

- almost two thousand years to forget and for traditions to develop
- the Dark Ages when Bible truth was purposely hidden
- Satan's continuous efforts to darken our understanding
- changes in language and culture that have obscured original meanings

So is the gospel commonly taught today the true gospel, the original gospel or could the other gospel Paul refers to already be here?

This study looks at this question by allowing the Bible to explain itself. Understanding the truth of "the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1) requires a correct understanding of - naturally - God.

What is God like? What is His character?



That character - what God is like, how He treats others and so on - is, of course, involved in every

aspect of the gospel. So where to start? Well the gospel is the good news about how God saves or heals us from the bad news - the state we are initially in. And we are in this state because of sin which John tells us has something to do with a broken law:

"Whoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4, American King James Version)

A good place to start would be to attempt to understand the law of God. There are actually two distinctly different ways to understand God's law both of which claim the support of scripture. Let's take a closer look.

The **Legal Model**, emphasizes that God is sovereign, He is the boss and He can make whatever laws He wants. Basically, He dictates the rules and we are to obey. The laws are imposed upon us and obedience is required for us to avoid incurring a debt to God.

The **Healing Model** emphasizes God's nature of love in which He makes laws that are natural in that they are related to the risks that man faces because of his own nature and because of his natural environment which includes exposure to Satan's temptations.

Those laws are for our good and for our protection. They are for us, not for Him. They are like a hedge of protection.

We are the problem

Either way God's laws are understood, the problem is that we can't keep them. We don't have a nature that can keep the law. This is evidenced by much scripture:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ..." (Jer 17:9)



There is more evidence that we, in the nature we are born with, cannot obey:

"... they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psa 53:3)

Also see Rom 3:23, Eccl 7:20. So really, the problem, the fault (Heb 8:8) with us is our nature. We are "... by nature the children of wrath ..." (Eph 2:3)

So what is the solution? Here, the two models of the gospel diverge because of two different

understandings of the nature of God's law and the solutions provided by the different models.

The Legal Model



The Legal Model can be understood much like a legal accounting system with laws and penalties imposed for not keeping them. The Bible

defines what sin is:

"Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God." (1 John 3:4, New Living Translation)

When a person breaks one of God's laws He is subject to a penalty much like the imposition of a fine for a traffic violation. In our earthly system, the governing authority decides on the traffic rules, sets penalties, monitors activity, charges offenders and demands payment of fines. When the offender makes payment he is then released from his debt.

The penalty God has decided fits the crime of sin (whatever the actual sin might be) is this:

"For the wages of sin is death ..." (Rom 6:23)

That death is more than the death we all die (the first death) as both saved and lost people are subject to that; it is what the Bible calls the second death. So what is the solution?

In the legal model, we all owe this debt and we can pay it ourselves but only by dying the second death. But that would be the end of us and God wants to save us, so He has appointed someone else to pay our debt for us. By having His only-begotten Son die, God's justice could be satisfied by the payment of Jesus' shed blood to cover the

sins on our account. Then the debt we owe is cancelled and, in the judgment, God can regard us as though we were not sinners and grant us the gift of eternal life.

That was a quick summary, however, in most minds, this understanding of the gospel works really well. As long as our sins are "covered by the blood" we are safe. However, there are some serious scriptural difficulties with that view. To help explain those (in a later brochure) and before we do, let's look at:

The Healing Model.



In the Healing Model, again, we keep stepping outside of the law not realizing laws are designed for our good like a hedge of protection. When we make those

wrong choices, we give Satan access to attack us through that breach – that weak area in our protection. And the devil is looking for any opportunity to attack us (1 Pet 5:8).



Some go further and cast off God's law altogether, rejecting its protection and guidance. God honors our free will and permits us to go outside of His law if we chose. It is a hedge of protection not a prison wall. However, that freedom includes the freedom to experience the consequences of our choices.

If we rebel against God and reject His law; stepping outside of its protection altogether, then we are unshielded from Satan's attacks.



Then, when the troubles come, many think that it is God Who is afflicting them and they lose their trust in Him. (And Satan has become very good at getting people to blame God for their problems; often even labelling them as "acts of God.") But the afflictions we experience are just symptoms of essentially an illness characterized by a distrust of God and the wisdom of His laws. What is the solution? To again trust in God:



"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." (Psalm 34:8)

God is ever merciful. If we will turn to Him in faith He will again provide the means to protect and provide for us:

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Eph 6:16)



That shield of faith (or trust) is really God's protection of us when we willingly place ourselves under His protection; that is, we again chose to stay within His laws which are designed for our health and happiness.

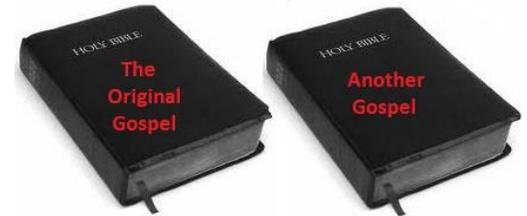
It is vitally important that we understand the nature of God's law and His purpose for it.

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Two Ways to Understand the Gospel

Part 1. The Law



Paul warned of the danger of another gospel that would deceive and draw people away from the original good news as the Word presents it and as Jesus lived and taught. Paul wrote:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:" (Gal 1:6)

We think perhaps of the danger of another gospel, a false gospel, in the last days but what if it has already been here for hundreds of years? Paul observed - so it must have been in his day - "that ye are so soon removed ... unto another gospel." Perhaps it is the true gospel that is to be revealed again in the last days.

There are two different - very different - ways to understand the Gospel. There is the traditional way as you might hear in the majority of Christian churches today. But was that how it was originally understood? The gospel, God's plan to save mankind, was given millennia ago, observed (more or less) during Bible times and taught by Jesus. Surely, what He taught was the true gospel. But, from the time of the apostles to now, we have had: