

God's Mission – Reality of the Gospel

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MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 1:26-28](#) • [Genesis 3](#) • [Matthew 4:17](#) • [Matthew 4:23](#) • [Matthew 6](#) • [Matthew 8:12](#) • [Matthew 18](#) •
[Matthew 22:13](#) • [Matthew 23:15](#) • [Mark 1:1](#) • [Mark 1:14-15](#) • [Ephesians 1:10](#) • [Romans 8](#) • [James 3:6](#) •
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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

So this week, I'm excited to start a series that I've been preparing for over a year and a half, maybe two now. And it's an important series. And it may very well be the most important series that is ever presented here at Founded in Truth. And the reason why I say that is: how many of you guys know exactly what chapter we can go to for the laws restricting what foods we can eat—the more detailed chapter in the Torah? How many of you guys know exactly what chapter you can turn to for the commandment of the tzitzit, tzitziot? A couple people. The feast days of God? All of them. How many of you guys know the chapter where the three pilgrimage feasts are? That's apart from that chapter. How many of you guys can say the first five books of the Bible in order? Genesis, right?

What Do We Really Know?

How many of you guys know what the gospel is and why Yeshua died? What happened as a result of his death? Why was he resurrected? What was the conclusion of this magnificent event? And is the gospel really important? I mean, we have so much else in this grand library called the Bible. What impact does the gospel of Yeshua have on the rest of Scripture? Why is it important? Why is it life-changing? How should we respond to the good news of the life and the burial and the death and the resurrection of Yeshua, the Messiah, a.k.a. Jesus, the Christ?

See, we all agree that these questions are important, but I feel that not only the Messianic communities that keep the Torah and Sabbath and celebrations of God and so on, but greater Christianity as well—I feel like this topic, the greatness and the importance of it and the significance of the gospel, has been minimized if not forgotten. And I want to make a statement right now that will encapsulate the rest of the series:

The Gospel Is Everything

The gospel of Yeshua, his life, his ministry, his teachings, his death, his burial, his resurrection was the best thing to ever happen to creation. And there are plenty of important things contained within God's Word, the Bible. There are tons of great important things that should be a part of our daily lives and our pursuits, but none of it, none of it is as important as who the person of Yeshua is and the gospel that he proclaimed. None of it. And there may be some who would challenge that statement and say, "Well, yeah, Yeshua is important, but—B-U-T, comma—I would question the integrity of the pursuit and the agenda of someone who claims to be a believer and wants to assert that there should be a but behind that statement. There is no room for buts behind the statement that Yeshua is the most important thing.

And we live in a culture that is training our churches to ignore that and training our fellowships to minimize that. We have social media that promotes fantastical ideas of knowledge, provoking conspiracy theories, fear, false empowerment of knowledge, creating rogues and rebels throughout our society. And we have believing fellowships that are minimizing the transforming message of Yeshua to fit their personal agendas and their bias towards the Scriptures that they stretch from the Bible. When you have a so-called Messianic fellowship that has a youth program or a children's program, and the children walk out knowing all the Torah portions and knowing how to say Hebrew blessings, but don't know who Mary and Joseph are, you may have a problem. It's all about God's glory manifest through Yeshua. And it's all about this proclamation known as the gospel, this good news. And it's not all about the lost tribes. And it's not all about the Nephilim. And it's not all about the rules surrounding the Sabbath. And it's not all about you. And it's not all about what you want it to be about.

The story of the Bible is just that. Every book in this library contributes to one single story, and it's the story of God's mission. And my hope is to be used to deliver a message that will either provoke a complete change, life-changing experience in your life through the hope of God, or that reminds you of the life transformation that you may have already had in your life. And I hope this series empowers you to say, I can live for God. And I hope this series encourages you to say yes—that I do have authority given by God to participate in his reign here on earth and to

be an ambassador of the King here and now, so that others would see his reign through me. And I hope this series awakens something within you that maybe you've counted as having little or no value in the past, but has actually been the voice of God attempting to speak to you and through you to reach the world. And I hope this series, at the very least, causes you to look back into the account of who the person of Yeshua was, and look back on yourself as a reborn individual in the new creation through the power and the will and the hope and the love and the mercy and the grace and forgiveness of God.

A Story About the Bible

And so I want to tell you a story about the Bible today. And as you can see, I'm super excited that the church here let me use a whiteboard today. And there are many resources out there—scholars and teachers and professors—that have earnestly committed their lives to teaching, reading and studying the Word of God and preaching and teaching who Yeshua was. And if you'd like some resources to look at or professors to check out later in the series, I'll give you certain books. But a few scholars that I look up to and I've gleaned so much from—one would be, of course, Professor Nicholas Thomas Wright, N.T. Wright. He's fantastic. He writes books, a ton of them. And I love almost everything in all of his books. I love the direction that he paints the gospel and what he reveals about the New Testament and how powerful and life-changing it is.

Christopher Wright is another scholar that I highly recommend. He transforms the Bible and he asserts that the mission of God is not found in the Bible, but the Bible is a result of the mission of God. That sounds like a cool phrase, but that's not how we read the Bible a lot of times. We read the Bible as if it's just a whole bunch of stories and maybe we'll find some golden thread between them. No, they all are about one thing: the mission of God. Professor Timothy Mackey is the creator of the Bible Project. Hopefully you've seen some of the work that he's put out—short illustrations on YouTube for free that come from a huge background in academia. He has a degree and is a professor of ancient languages. And, of course, G.K. Beale is another author that's fantastic.

Preparing This Series

So I just wanted to toss that out there. This is not something I just woke up one day and said, "Oh, this seems like a good idea," and I'm going to search the Scriptures to try to put my ideas together. And that's what seeking and searching and praying are all about. And this is why we

need to be in our Scriptures daily. And our Torah portions are great. They're fantastic. Don't neglect the Gospels and the Gospel accounts. Do not. Do not.

And so Timothy Mackey, a really great scholar and presenter, in one of his lectures did an illustration. And his illustration is actually found in one of his Bible Project videos, which I'll post once this is up on YouTube—I'll post it in the description below. And usually when I see professors and teachers and pastors and preachers present something, and I'm like, wow, what wisdom in how they articulated something or how they illustrated something—I really try to think, okay, how can I do this differently? How can I make it kind of mine without just mimicking it? And I could not figure out a better way to present this than how he presented it. So thank you, Professor Timothy Mackey, for the illustration that fueled and inspired what we're going to see on the whiteboard in just a minute.

God's Mission and the Gospel

And so what I want to talk about today is God's mission and the reality of the gospel. What is the force, the driving force behind the gospel? And I hope today it's a certain aspect of the gospel that I feel is one of the most important aspects. And I believe it's the aspect that gave hope and unity not only to Christians in the first century but to those in the second, third, and fourth centuries.

When the disciples were going into pagan nations, what was coming out of their mouths that was driving these pagans to stop worshiping their gods and say, "I want to call Yeshua my king, and I want to worship the God of Israel"? What would cause someone to do that? What would inspire these utterly lost people to say, no, I want that? What has not stopped for the next 2,000 years? Until we have billions of people who cry out and proclaim themselves followers of this King. There's something—there's a driving force behind this.

And the world around us views Christians a certain way, views believers a certain way. And these followers of this Rabbi Yeshua are viewed as many things. How many of you guys have ever tried to explain what you believe and someone just kind of asserts that they already know what you believe? "Oh, you keep Sabbath? That means you're a legalist and a Pharisee, yada, yada, yada."

The World's Gospel: Heaven as an Afterlife Escape

Anyone ever been called that? No, of course not. And the reality is no, this is just how we honor God. And everything else you're saying is a false view of what we believe. And usually their

perception of us and what we believe is caused by our actions or our words or our behavior and is sometimes mixed with half-truths on their part and ours. And so I want to show you what the majority of the world believes that we think the gospel is as believers in this Yeshua or Jesus. Can I do that? You don't have a choice. I'm going to use lots of colors, right? Pretty colors, right? And so the majority of the world believes that Christians believe we have the earth, right? Here we go. The earth. And then you have you or me. And what happens? You're born into this world and you live your life, right? And during this life, you learn certain opinions about God and certain opinions about this Jesus, right? And these beliefs about the Bible. And there's a moral code, and on this side of the line are bad things that you shouldn't do, right? And sometimes we do bad things. No? Okay. Sometimes? Just a few, right? Just a few. But for the majority, we try to stay on this side of the line, right? We try to, because we're good people and we're followers of this Jesus. And then we've accepted this gospel that we're struggling through this world, and this world is this wretched place, and our flesh is just horrible and sinful and needs to be taken out. And then one day, we die. And the gospel starts, according to this belief, the gospel starts right here. We've kind of had this ticket and this secret password that we've been given here, but we can't use it until this point. And when we die, there's two paths that can happen. One is if you have the correct opinions about God and the beliefs of the Bible, and if you know the password to tell St. Peter, you go to heaven. Heaven. Now, heaven is typically viewed, in this view, as a place with clouds, and it's white, but it has streets of gold, right? And there are harps, and I guess everybody's naked on clouds playing harps. I don't know. And if you've seen, what was that Robin Williams movie, where dreams are made? Is that something like that? Yeah, it was a great movie. And how heaven is depicted is like you just get everything, everything you've ever wanted. In heaven, I will have my 1988 E28 M5 BMW, right? And that is the car I will drive on the streets of gold, right? And this is the view of heaven, right? It'll be nice.

Hell and the Ultimate Destination

But you don't have the right opinions about God and you live more on this side of the line than that side of the line and you don't have the correct password at the end, then you go to hell. And hell is viewed as this subterranean, fiery pit, and there's pitchforks, there's farm equipment that is used on you, and it's a physical place, even though you're not physical, and you feel the pain, even though you don't have nerves, and God is watching over this hell, and he's allowing you to be tormented and tortured for all of eternity. And this is the goal of the gospel. The goal and the focus of this view of the gospel starts here when you die, and the final destination that you have is heaven. And that's where you will stay for all of eternity in the glory of God, singing

praises, driving your car, and celebrating and eating and doing all the things that you want to do, or your final destination is hell. And the reality is, not this, not quite, anyway. This is what the majority of the world believes that Christians believe, in one sense or another. But the biggest issue with this is the Bible. The gospel, the goal of the gospel, and the focus of the gospel, and the focus of the proclamation of the good news that Yeshua spoke, was not this. It was something else. And this view has evolved constantly, more so of late, but has evolved from many different aspects. And it has mixed in certain truths of the Bible, and it has mixed in fear and control, and this is what we have.

Turning to Scripture

And so I'd like with you to turn and look at this. In 2018, not many of us have a printed Bible that we use all the time. Maybe we bring it with us to show off. I use computer software at home or I use Blue Letter Bible on my phone. And it's amazing because, oh, what verse was that? I'll just type in what the verse says and look. I look like I knew exactly where it was. Search, right? I'm there too. On this topic, I wanted to bring my Bible in. And I wanted to read the words of Yeshua in two different verses here. So turn with me to Matthew chapter 4. Matthew chapter 4. If you can turn with me there. And Matthew is, when it was canonized, was put in the front, which is where Matthew belongs. Matthew chapter 4. We're going to start in verse 17 and go ahead and put your finger on verse 23. Verse 17 of Matthew chapter 4. From that time, Jesus began. Oh, and my Bible says Jesus, so I'm going to read Jesus. Is that okay? Okay, thank you. From that time on Jesus began to preach, repent for the kingdom of God is near. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. The kingdom of heaven is near. In verse 23, Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news, the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and sickness among the people. Notice it doesn't say repent forever. The gospel is finally here that you can go to heaven for all eternity and you don't have to burn in hell like everyone before you has. And he doesn't go to the synagogues and teach, listen guys, everybody's been going to hell up until this point. And the goal is that you guys can now go to heaven. And this is the gospel. You need to repent so you can go to heaven. No, he began healing people to demonstrate what he was preaching. And what was he preaching? The kingdom of heaven is where? Heaven. It's here. It's near. It's now. It's not at the end of your life. It's now. The kingdom of heaven has arrived now. Now. Believe the good news of the kingdom. And he healed every disease and sickness among the people.

The Gospel Isn't About You

And it's quite easy to think that if I'm a good person or that if I have the right ideas about Yeshua, bam, I have the password to get into heaven when I die. But the issue is that the gospel, the gospel doesn't rotate around you. It doesn't orbit around you. It doesn't revolve around you. The gospel doesn't have anything really to do with you. The gospel is the good news of what God is doing. Not what you're doing, but what God is doing. And to take this stance, we divert the focus from what God is doing to what I'm doing. You see, right off the bat, we have an issue with this. Do you guys know who first believed that the ultimate goal was to leave this wretched cage of a body and yearned for a soul to enter into heaven? There was a man by the name of Plutarch. In the first century. And Plutarch was a younger contemporary to the Apostle Paul. And Plutarch was a biographer, an essayist. He wrote a lot about people and events and so on and so forth in the first century. But he was also a Platonist. A middle Platonist, if you want to be specific. But he had this philosophy that was built after Plato. And it's fascinating because he had these wild ideas. And this is what he was teaching in the first century. In a letter to his wife mourning the death of their nearly two-year-old daughter, he comforts her, and it says something fascinating. He says, listen, our souls are immortal. Our body is not. And our souls have been placed in our body, and it's like a wild bird being shoved into a cage, like a lion being shoved in the zoo. A wild bird being shoved in a cage only to be tamed, disheartened and trained to only focus on this cage through the tragedy and the loss and the sadness throughout their life. But at the right time, higher powers unlock the cage so that the bird can go free, so that your soul can go free from this wretched cage that it finds itself in. And it will experience the flexibility and the resilience like it's never experienced before. Sounds kind of familiar, right? I like to think that about my relatives that have passed on. I admit that, you know, it is what it is.

The Pagan Origins of Christian Heaven

But it's fascinating because the Christian focus of only the gospel starting here and going to heaven as the ultimate goal—please listen to what I say—the ultimate goal of the gospel is more founded in first century paganism than it is in Paul or Yeshua or the Bible. Now, I want to go ahead and say something. We've done the afterlife series, and it was an exploration of all the verses in the Bible that talk about the afterlife. In the third one, I kind of gave my opinion, but it's the afterlife. It's meant to be kind of vague. I believe what the New Testament, the little bit it says, and the little bit that it focuses on about what happens to you after you die immediately, I believe that. I believe that. Going to this place, experiencing being in the glory of Christ, I believe that. Whatever that is, I believe it. And I'm not taking that away. But this is not about where you go immediately when you die. This is about the gospel and what the point is to it.

Justin Martyr and Early Christian Beliefs

Everybody okay? Okay. Fantastic. Let's see here. Oh, I didn't have it on. So we'll come back to that one. So you guys familiar with a man by the name of Justin Martyr? Hopefully you guys can see that. If not, I'll read it. Justin Martyr was a second century church father. He did a lot in his letters to build a foundation of the early church. And allegedly—because there's some speculation—he recorded this dialogue with this Jewish fellow named Trypho, and it was apologetics. It was these letters arguing about the Messiah and against those who reject the Messiah. And regardless, this is very special to me because it shows what the early second century Christian community believed. The first century is 0 to 100, like the early 100s. And it's fascinating. And here's what he says in his dialogue with Trypho. He's saying that the belief most of the world thinks we hold—that the final destination is heaven forever and ever, that we die and have the passover moment and get into heaven and that's our destination—denies the very foundation of the gospel being about new life and resurrection. And he's arguing that that's blasphemy. Not my words. This is Justin Martyr.

God's Good Creation

And the Bible is a book that tells a story of how God is going to do something new and restore his good creation through created vessels. [Genesis 1](#), 26-28. You should be familiar with this. Can't see the boldness, but that's okay. [Genesis 1](#), 26-28. Then God said, this is the creation account. This is when God created his good creation. Let us make man in our image. In our what? Image. So image. In our likeness and let him rule. Let him what? What's man supposed to do? Rule. Man's supposed to rule. Everybody say rule. Right? Like Xerxes. Yeah, that was a good response. Over the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, over the livestock, rule over all the earth and over the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him male and female. He created them. And God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds in the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

Image Bearers and Stewardship

Now, quick Hebrew lesson. The Hebrew word for image, which is a fascinating word. And we could just spend all day talking about the paradox of why this word was used for us. But it has many contexts in the Bible. But the context here is it's a representation of a king. It's an ambassador. Selim is an image. It's a representation of the king, or in this case, God. So man was created to be what? Selim. A representative of God's power and authority and reign and

kingdom. Right? And then we have this word rule, and I love that, because man was created as the image bearers of God to rule. And the word there is rada, and in this context, it's the authority in the stewardship over God's good creation. So man was created to be the image of God, the representation of God's kingdom, and to rule alongside God, if you will, or under God's authority over creation. That was the plan anyway. And the story starts off with God creating the world and charging mankind to be good stewards of it. In other words, God creates man and the world, and he invites man to progress the world, to cultivate that world alongside him, which flies in the face of the pagan nations and their Babylonian creation account. It just flies in the face of it. It's fascinating. God created us to work alongside him to cultivate his good creation, and to trust and obey him because there's no other, all under his authority.

Expanding the Garden

And he tells man to fill the earth. Now let me ask you something. Fill the earth. Does that mean that God wanted man to go outside the garden? Wouldn't he have to leave the garden to go fill the earth? I would assert no. The plan was never to leave the garden. The plan was to take the garden and engulf the earth. Continue cultivating creation. That's my opinion and we're going to discuss that in the next few weeks. The Bible tells a unified story about God and God's good creation. It's a phrase I'm going to use a lot. And God's creation was called what? It was called good. It was good. Was it perfect? I don't think it was. Heretic moment. God's creation wasn't perfect because perfect is a word that means static. It means unchanging. It means nothing ever happens to it. It stays exactly like it is right now. It is fixed. It does not change. God didn't make the world to be perfect. He made it to be good. It is a good creation. The trees continue to grow up and they have fruit. And the fruit falls to the ground and the fruit decays and dies off and the seed goes in the dirt. And what happens? It continues to progress in a cycle. It's not static. It's dynamic. It moves. It evolves. It's cultivated. It's good. It's awesome.

The Vocation of Image Bearers

And God called mankind to have a vocation to cultivate God's creation, to plant in it, to harvest in it, to expand the garden, to make it better in the name of God's authority. Let's do this together to be his image bearers. And this is what an image bearer is. You've been created to be an image bearer. This is the goal of mankind. This is the vocation of mankind. An individual that represents God's goodness and character and reign and justice on the earth. And when people see you, they should see God's reign being planted. When people see you, they should see an ambassador of God's goodness. And the beginning of the Bible starts with a garden. And

notice at the end of the Bible, in [Revelation 21](#), what is the reader given? What is the imagery? The book ends not simply with a garden, but with a city. And what's a city? I'd say a city is a whole bunch of gardens put together that have been cultivated and reached their fullness of what they're meant to be. And notice in the city, what is it? The tree of life. It's the garden. But it's progressed. It's been cultivated like it was supposed to be. We're put here to progress creation alongside God and under his reign and under his authority. God wants to work in his creation through you.

Corruption and Evil Enter Creation

And see, the story of the Bible tells us that evil and corruption entered creation in [Genesis 3](#). As a result of what or who? Us. Corruption entered God's good creation. And we thought we could define good and evil better than God. So we sought to have knowledge of good and evil. Instead of being under God's judgment, we separated ourselves from him. We yearned for autonomy from God. And we were wrong. We were wrong. We are not good rulers over this earth apart from God. And our yearning to rebel against God's blueprint for his good creation, our yearning to do things our way, our yearning to think that we can do things better, that we can define evil better than God, that we can define good better than God, has corrupted his good creation. And the story throughout the Bible is the story of God choosing to work through his creation to dispel this corruption and this underlying force that is constantly pushing back that we call evil.

The Gospel of Mark

So what does that have to do with the gospel? That was neat. What's that have to do with the gospel? What is the gospel? I want you guys to turn to a very special gospel, and it's the oldest and shortest gospel that we have, and it is the gospel of Mark. And for some reason, it was put after Matthew, but that's okay. And the thing about Mark is amazing because every gospel, when the New Testament was canonized and the gospels were canonized in the Bible, all four gospels don't sync up with all the details, right? And the believers who took on the authority to compile this together, it never bothered them once. It never bothered them once. Because they looked at the Bible and said, these are four different accounts by people inspired by God to tell the story of who this king is. And the thing about each of the Gospels is they're not meant to be the same. They're meant to show us different aspects of who Yeshua is. So John, for example, focuses on Yeshua being the Lamb. He is the Passover, which is why there's a date discrepancy. Mark is all about showing the kingship and royalty of the Messiah. That's who he is. That's the

lens that Mark tries to portray to the reader. And so if you turn with me to Mark chapter 1, starting in verse 1.

Mark's Opening and Isaiah's Prophecy

Verse 1. The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way. A voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Son of God is, of course, a title that means king. Jesus the King, the Christ, the anointed Son of God. So if there's a book of the Bible that you want to go to and read about what the gospel is, what would be a good candidate for this? Mark would be a fantastic candidate for this, right? This is what we're reading. And what's fascinating about this is Mark quotes Isaiah right there. You guys see that in your Bibles? He's quoting [Isaiah 40](#). [Isaiah 40](#) is a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant prophecy. And what this prophecy is about is God redeeming his people from exile, bringing them out of exile and reconciling them with him.

And if you read chapter 39, it puts it in context of the Babylonian exile. But it's one of the chapters that has to do with the result of this greater Passover that's going to happen sometime in the future and this greater exodus or this second exodus or this greatest exodus where God is going to redeem his people from exile and bring them back to him. And it's all kinds of great imagery here about the desert, the mountains moving away so that our path is straight. And you're walking and there's a cactus in the way and it can move out the way. And everything—the path is going to go straight to God. And your distance from God will no longer be an issue because the things that put you at a distance from God into exile, your sins will be forgiven and you will have freedom to run back into the arms of the Father. It's a brilliant chapter.

And Mark, spoiler alert, Mark begins his book by asserting that this exile has ended in the person of Yeshua who is our king that has come to reign. That makes me excited. That's awesome.

The Gospel of God's Kingdom

And if you continue turning in Mark, verse 14. So go ahead and turn over to verse 14. We're going to skip a few verses. Now after John was arrested—which John is this? John the Baptist. John the Mixer man, whatever your title is. After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee

proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel."

So he's saying, repent and believe the gospel. But what's the gospel? He's saying, believe the gospel. It would indicate that he's already told us what the gospel is. Look, the gospel of God. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is here. The kingdom of God is now. The kingdom of God, the gospel, is coming to reign, to be recognized, to be manifest as a real reality in this world.

Notice that the gospel, once again, has nothing to do with going to heaven as your final destination. It has to do with God's kingdom or the kingdom of heaven coming to earth here and now. Not in the future, but the gospel is proclaiming that God is king and his rule will be victorious over the corruption of this world and it's starting now. Repent. It's starting now.

Heaven and Earth United

And so in [Genesis 1](#), you have a God creating the heaven and earth, and this is God's domain and the domain of creation, and the two were one. And God's reign was perfectly infused into his good creation. He walked in the cool of the day. Heaven and earth were united. They were one. They overlapped.

What was not created by God in [Genesis 1](#)? So we know the earth was created, and the heavens were created. What's not mentioned in [Genesis 1](#)? Hell. Hell is not mentioned in [Genesis 1](#). Hell is spoken about much later in the Scriptures. In a very enigmatic way, hell is a metaphorical way of describing a place that is apart from God. Hell was manifest through us, our pursuits to separate ourselves from God, our pursuits to be wild by our flesh, our pursuits to establish what true good and evil is according to us, and our pursuit to establish our selfishness, our greed, and our lusts, created an aspect of hell. Hell is not something that exists only as a consequence of a divine judgment. Hell is something that exists now, as well as after.

Gehenna: A Dimension Apart from God

And if you've ever studied hell, you know that the Greek word is what? Gehenna. Right? And Gehenna—the word in the New Testament that hell is constantly translated as—was a pit that was outside the walls of Jerusalem where lots of horrible things took place. Kids were sacrificed there. Idols were worshipped there. And it ended up being turned into a big trash heap that constantly burned. And so when this word is used in the letters of the New Testament, the imagery is there. People could look outside of Jerusalem and be like, that's hell. Right? And get

that imagery. And whenever you see hell, that's what you're seeing. And hell is a real thing, and it's described via metaphor.

When hell or Gehenna is mentioned, it's not speaking about a place where your non-physical body goes to a physical place. Think about that. Just let it soak in. I've heard people talk about the center of the earth is hell, and that's where all the souls go. But I won't have nerves to feel the lava. It's something more than that. And please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. Gehenna was a term used to describe this dimension where you are separate from God. And it's something that Paul asserts in 1 and 2, his letters to Thessalonians specifically. He doesn't spend much time talking about going to hell. He talks about the tragedy and the worst thing that could ever happen is for you to be eternally separate from God's glory. That's hell. That's hell.

How Jesus Describes Hell

And we have these terms of fire and hell and burning and nastiness and suffering all used to invoke this sense of hell being this most awful place ever. And do you want to know why those things are used? Because it is. It is the most awful thing ever. Yeshua himself describes this place not only as eternal fire, but uses different descriptions in other passages of the Bible. [Matthew 8](#), 12, as well as [Matthew 22](#), 13, he mentions this place of being the exterior darkness or the outer darkness, the place where no light shines, the place that is fully separate from God, the place that is fully outside of God's heavenly reign, his presence and his kingdom and his glory.

Now, it's pretty hard to call a place that's literally on fire, photons shooting out everywhere, a place of darkness. It's just another way of describing the same place, and it's just as awful. It's a dimension that results from our lack of trust and obedience that withdraws us from God. And this dimension is also described many times as a place that is indicated as the fate after a final judgment, such as in [Matthew 18](#), the eternal fires that are prepared.

Hell Exists Now

But when we look at what Yeshua says about hell, Yeshua speaks about hell as a very real place, but not just at the end of your life, an eternal judgment or whatnot, or this divine judgment. He talks about hell being now. So [Matthew 23](#), if you want to turn there, [Matthew 23](#), verse 15, he's speaking to the Pharisees. Yeshua says, "Woe to you, you teachers of the law and Pharisees,

you hypocrites. You travel over land and sea to make and win one single convert. And when you have succeeded, you make them twice a child of hell as you are."

Yeshua says that the Pharisees are producing a child of hell now. Now. Not in the future, but here and now. Because of their actions now. Because of what they're doing now. You shouldn't just be afraid of experiencing hell after you die, guys. You should be afraid of experiencing hell now as you live.

The Fire of Your Tongue

James. James was the brother of Yeshua. I feel like James knew Yeshua pretty well—that's just an assertion on my part. In James chapter 3, we did a message on this called "Taming the Tongue" a year or two ago about the damage that your tongue can do and how your tongue can annihilate, your tongue can destroy, the words that you speak, can cause utter suffering to other people. It was fascinating. The second leading cause of death in teenagers is suicide currently in the U.S. Suicide. And almost all the situations have to do with bullies and have to do with people that speak words over them. And they are in hell. They're experiencing this hell and they feel like they would rather die than to live in the hell that the mouths of bullies produce for them. And that's utterly tragic. Reading stories about 10 and 12 year olds talking about having suicidal thoughts. Not 16, 17, 18 year olds. 10 and 12 year olds. What? Words. Words.

In [James 3](#), verse 6, it says, "...the tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and it itself is set on fire by hell. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in God's image." James states that with your tongue you do this. And it does this because it's ignited with the fires of hell. And you can spread hell in this earth. You have the ability to spread hell now. Hell can and is experienced now on earth. And it was never meant to be that way. Never. And we hate hell. And God hates hell. Why? Because hell was never a part of God's good creation. Corruption in this world, self-seeking motives in this world. All the things that separate us from God were never part of God's good creation. We have ushered this in.

What Was Never Created

And so in the beginning, in the beginning we have—let me draw a clearer picture. We have earth, right? And what else do we have? We have heaven. And this is God's good creation, where earth and heaven were one. They were counterparts. In the beginning, God did not create

heaven and hell. He created heaven and earth. These were the two things that were supposed to be in union together. And they were one. And God's supreme rule was found and engulfed the earth. And his reign and his kingdom engulfed the earth.

And then what happened? Mankind, through their seeking to have autonomy from God, pushed heaven away, yearning to rule their own world, yearning to make their own judgments, yearning to be their own God over the world through their own decision-making of what good and evil is. And the scriptural narrative all throughout the Torah and the prophets, it wasn't a complete separation, but this was a problem.

You guys remember when I did the temple series and I spoke about what the temple's function was? It's the place where heaven and earth met. This is the temple. Heaven and earth were never meant to be separate.

And when the temple was built, it was recognized as the place you could go and God's kingdom would be revealed, and sin could be cleansed away, and the corruption of mankind would be stopped because of the awesome power of God's presence and glory and rule in that place.

God's Kingdom Is Invading Earth

The gospel is the good news that God has come to dispel the hell out of his good creation. The good news is that despite us corrupting his good creation, God is not going to let hell and corruption have the last word. The good news is that God's kingdom is coming and is invading earth right now. Right now.

And the Pharisees were creating children of hell. Pockets of hell. Because they were imparting their corrupt hearts onto others.

We have the ability to create pockets of hell. With our mouths, with our actions. Maybe some of you have lived in a pocket of hell before. That was never supposed to be a part of God's good creation.

When God speaks of outer darkness in the supreme reign where heaven and earth are reunited—as all the prophets speak about and as the book ends on—what is outer darkness? It's a place that's apart from God's glory and presence and reign.

And Yeshua many times refers to the kingdom of God as the kingdom of heaven. And when he speaks, he's not simply focusing on a place where we go after we die and we're going to go up to heaven and we're going to drive our fun cars in the streets of gold. When he speaks about

heaven coming in, he's speaking about a reality that's starting now. And a heaven that is coming to earth now. And a place where God's will is lived out through his creation now.

And the proclamation of the good news, a.k.a. the gospel, is that God's kingdom of heaven is invading earth as we speak and it has started. And the mission is to confront the wickedness and vile, corrupt, selfish consequences of our actions—to confront hell, to get it out.

And his mission is to get it out of not only creation, but—where else does hell exist? Manifest. Where did it start?

God is just and he's merciful. He will not allow this corruption to have the last word. And this is what Yeshua is doing.

May Your Kingdom Come

[Matthew 6](#)—depending on how you read it, it's in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, but regardless. [Matthew 6](#), there's something called the Lord's Prayer. And the disciples come to Yeshua and they ask him, hey, teach us how to pray. You are a rabbi, teach us how to pray. And he says, okay, I'll teach you how to pray and this is how you should pray every single day. This is what your hope and your motivation should be based on every single day.

And he says, our Father who art in heaven, holy be thy name. May your kingdom come. And may your will be done, where? On earth as it is in heaven. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And then he proceeds to tell his disciples, you need to pray that he will equip you with the ability to give us our bread, our daily bread, and forgive us of the sin and the evil and the hell that we've produced in your world, and also equip us to forgive those who are setting their evil and sinful ways and their hell upon us. Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil. This is what Yeshua said to pray every single day.

[Ephesians 1.10](#). It's a fantastic verse that drives it home. Can you guys see if you can select that? [Ephesians 1.10](#). There it is. King James Version. This is what Paul is talking about, and if you read it at the end of [Romans 8](#), you'll see the same thing.

"...that the dispensation of the fullness of times, that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him."

So what's Paul going to say? The fullness of times? What's Paul's hope here? What is Paul looking forward to? Paul's looking forward to everything that is in heaven and everything that is

in earth being what? Being brought together as one.

Here's an important part: in Yeshua. In Yeshua.

The Gospel Is About Life Now

When we speak about the temple, which we will in a few weeks... We have these assertions that make us uncomfortable when Yeshua talks about his body or when the biblical authors talk about the body of Yeshua being the temple of God. Why? Because every single step that he took, every single thing that he did was heaven manifest on earth, which is the function of the temple.

And the reality and focus of the gospel and God's mission isn't about going and dying and being sent somewhere else forever. It's about doing something now. And it's about manifesting God's heavenly reign in God's good creation now.

And I want to put forth a very uncomfortable scenario. And I debated whether to even bring this up. But it's important because we have people who hate our Messiah and they hate what we do.

And do you guys believe infants and babies and toddlers and unborn children that die—do you believe they go to heaven? And when I say heaven, I mean like God's embrace where an atmosphere of mercy and peace is felt by them and God weeping over the tragedy and the hate and the damage this world only had to offer them. Do you guys believe that unborn children that die go to heaven?

If we do, if we do, why do we believe they go to heaven? Because they're innocent. They're innocent, right? And I don't disagree. I personally believe that precious children are not burning in hell for all eternity.

But if the goal is to be born and go through this life of this corrupt world and fighting sin every day, hopefully you make the right decisions about your beliefs in God, only to go to heaven forever—if this is the truth, aren't they in a better place? Is it not a good thing that they didn't have to face this world and now they're in heaven for all of eternity?

Matt, why would you ever think of a scenario so twisted as that? Do you want to know where I first heard this? From an atheist. From an atheist.

An atheist is a person whose religion is based around mocking and criticizing other religions. That's it. An atheist attempting to demonize Christians.

And if he can find evidence that this is what Christians believe, then it appears Christians believe that those children are in a better place and that it was actually a better thing. It was good that they died.

If this is correct and this is our final goal, and that's the focus of the gospel... Guys, we yearn for our children to live and have life. And I am pro-life, and I hate the act. Something changes when you become a parent. And the greatest fears I had before I became a parent cannot even compare to what enters my mind now in the worry and stress and anxiety of being a parent.

The Bible supports life. And it always will. And the focus of the gospel is to raise up the next generation to be the image bearers of God, to show forth the justice, the mercy, the hope, to show forth God's love to impact this world and be good stewards of what God has given to us.

The story of the gospel is about raising children to facilitate and cultivate and be the ambassadors of God's kingdom coming into heaven. Yes, it is a horrible tragedy that children would ever see death. Horrible. God didn't do that. We did. We did that. That is not something that exists in the kingdom of God. That is not something that existed in God's good creation. That result is on us. It's about life, about beginning the gospel and the pursuit of the gospel now in your life. Not simply after you die. Not just—listen to what I'm saying—not just after death.

And the story of Yeshua is one where death, which is the ultimate mascot of evil, is conquered. And the story of Yeshua is about death being found wanting in its power. Where evil had its chance to heap up its intentions and was found to be weak. Where we have a new identity, where we have a new hope, a hope of fullness, of new creation. Where heaven will overtake earth in one final climactic moment, according to the scriptures, where Yeshua is the reigning king and heaven and earth will be one.

Change Your Heart

But to get there, it's not simply a change in our actions, but our heart.

Is it immoral to murder someone? Yes, it is. Is it immoral to have adultery? Yes, it is. Of course it is.

Yeshua did not simply want people to change their actions and to be good moral people. He wanted to attack and confront the evil that was within their heart, the hell that was manifest, the separation of God that was manifest in their heart.

So on the Sermon on the Mount, he says, you've heard it said, don't murder. Yeah, I've heard it said, don't murder. Stabbing people is bad. Of course I've heard that said. I say, if you hate your brother in your heart, you're guilty of murder. I didn't kill him, but you hated him in your heart. You killed him in your heart. You wanted him to experience harm. You wanted him to experience hell from your heart. Therefore, yes, all the ingredients are there. Yes, hell is in your heart. Yes, you're a murderer because you're contributing to hell being manifest on earth from your heart.

Yeshua's words are so brutal. Action, the change of action, is not enough. You've heard it said, don't commit adultery.

Yeah, I've heard it said, don't commit adultery. Doing good there. If you lust after a woman in your heart. Man, maybe we can't relate fully to the murder thing. If you lust after a woman in your heart, you have committed adultery. I didn't touch her. You did in your heart. You pretended to in your heart. You wanted to in your heart. You sought to in your heart. Just because it didn't manifest in actions doesn't mean that it was not manifest. That needs to stop. That is the reason, that is holding heaven from coming forward if you are to be the ambassadors of heaven. You are holding it up, if you will. The forces of evil that have overtaken our hearts need to be fixed. And that is what Yeshua confronts. And we see the enemy, and the enemy is part of us. We love to live in dualistic terms where you're either good or you're bad. And the truth is, we're a little bit of both. We do good things sometimes, and we have good thoughts, and our hearts are good sometimes. And then other times, other times they're not. And this is what Yeshua is confronting. And how do we get hell and the separation of God and sin and evil out of earth so that heaven can invade it without getting rid of us? There's good news. There's good news. There is hope. And it may be painful, but if you yearn to see this hell taken from you, there is good news. And that is what Yeshua is proclaiming. And he says this in two words. He says, follow me.

Following Yeshua Into Heaven on Earth

And Yeshua lives this life of literally planting heaven on earth everywhere he goes, and he lives out this life that is not contaminated with the roots of hell and separation of God in his heart, and he's showing what an image bearer looks like, the perfected image of God. And it gets him into trouble. And do you know who it gets him into trouble with? Do you know who is the most offended of him walking out heaven on earth? The religious. The religious. The religious. And the result is that God is a loving God and he loves you so much that he would not stand by and watch evil overtake his good creation. So he allows hell to overtake him. And hell and sin

and corruption and evil with a capital E is allowed to exhaust all of its power in its fullness on Yeshua through the form of the cross. And it destroys him. It destroys him. And God says, no, it doesn't win. No, it's not powerful enough. And how does God show this? How does God show that his love conquers evil and everything evil can throw at it? The resurrection, the victory of our God. That's what that is about. And through this resurrection, we have victory. And through this resurrection, we have hope. And through this resurrection, we have a power and authority that is given to us. That's what the cross is. That's what the cross is. It's victory over the powers of evil. It's victory over the enslavement of sin. It is the ultimate Passover. It is the ultimate exodus. And the moment of the cross is the moment when the catastrophe of human existence of sin and corruption is defeated. And the death and the resurrection of Yeshua is the moment when we see that this God loves us so much that he will not let death continue its reign any longer. Yeshua's resurrection is the climax of new life, of new creation, of restoration. And the resurrection of Yeshua symbolizes an opportunity for you. It symbolizes an opportunity of life, of life that hell does not have hold on. It's referred to as eternal life. Now the thing about eternal life is we're always taught that eternal life begins here, right? So we're going to live out this life and we're going to die, and then eternal life is going to exist in heaven and will be in heaven forever. Because that's not the life that Yeshua is speaking about. Yeshua is speaking about a life that can start now, a hope that can start now, a faithfulness that can start now, a grace that can start now. When you, the moment that you acknowledge that you are a sinner, that you've been a contributor of hell, and that through the victory of the cross, this can be released, and you can be an ambassador for a better place. You can be an ambassador for a better kingdom. You can serve a better king. Eternal life starts now. And it is so powerful and it is so potent and it surpasses death forever and ever. That's the story of what Yeshua proclaimed. That's the story of what Yeshua proclaimed.

Eternal Life Begins Now

Repent and believe the good news that God wants to save you from hell now. He wants to save you from hell now. Not simply, listen to me, not simply after you die. He wants to save you now. You don't just get a voucher, a winning lottery ticket that you can't turn in until death. You can experience it now. You can experience God's love now, his grace now, his mercy now. Now is when it starts. And if that's the only thing you take away from this message, maybe I've said something in this message that caused you to be defensive or to put a wall up, or maybe I've said something in this message or I misspoke something in this message that offended you and that you utterly disagree with, please do not walk away with here without hearing the words that in Yeshua you can experience the life that God has for you now, starting now in your life. If

nothing else, walk away with that. Please walk away with that. A start of a new creation has begun. Just as all the prophets foretold about, we're waiting for it to happen here or sometime over. No, it's birthed in Yeshua. The new creation has come upon us now. And we know the fullness of new creation will be complete one day. But there is hope. Yes, there's a day when the scriptures talk about violence will no longer exist. Well, we will, our guns, this may offend some folks, our guns will be turned into garden tools. There will be a day when our guns are turned into garden tools. Sorry to break it to you. And it will be a wonderful thing. It will be. Where racism will be extinct, wars will be no more, unforgiveness will no longer be a way of life, where justice reigns and God's supreme love is felt everywhere in all. And we live in that hope. We live out that hope. We live out this hope as if it is already here in its completion. Why? Because we're ambassadors of that hope. We're ambassadors of that kingdom. The kingdom that is coming. The kingdom that is here but not yet. And that's why Yeshua tells us to forgive our enemies now. Why? Because in the world to come and its completion, all relationships are reconciled. So live it out now. And Yeshua speaks about loving people despite violence against you. Why? Because in God's good world, there will be no violence or offense. Live it out now. But they did this to me. But you're an ambassador of another kingdom. So live out that kingdom now. But that's not fair. Have you forgotten? Yeshua tells us to give without even considering how much. Why? Because in God's good world, his good creation, when it is fully come, no one will be found wanting. This is the world, guys. The kingdom we live out now. We will live out the testimony of what is coming. And we live it out now so that the world will bear witness to the power of God's transformative spirit within us. And we live it out because God is here and new creation has begun and we're the ambassadors of that.

Ambassadors of God's Transforming Kingdom

And the story of God's mission, the story of God's mission is that he loves his good creation and he loves the humans he made to be his image bearers. And Yeshua comes on the scene and proclaims this king has arrived and his kingdom is invading and is a full affront to hell in this world, to everything that is not of God. You know, Paul makes a list of things that won't inherit the kingdom of God. Why is that? These are elements of sin. Sin is not part of good creation or hell as I've been referring to it. And it's happening now. And when we read through Matthew and we read through Mark, what do you see Yeshua doing? And this is important. He's going around telling folks. Is he going around telling folks the secret password to get into heaven? No. That's not the focus of the gospel. Listen to me. That's not the focus of the gospel.

Heaven Advancing: Jesus's Healing Ministry

He heals. He restores. He reconciles. He forgives. Heaven on earth. He lives out heaven on earth. And Yeshua reaches out and touches the leper. And somehow, instead of himself being infected... His cleanliness is transferred to the leper. And when he touches the woman with the issue of blood, or he allows the woman with the issue of blood to touch him, and if she touches anyone else, they're made unclean. It's a big mess, and it's a big deal. And the scripture tells us what? Not that he was made unclean, but that power went forth from him to her. When Yeshua touches the widow's son's corpse, instead of Yeshua being infected by the corpse, the corpse comes back to life. Yeshua was ushering in the kingdom of God in a very real reality now. The reign of heaven manifest now. Everything the Jewish revolutionaries were trying to do through violence, he was doing through love and mercy. Let that soak in just a little bit. Yeshua was defeating hell on earth. He was defeating sin and death on earth now. And Yeshua was establishing, if I will, if I can take it a step further, when Yeshua walked the earth, he was establishing pockets of heaven. Everywhere he walked, he was establishing heaven on earth in a real tangible reality. No, he was calling forth a people that does the will of his father. Those were his brothers and his mother, right? And this people is Israel, or what Israel was supposed and always meant to be. How many disciples did Yeshua have? Twelve. What did they represent?

I'll give you one guess. The tribes of Israel. So Yeshua had regathered and reinstituted all 12 tribes of Israel, the wholeness of Israel and everything they were supposed to be around him. That's how he started his ministry. And he sends this people of God out to do what? Do as I do. And don't just love people as yourself. I'll give you a new commandment today. Love them as I loved you. That's a big do it. Teach all nations what I have taught you. Go out and confront evil, confront hell. Be good soldiers of Christ. Be good stewards. Be ambassadors of the king. Be the image bearers that God created you to be. Follow me.

And how does the Bible end in the story of Revelation? We have the imagery of heaven and earth finally coming back together. I heard one professor assert that was the wedding. That's a wedding when heaven and earth finally come back together. And we see a city coming out of where? Heaven and coming to earth. And it's a city that's also a garden where the tree of life resides. It's Eden restored. God's good creation.

And so, this is an extremely short overview of what we're going to explore in the coming weeks and why Yeshua is the best thing ever to happen to creation and what it means to be a follower of Yeshua. Or people say, Jesus freak, I say Yeshua yahoo. I am a Yeshua yahoo.

Living the Gospel Now

And I didn't go into great detail about everything the Bible says after you die. So please don't take this message wrong and make criticisms about, well, heaven and hell and this, and after you die, the focus wasn't that. The focus was on the gospel and what it means to you now, in your life now. What can the gospel proclaim to you? What opportunity has been given to you now? There's a whole other message that we could do about what happens after you die and the resurrection, but the point is to tell you about God and his mission for his good creation here. This is earth. This is where we're born. This is where we die. And the Bible says this is where we'll be resurrected. We're resurrected here, back in God's good creation.

But in worship team, you guys can go ahead and come on up and get set up. Guys, I want to challenge you today. I want to challenge you, and I want you to ask yourself the question, what gospel are you living out? What gospel are you living out today? Are you living out every single day secure that because you know the password, that one day, if you just make it through life, one day you'll get into heaven forever? Or are you waking up every single day anticipating the hope that we have in Yeshua and the hope of God's final restoration? Are you living out that hope just as [Hebrews 11](#) says to do? It's what our faith is. Our faith, our walk, our lives should be the substance of what is hoped for. It should produce the evidence of what is not yet seen. That's what we live out. We live out God's kingdom, heaven on earth now. And we're representatives of that.

Living out the gospel is about taking up our vocation as an image bearer, confronting evil, and showing forth the love, the hope that is only found in Yeshua, here and now. It's a responsibility that we have as believers here and now, not something that we just got, okay, I'll do the best I can, and yeah, this world's going to hell anyway, so I'll just hang out here until I die. No, you have something to do now, and it's to live out the gospel.

There Is Another Way

And maybe that's not you today, right? Maybe you've been living a life consumed by hell. I don't know if that's you today. Maybe you have been the one that has produced an ignited hellfire within yourself and have spread it to others. You don't have to live that way. You don't have to live that way. There is another way. There is a way of peace and mercy. There is a way of grace. There is a way where God's love is felt. And although this world will throw hell at you every chance it gets, your faith determines whether you're consumed by it or not. And that's the reality of the gospel. We have a hope in the reality of heaven now.

Shalom. I'm Matthew Vandrells and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to cultivate a fellowship of image bearers that live the redeemed life only Yeshua can give. If this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us an email through the contact form on our website and tell us how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him. If you'd like to see more messages like this one, subscribe to our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#). If you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our online giving portal [here](#). We thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to next time.

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