

A DIFFERENT GOSPEL

Is the Gospel message important? Consider what the Apostle Paul said in the following passage: Galatians 1:8: "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

Following is Thayer's definition of the Greek word translated as "gospel" in this passage. "2097 euaggelizo- to bring good news, to announce glad tidings used in the Old Testament of any kind of good news, of the joyful tidings of God's kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings in the New Testament used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation glad tidings are brought to one, one has glad tidings proclaimed to him to proclaim glad tidings, to instruct (people) concerning the things that pertain to salvation."

As you have just seen, the Gospel message was very important to the Apostle Paul. The Gospel is the good news of salvation found in Jesus Christ. The question we will discuss in this section is, does The Watch Tower agree with the Bible's view of how salvation is obtained? I have read several Watch Tower articles that sound like works are merely the fruit of genuine faith, and not a means of salvation. To this I would agree, however, the Watch Tower is not always consistent with this viewpoint:

Watch Tower, Feb.15,1983, pgs. 12-13 (JW)(PDF pg. 108-109)

"You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth — But How?"

"LIVING forever on earth is just an impossible dream. There is no way anybody can do it! You may have heard people say that. Yet you may know that in the beginning it was God's purpose for obedient humans to live forever in an earthly Paradise. And God never fails to accomplish what he purposes (Genesis 1:28; Isaiah 55:11)! His Word plainly promises: 'The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it' (Psalm 37:29).

"That is the thrilling message that Jehovah's Witnesses bring to people when they call at their homes. The Kingdom, with Jesus Christ as Ruler, will see to it that God's original purpose is accomplished. Under the Kingdom's righteous administration this earth will be cultivated to become a beautiful Paradise. However, not everyone will be permitted to live in the Paradise earth. Requirements must be met. That is reasonable (Matthew 6:10).

Consider: If you were the owner of a beautiful home surrounded by well-kept gardens, would you allow just anyone to live there? No, he would have to meet with your approval, meeting your requirements. **What does God require of those who will reside forever upon his Paradise earth? Let us examine four basic requirements.**

“Four Requirements

”Jesus Christ identified a first requirement when he said in prayer to his Father: ‘This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ’ (John 17:3). Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ includes knowledge of God's purposes regarding the earth and of Christ's role as earth's new King. Will you take in such knowledge by studying the Bible?

“Many have found the second requirement more difficult. It is to obey God's laws, yes, to conform one's life to the moral requirements set out in the Bible. This includes refraining from a debauched, immoral way of life (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 4:3, 4).

“A third requirement is that we be associated with God's channel, his organization. God has always used an organization. For example, only those in the ark in Noah's day survived the Flood, and only those associated with the Christian congregation in the first century had God's favor (Acts 4:12). Similarly, Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it.

“The fourth requirement is connected with loyalty. God requires that prospective subjects of his Kingdom support his government by loyally advocating his Kingdom rule to others. Jesus Christ explained: ‘This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth’ (Matthew 24:14). Will you meet this requirement by telling others about God's Kingdom?”

Christian rebuttal to the Watchtower's 4 requirements

Although the Biblical view of heaven and The Watch Tower view of “Paradise Earth”, as well as who will go there, are different, that is not the area we will focus on right now. The question we want to answer is, “How is salvation obtained?”

According to the Watchtower there are four requirements that must be met.

1. Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ includes knowledge of God's purposes regarding the earth and of Christ's role as earth's new King.
2. We must obey God's laws.
3. We must be associated with God's channel, His organization. (The strong implication here, of course, is that Watch Tower is this organization.)
4. We must tell others about God's Kingdom.

Does the Bible teach these same four requirements?

1. Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, the Bible tells us "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). However, God does not expect everyone to be a theologian in order to be saved. Salvation does not include "knowledge of God's purposes regarding the earth and of Christ's role as earth's new King".

Jesus told the thief on the cross, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The thief on the cross knew only to put his trust in Jesus, and that was enough.

2. We must obey God's laws.

To obey God's commandments is important. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"(John 14:15). But we are not saved on the basis of this obedience to His commandments; rather we are saved by his grace through faith alone.

Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

We are to do good works, but we are saved by grace. This is a "gift". One cannot earn a gift, but rather it is given freely.

Romans 21-24: "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory** of God, being justified as a **gift** by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"

We are ALL sinners and are justified as a gift, by His grace. If we could keep the law, we would be sinless. The Bible tells us that we are not sinless.

I John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

3. We must be associated with God's channel.

God never indicated that we need to belong to any organization. We do need to be associated with Jesus. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'" (John 14:6). "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

4. We must tell others about God's kingdom.

Telling others about God's kingdom is also important. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). As we have already shown, we are not saved by any work; this includes sharing the Gospel with others. Is it important? Yes! Does it have anything to do with our salvation? NO!