† Paul warned believers not to exchange the true gospel for another message.

† Any message that replaces Christ and His kingdom with man-made systems should be carefully examined.

† The gospel is defined by Scripture, not by modern methods.

† Our authority is the message preached by Christ and His apostles.

Historical References

- † Eusebius recorded that the earliest Christians proclaimed Jesus as the promised Messiah and reigning Lord.
- † Ignatius repeatedly emphasized the death, resurrection, and lordship of Christ as the heart of the Christian message.
- † Justin Martyr pointed people to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus Christ.
- † The earliest Christian writers consistently focused on Christ's person, work, resurrection, and kingship rather than evangelistic formulas.
- † The writings of the early church fathers contain extensive defenses of Christ's identity and resurrection, but they do not contain standardized evangelistic diagrams or formula presentations.

How It Applies To Us Today

- † We should never confuse a teaching method with the gospel itself.
- † Diagrams, illustrations, and presentations may sometimes help explain truth, but they are not the gospel.
- † Our confidence should rest in Christ and His finished work, not in a particular evangelism technique.
- † When we share our faith, we should proclaim Jesus as Lord, Messiah, Savior, and King.
- † We should be careful not to substitute modern systems for the message preached by Jesus and His apostles.
- † The gospel remains the good news that God fulfilled His promises through Christ and established His kingdom forever. (Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:5-6)
- † Nowhere in Scripture do we find the apostles using a standardized diagram, circle chart, or scripted formula. What we find is the proclamation of Christ, His kingdom, His death, resurrection, and lordship.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Is it wrong to use illustrations when teaching the gospel?

A: No. Jesus often used illustrations and parables. The problem

comes when the illustration replaces the biblical message itself. (Matthew 13:34; Mark 4:33-34)

Q: Is the gospel only about sin?

A: No. Sin is part of the story, but the gospel is the good news of what God accomplished through the death, resurrection, exaltation, and reign of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:1-4)

Q: What was the central focus of apostolic preaching?

A: Jesus as the promised Messiah, the risen Lord, and the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. (Acts 2:36; Acts 13:32-33)

Q: What should we focus on when sharing the gospel?

A: We should focus on Christ, His kingdom, His death, His resurrection, and His lordship. (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 24:46-47)

Q: Did the apostles ever use a gospel formula?

A: Scripture records sermons, teachings, and conversations centered on Christ and His kingdom, but it never records the apostles using a standardized evangelistic formula. (Acts 2; Acts 13; Acts 17)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Mark 1:14-15, Acts 8:12, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Acts 2:36, Romans 1:1-4, Luke 24:46-47, Acts 28:23, 31, Galatians 1:6-9

† Eusebius, Ignatius, Justin Martyr

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