

*We heard that story of Jesus, and even if we didn't see the whole picture, we embraced it. And we say we believe Jesus is the king. We believe that Jesus is the son of God, that he rules and reigns at God's right hand. And then we were baptized and we embraced the gospel truth, and so there's where you could say, yes, baptism is a matter of obeying the gospel. So we're embracing this good-news story to say God rules and reigns through Jesus.*

**Welcome to the Radically Christian Bible Study Podcast. I'm Travis Pauley. Here we have one goal: Learn to love like Jesus. Each week I visit with Wes McAdams, minister and author, and together we explore biblical passages and topics. I hope you enjoy this study.**

WES: Okay, Travis. So our habit is beginning to form of starting this podcast by asking you a question, by putting you on the spot.

TRAVIS: Yeah.

WES: And you said yesterday, to me, you said, I like being surprised by what we're talking about.

TRAVIS: I do.

WES: Because you don't know -- well, I told you about five seconds ago what we're talking about today.

TRAVIS: Yes.

WES: But up until that time, you didn't know what we were talking about, so --

TRAVIS: There wasn't enough time for me to Google it.

WES: Because that is -- that is the concordance of today.

TRAVIS: Absolutely.

WES: That's the theological study book, and every other book, is Google.

Yeah, just Google it.

TRAVIS: That's right.

WES: You know, it's funny, speaking of Google -- I don't know if we'll edit this out, but it is interesting how now, with Google, they will strip information. So if you Google -- our phrase today that we're going to talk about is "gospel," so if you Google, "What is the gospel," it might very well strip a definition out of a website --

TRAVIS: Oh, yeah.

WES: -- and put it on the Google search-results page so you don't have to click to go to that. But I found that that could be rather deceiving because it doesn't consider the context.

TRAVIS: No.

WES: And you know me, I'm all about context. So it doesn't consider the context of the website from which it stripped it, and so I would really encourage people, if they Google a theological idea, don't take Google's word for it. You might find a good website by Googling, but don't just take whatever Google stripped off of some website and put it out there because you don't know what that person -- I mean, who did they take that from? Like, what website and what's their theological slant or bias, you know, and they just ripped that --

TRAVIS: That's a good point.

WES: -- from something and then stuck it on their search-result page, and you don't know where it came from or what the author was even

saying in that.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: It may have been a human being that copied and pasted it, but it most likely was a bot. You know, it was just Google algorithms scraping something off there because they saw something that said, "The gospel is \_\_\_\_\_," and so then they put it on there. So be really careful when you Google theological --

TRAVIS: I couldn't agree more.

WES: -- or pretty much anything, but yeah. Not to say that it's not a good tool, because it can be a very good tool.

So that brings us to our question: What is the gospel? I recently did a blog-post series. It was inspired by a book that I had just finished reading, Scot McKnight's *King Jesus -- The King Jesus Gospel*. Is that right? I don't know. We'll post it in the show notes. But, anyway, it was really good and it really helped me to solidify some things in my mind, things that I had been thinking about and wrestling about, things that, you know, I probably included in my book, *Beyond the Verse*, but it has really occurred to me that our definition of "gospel" and the New Testament definition of "gospel" are two pretty different things. So I don't necessarily -- you know, I'm not necessarily asking you, Travis, what your definition is now.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: But if you just had to -- if you just had to think, you know, what would the average person say if you said, "What's the gospel?" If you just asked somebody, a churchgoer, you know, a Christian person,

"What's the gospel," what do you think most people would say?

TRAVIS: I definitely would have a different answer, like you said, for me now, but I think, in general, what is the gospel is that God came to earth and that he lived a perfect life and that he offered himself up as a sacrifice, and most importantly of all, he was raised again.

WES: Yeah, and I think that's a legitimate answer. I think that's a good answer. What would you say that people would think is the goal of the gospel? Like if -- if you said, you know, like what's the point? What's the -- the Greek word, the "telos," the -- where is this going? Like what's the point of the gospel? What do you think most people would think was the point of the gospel?

TRAVIS: Well, I know where I've come to on that is that -- you know, because we talked briefly in our last episode on salvation and baptism, how it's not just about getting to heaven.

WES: Yeah.

TRAVIS: It's about --

WES: Which I think is what most people would say, right?

TRAVIS: Exactly.

WES: Yeah, I think most people would say that the point of the gospel is for my sins to be forgiven so that I can go to heaven.

TRAVIS: Right. That's the good news, right?

WES: Right, right. Exactly. And I think that that's -- exactly. So when you say, what's the good news -- the good news, to most people, it may, like, include Jesus, like Jesus coming and Jesus dying, but the good news, to most people, is that I can get forgiven, right? I mean, I think that

that's what most people -- that's what I always thought. You know, the good news is that I can get forgiven.

And then we even tie in phrases like "obey the gospel." And so the way that I grew up -- if somebody said that person obeyed the gospel, what would you think they meant?

TRAVIS: They got baptized.

WES: Right, they got baptized. And then we sort of just like check that off of a list and say, okay, they obeyed the gospel. And we even say it in the past tense, like that person has obeyed the gospel. And so the way I always -- and I explained it this way. I mean, I grew up hearing this, and then I became a teacher, a youth minister, a preacher, and so I explained it the way that it was explained to me, that the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died, he was buried, he was raised, and so the way you obey that is you die to your sins, you're buried in baptism, and you're raised to walk in newness of life.

TRAVIS: Yeah.

WES: And they're tying I Corinthians 15 and Romans 6:1-4, tying those things together and saying that's obedience to the gospel. Well, I mean, it is. It certainly is obedience to the gospel, but you cannot say -- and I have a real problem with us saying -- and I'm saying -- I'm picking on myself here, too. I have a real problem with us saying a person obeyed -- past tense, checked it off a list -- obeyed the gospel because they got baptized. That's -- you're never done obeying the gospel. To obey the gospel -- and that phrase is used a couple of times in scripture, but every time it's used, it's used in like a present-tense type of a situation, and it's

always actually used in a negative sense. So it talks about, at the judgment, Jesus will judge those who have not been -- have not been obeying the gospel, have not obeyed the gospel. So in that sense, it's past tense, but right now it's present tense, right? So when the judgment happens, he will judge those who have not been obeying the gospel, who have not lived in accordance with, have not embraced and walked in the good news.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: So when we talk about the good news, yes, it most certainly includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Isn't that funny, though? When we say it, we tend to say -- and I would have to rewind the podcast to figure out how you said it exactly. Well, I think you said "God," right? You said "God" came to earth --

TRAVIS: Yes.

WES: -- and that he died. And that's an interesting way to say it, too. And we tend to say Jesus -- or Jesus died for our sins, and both of those are true. Jesus is divine. Jesus is God in flesh, the second person of the Trinity, so all of that's true, but the way Paul says it in I Corinthians 15 is "Christ." Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and he was buried, and on the third day he was raised in accordance with the scriptures.

So it's interesting that Paul doesn't say "Jesus." Now, is he talking about Jesus? Of course he's talking about Jesus, but he says "Christ," which means the anointed one, right? It means the Messiah. The Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that's

slightly different than just saying Jesus died for our sins. Yes, the Messiah is Jesus; Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Christ. But what Paul is saying is that "in accordance with the scriptures." So when you hear that phrase, when you hear "in accordance with the Scriptures," what do you think? Or what do you think most people think when they hear Christ died for our sins "in accordance with the Scriptures"?

TRAVIS: That it's fulfilling something from the Old Testament.

WES: Okay, good. And I think that that's good. I think that maybe we might nuance what we mean by fulfilling something from the Old Testament. I think that that's important, but I think maybe the way I read that -- I don't know. It's hard to know what I thought when I was 18 or something, but I think maybe what I thought when I read that was that, you know, in accordance with what Matthew and Mark and Luke and John wrote.

But that's not what -- Paul means exactly what you said. He means the Hebrew scriptures. He means what was the scriptures to him his entire life. Now, obviously, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and all the epistles that Paul wrote, eventually become the collection of inspired writings that we look at and say those are the scriptures. But any time Paul talks about the scriptures, he's speaking about -- he's speaking about the Hebrew scriptures, what we would call the Old Testament.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: And so he's talking about the scriptures of the law, the prophets, and the writings, the Hebrew scriptures. And so he says that Jesus -- not "Jesus," "the Christ." He says that the Christ -- this is the good news. The

good news is that the Messiah -- and even that idea has to be unpacked, right? I mean, so if we just walk up to somebody on the street and say, well, Jesus died for your sins, they say, okay, I knew that, or I didn't know that, or they draw a conclusion of what that means. What does it mean that someone died for my sins? And often I think we picture like a courtroom scene and we're like, okay, so you're guilty, and then somebody steps in and he dies for you so that now you're innocent and you can go free and the guilty person took your place, right? So we tend to think about it just in those terms. Jesus died for Travis. Jesus died for Wes. Jesus died for Bob. Jesus died for Sally. And we tend to think that's the gospel. But you have to unpack what Paul means when he says the Messiah died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

TRAVIS: Yeah.

WES: So he's saying that the Hebrew scriptures -- and he doesn't, like, pull out one of them, and I don't think he even means a handful of, like, predictions. I think that's how we tend to read prophesy, like they're just a bunch of -- you know, there's a few what we call "Messianic prophecies," you know, so there's these predictions and we almost treat it like Nostradamus or something, like there's just like this fortune teller told us about, and then, yeah, Jesus was that guy. And so we tend to read it like that. But I think that Paul means when you read through the entirety of the law and the prophets and the writings, when you read through the entirety of the scriptures, that you know God will rescue his people through an anointed one. He will rescue his people.

And I've been thinking a lot about some of the things that Isaiah



said here recently, so this would be a good opportunity to pull open and look at a couple passages. But in Isaiah 61 -- and this is a passage that Jesus read in Nazareth. So he goes to the synagogue and he sits down and he reads this passage to the people sitting there, and, I mean, it's an incredibly bold thing for him to say. So he reads Isaiah 61:1: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me." That's "Messiah." So to say, "the Lord has anointed me," he's saying, I am the Messiah. I am the anointed one.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: "Messiah" means anointed one. So I am the Christ. I am the Messiah. The Lord has anointed me with the spirit. So "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me" to do what? "To bring good news." The Hebrew word is "basura," but the Greek word is "euangelion," and so he says, "The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor," to the "anav," to the meek, to the persecuted, to the afflicted. I have come to announce good news.

Well, what is that good news? Is it, you know, your sins are forgiven so you can go to heaven? Is that the good news? Well, if you read through Isaiah, I don't think you'd ever get that impression. If you read through Isaiah, it's that Isaiah is saying to God's people, you've sinned. To Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, you've sinned, you have been unfaithful to your God, and you're going to be punished. You're going to be taken off in exile. Your cities are going to be destroyed. It's going to be awful.

But then God will also judge every kingdom of the earth, and at

some point, there's going to be a Messiah, an anointed one, who will announce good news to the meek who have waited for salvation from God, and cities will be rebuilt and things will be restored and there will be peace and there will be prosperity. Why? Because -- and he -- Isaiah keeps using this idea that God will return to Zion. God will return to his city. God will return to reign as king. In Isaiah Chapter 52 -- and when he talks about good news -- and this is a phrase that Paul uses in Romans 10. He says -- this is Isaiah 52:7. He says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns."

And that's -- for Isaiah, that's the good news. The good news is "Your God reigns." God has returned to reign as king. God is now in charge of the world. And so when Jesus shows up and he says, the Lord has anointed me -- the spirit of God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to announce, or to bring, good news to the poor, to set free the people that are in bondage -- you know, the rest of Isaiah 61, he sent me "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion" -- which, if you're thinking Jesus, and you're thinking this, you might think about the Beatitudes, right?

TRAVIS: Yeah.

WES: And so there's a lot of similarity. You know, those who mourn are

comforted; those who are hungry are satisfied. "To give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

Okay. So for Isaiah, the good news -- and the good news means your God reigns, that somehow God's reign and rule will be reestablished and that God and man will be at peace once again and that the sin and everything that defiled will be taken away and there will be peace and there will be prosperity. And so this is what the people are waiting for, right? I mean, so, eventually, the Northern Kingdom of Israel falls to Assyria, the Southern Kingdom of Judah falls to Babylon, and then Babylon falls to the Medes and the Persians. The Persians let them go home back to Jerusalem and sort of rebuild, but it's really still not -- there's no Messiah. There's no prosperity. There's no peace. There's no year of Jubilee, everybody goes free. It's nothing like that.

In fact, when you read Ezra and Nehemiah, by the end of the book they're like pulling out their own hair and pulling out other people's hair, and, like, cursing people and beating people, and like, why won't you obey the law? Why don't you just -- we need a change. And so that's frustrating. And then you have Alexander the Great, and the Greeks sort of take over the world, and then you have some Syrian kings. Antiochus Epiphanes, he comes in and he essentially outlaws Judaism and says, you know, if you're circumcised or you have a copy of the Torah or you celebrate Jewish holidays, death penalty. So he enforces it. And some Jews go along with it and they sort of become Greek. They sort of

compromise to save their lives. And then others are zealots, and you have the Maccabean Revolt. And so you've got the Maccabees and they overthrow the Syrian kings, and then you have a while where the Maccabees and, you know, Jews are in charge once again. But then, eventually, Rome comes in and wipes them out and they sort of install their puppet king and they run the show.

And so the people of Jesus' day are waiting for someone to announce the good news. Announce the good news, not just of, like, personal salvation. Like that was never -- that's never the story. The story is the salvation of Israel.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: And then if you're really paying attention, then you realize it's not just the salvation of Israel, but it's the salvation of the whole world through Israel.

TRAVIS: And you brought up the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. And I think -- when you said, what is the gospel, where I now go with that is, obviously, the foundation is his sacrifice and the salvation brought through that, and -- but more importantly, that that is the fulfillment of the law, and that for all these years they had been commanded to -- when you sin, or just day-to-day, you have to sacrifice. You have to make sure that that blood is spilt in order to atone for your sins, and there's all -- I mean, you read through Leviticus and you read through all the rules, and it's complicated. And it was always about, you did something, you make a sacrifice for it.

Then Jesus comes along, and in the Sermon on the Mount he starts

talking about -- I kind of -- in my mind, the gospel is boiled down to when he talks about, you know, you've heard it said don't commit adultery, and I tell you don't lust. He's not just -- he's saying it's not just about a commandment and if you do it, you're toast or you got to go make a sacrifice. You've got to go through all these hoops to atone because there is -- you do have to atone. If you want to be right with God, you have to -- something has to be done. But now he's saying, there's another way to think. Fight the battle on a different plane. So when he says, you know, you've heard it said don't murder; I tell you don't hate -- you're fighting an entirely different battle. If you're trying not to hate, murder is probably not ever going to be on the table for you.

And I think that is the enlightenment of Jesus, and I think you've seen in many, many ways, since Jesus, the effect that that has had on the world. We're not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. We still have a lot of problems. But the world does not look the same today, and I think we take this for granted sometimes. You know, we can kind of look around our world and get very discouraged, but it's like the world is not the same today as it was before Christ. I mean, we've gone through some pretty tough periods, but, largely, the effect has been, I think, that enlightenment of we're fighting a different battle.

WES: Yeah. Yeah, I think you hit on several things there. I think that, on the one hand, they're waiting for a day of atonement, and I think that that's a great analogy, that it's not just -- it's not just like I sinned so I need to make atonement for my sins. They thought much more -- there is an element of that, for sure. But they thought much more collectively.

And when you listen to the prophets, they definitely make it clear that suffering is going to have to happen in order for atonement to happen.

Now, they may have thought -- and it would be a reasonable conclusion to come to -- that we're going to have to suffer as a people in order to make atonement for our own sins and shortcomings. But, in reality, when you read Isaiah 53, it looks like -- if you read the entirety of Isaiah, it looks like the servant that's suffering on behalf of the people -- and on behalf of the nations, really, that's going to bring about atonement and forgiveness, it looks like the servant is Israel, and so that Isaiah is just talking about the whole people as the servant of God.

But when it turns out -- when Jesus comes along, we realize, oh, the servant was actually a representative of Israel who would be put to death in the people's place and who would make atonement for the people. So there becomes this ultimate day of atonement to which all of the other days of atonement simply pointed forward to, and now the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, has come and makes atonement for all the people.

And then going forward as the new kingdom of God, what does that look like? What does it look like to be the new kingdom of God? What does it look like to truly live under the rule and the reign of God through Christ? What does that look like? Well, the Sermon on the Mount is this picture of what does the kingdom -- what do kingdom people look like? And it's not people -- like you said, it's not people that are checklist people. It's not people who live by the letter of the law --

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: -- but who live by the spirit of the law, which is exactly what Jeremiah and Ezekiel said was going to happen, was that the spirit of God was going to come on the people and that their hearts and their minds would be changed. It wouldn't just be behavior modification; it's going to be an internal change. And there has been a tremendous effect of the church on the world, that when the church is being the salt and the light of the world, it has made a tremendous difference in the world.

I think, though, that as our focus has changed and we're now in sort of -- in a mentality of, well, we're just waiting to die so we can go to heaven instead of remembering we are the kingdom of God, we are the people -- more accurate, probably, to say we are the people of the kingdom of God. We are the people that have been brought under the rule and the reign of King Jesus, who have been brought under the rule of God through Jesus. Our sins have been atoned for. Now, as sanctified, made-holy people, as priests in the world, how do we bring the world to God and bring God to the world? How do we -- how do we shine as light and how do we flavor as salt? How do we preserve as salt in the world? And Jesus lays that out, what that looks like and how -- the lives that we're supposed to live.

And oftentimes, though, we are more comfortable simply being religious. You know, we're more comfortable -- like going back to your idea of the law and checking things off of a list, and say, well, I didn't -- I didn't kill anybody. I didn't commit adultery. Yeah, but what's your heart look like and what's your mind look like? Have you been set apart and changed? Has your heart of stone been taken out and you've been

given a new heart?

So when Paul says that the Christ has died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, he means all of that. He means the new heart, the new mind, the spirit being poured out. He means this ultimate day of salvation. He means that God has provided -- even back to the story of Abraham. You know, Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac, and Isaac says, hey, you know, we've got the wood and we've got everything for the fire and the altar, but, dad, where's the lamb, you know? And Abraham says, the Lord will provide. And that's exactly what he does. He provides a lamb in the place -- or a ram in the place of Isaac.

And that's exactly what God has done in Christ Jesus, is that the Messiah, the anointed one, the king, has suffered for his people to bring his people as a gift, to bring all of the nations that are made up -- all of his people that are made up of the nations. Every tribe and tongue, not just Jew, but Jew and Gentile alike, bringing us to the Father, reconciling us with God.

And now, as people of the kingdom, how do we live? So -- and we've already touched on this, so I want to kind of elaborate -- unpack this idea of kingdom. I think that that's much more a part of the gospel than we often make it. Like even back to your original statement, you know, what is the gospel? And we talk about, well, Jesus died for us so we can go to heaven and that kind of thing, and very, very little mention of kingdom.

And the way I've grown up thinking is that "kingdom" simply means "the church" and so we've simply replaced "church" with



"kingdom" and use those two words synonymously. Now, certainly, there's a lot of overlap in that the church is the people of the kingdom. But in New Testament vernacular, "kingdom" really refers to the rule and the reign of God. And so when Jesus comes announcing the good news -- when we read all throughout the gospel accounts, Jesus comes -- well, even before Jesus. Even John the Baptizer comes and he's announcing the good news, but it's always the good news of the kingdom, right? The good news of the kingdom.

And Matthew uses a phrase -- he says, "the kingdom of heaven," and then the other gospel writers usually use the phrase "kingdom of God." Dr. Ian Fair, who is a member here at McDermott Road, he often says that perhaps Matthew, because it's written to a Jewish audience -- they were very careful about using "God." In fact, Jews to this day, if you ever notice -- maybe you'll see a Jewish person write, "God" G-o-d, they don't spell it all out. They'll write G-d.

TRAVIS: Oh, yeah.

WES: They're very careful about pronouncing or saying or even writing "God" even though "God," that word itself, is sort of generic. Yahweh is the name of God, but even that, we have no vowels, and so we're not even really sure how to pronounce God's name, you know, or even if we knew how to pronounce it, are you supposed to pronounce it? Like they're very particular about that.

So with that in mind, perhaps in Matthew's gospel account, because it's written to a Jewish audience, they would use "kingdom of heaven." That way you're not saying God's name; you're simply saying

the place of God. But it means the same thing; they're synonymous terms.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: But I'm afraid that when we read "kingdom of heaven," we think the place I'm going to go when I die. You know, like we think the kingdom of heaven is up there, right? The kingdom of heaven is, you know, the place I'm going. Whereas what Jesus means is the kingdom of God is -- that's what's here. That's the good news. The good news is the kingdom of God is at hand. It's drawing nigh. It's drawing near. It's right here. I'm bringing it. I am bringing God's rule and reign. I am bringing heaven's rule and reign. So it might be -- you know, to think through like how would that -- what does that mean? I often compare it to, you know, if somebody in that time period and culture had said the "kingdom of Caesar," you would know what they mean. Or if they said the "kingdom of Rome" or the "empire of Rome," you would know what they mean. They're synonymous ideas. We're saying Caesar's reign and rule, or Rome's reign and rule. By "Rome," we mean Caesar's. So if somebody said -- if they were capturing a territory and they were saying, we are bringing the kingdom of Rome to you, good news. Good news, Caesar is now your king.

TRAVIS: They would say it like that.

WES: Right. They would. Absolutely, they would. In fact, "euangelion," good news, was used to announce about new kings and about the king's birthday, and to say, good news, God has blessed us with this great ruler and his reign. And so if they would bring Rome's reign and rule to a new

territory, they might say it that way. Good news, you're being set free from those kings you had before and now Rome's rule and reign, Rome's kingdom, Rome's empire, is coming to you. Or Caesar's rule and reign and empire is coming to you.

So that's what Jesus was preaching. When Jesus went throughout the countryside and he spoke to the people, he was echoing Isaiah and saying, good news. I am the bringer of good news. God has anointed me with a spirit to come and bring good news to the poor, that God's rule and reign is back. God is going to rule and reign over you, and here's what it looks like for God to rule and reign over you.

What's interesting -- and you pointed this out earlier about what's changed, you know? And on the one hand, I totally agree. I think that the influence of Jesus' people in the world, that kingdom people in the world has changed people. But on the other hand, it's legitimate to say -- I read through the prophets and I read about this peace and prosperity and this awesome age in which people are going to live when the Messiah rules and reigns, when God rules and reigns through the Messiah, and I don't see it. You know, like, I don't get it. Like where is it, you know? And so -- and that's a legitimate thing to say, well, if God's in charge of the world, why does it still look like this, right? Why does it still look like this? And Jesus -- he, actually, I think, deals with this in so many of his kingdom parables, because if you read the prophets, you just expect this is all going to happen at once, that the age of evil and death and sin is going to end like this. The podcast listeners can't see me, but I'm drawing a line with my hand. So it's going to end here, and then

right at that same mark, then the rule and the reign of peace and life and Messiah is all going to reign. What they didn't expect is for the two to overlap. What they didn't expect is that --

TRAVIS: Oh, that's interesting.

WES: -- the kingdom of God is going to break into -- that light -- John speaks about it in terms of light. So that the light is going to break into the darkness. Not that the darkness is just going to end and then there's going to be light, that it's going to be the light that breaks into the darkness. And if you think about the parables that Jesus told -- and when he told a parable, he said, "The kingdom of heaven is like this," or "The kingdom of God is like this," he's telling you, this is what the kingdom is like, and it's going to be different. It's going to break your categories. Because your categories say, you know, this kingdom is going to end and this kingdom is going to begin. The kingdom of Rome is going to come crashing down and the kingdom of God is going to take its place, and that the two won't overlap.

But Jesus says, no, no, no. No, it's more like this. He says, it's more like a seed. It's like a tiny little mustard seed and it's planted in the ground. And, I mean, if you planted a tiny little seed in the ground, for a long time you'd say nothing has changed. It's the same. It's the same that it was before. And then, even after it sprouts up a little bit, you'd be like, okay, well -- okay, big deal. So what? But he says it's going to grow and it's going to grow and it's going to grow and it's going to grow, and all the birds of the air are going to come and nest in its branches.

And so he says that's how the kingdom is going to be. It's going to

be this tiny seed. It's going to be this tiny ray of light that shines into the world. And we're saying -- when we say good news, we're saying God reigns as king. Even though -- and we're walking by faith. We believe that something has changed, that the course of human history and events and the future of the world has been sealed through what Jesus, the Messiah, has done and is doing, that through his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of God, that God now reigns. God is in charge of the world. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth given to him and he sits at the Father's right hand, that this is the truth, this is the -- Jesus says, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. I am the reality. Everything else is an illusion. I'm reality.

Now, it looks foolish, right? I mean, it looks like -- well, you Christian people, you're kind of nutty, you know? You think God is in charge of the world? God's not in charge of the world. And then Jesus would say things like, the meek, they're going to inherit the earth. Those that show mercy, those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, these are the blessed people. These are the people of the kingdom. These are the people that win. And you have to embrace that by faith. You have to embrace this good news is true, whether it feels true or not. This good news is true, whether it looks true or not. Even when it looks like the bad guys are winning, their time is limited, their fate is sealed. God is victorious.

And so there's a phrase that theologians use a lot about the kingdom. They say, "already and not yet." So there's a sense in which the kingdom has already been planted like a seed, but it's not yet

reached its culmination. It's not yet reached its fulfillment. It's not as big as it's going to be. The glory of God has not yet filled the whole earth. And so there is a reality that is already, but there is also a reality that's not yet, but that we, right now, embrace it by faith. We embrace by faith that the meek and the gentle and the loving and the joyful and the persecuted and the poor, that they -- to them belongs the kingdom and the promises by faith. And so that's what the kingdom is made up of, is Sermon on the Mount people, is people that embrace these truths.

And so when we start to understand this is the gospel, the gospel is Jesus announcing that the kingdom is like the seed; it's growing in the world, and that his reign and rule are coming to fruition -- or he would say that it's like a woman who takes a little leaven and works -- hides it, he says -- hides it in the dough and he works it in there, and then, before you know it, it's leavened the entire lump. And so he's saying God's rule and reign, God glory, is being planted in the world.

And then you and I, we heard that story of Jesus, and even if we didn't see the whole picture, we embraced it. And we say we believe Jesus is the king. We believe that Jesus is the son of God, that he rules and reigns at God's right hand. And then we were baptized and we embraced the gospel truth, and so there's where you could say, yes, baptism is a matter of obeying the gospel. So we're embracing this good-news story to say God rules and reigns through Jesus, and we're embracing this, and baptism is really like this entering into the -- it's an invitation that we're accepting to enter into the story. Like we talked about last week, it's like Israel passing out of slavery in Egypt and into

the promised land, and we're being delivered into the kingdom of God. Even if we look around and we say I don't see with my eyes, I don't feel with my hands, there's days I don't even feel it in my heart, but I embrace it by faith.

I heard this tremendous example yesterday, so I apologize to my friend because I am going to wear this analogy out because it's so good. And I need to Google it -- back to Googling -- to make sure that it's true. But whether it's true or not, it's a tremendous story. So there were these POWs in World War II who were in a Nazi prison camp, and somehow these American POWs, they pieced together a radio out of spare parts and they made this radio and they could pick up on news that was going on. And they heard on the radio somehow that the Nazis had surrendered and that the Allies had won the war and that the war was over and that their time in the prison camp was limited, but they got the news three days before the German soldiers and those in charge of the camp got the news. So the Nazis had no idea that their country had surrendered, but these prisoners knew that their country had surrendered. So for three days they knew we've already won. You guys have already lost. The war is already over; you just don't know it yet. And then three days later they wake up and the camp is empty and the guards have all left and run away.

That's what we're saying, is we're saying the war has already been won. God has already claimed victory. The enemies, their fate has been sealed. It just -- they just don't know it yet. Their time is limited. The way Revelation puts it is, you know, Satan has been bound. He's in

chains, and the day of his destruction is coming. It's inevitable. It's already sealed, and sin and death have already -- their pain, their power has already been stripped from them and they're going to be thrown into the lake of fire. It's just a matter of time. And so we are the people who have embraced those realities by faith. We believe, hey, listen, take your best shot because you're already defeated; you just don't know it yet.

And so we can live with this meekness and this gentleness because we embrace the truth of God's rule and reign by faith, even though we can't yet see it with our eyes, but we believe that one day we'll see it with our eyes. So that takes us back to our original question of, like, what is the main goal of the gospel? What's the "telos"? What's the finality of the gospel? And so, when I asked you, you know, what is the gospel, what would most people say, you alluded to -- whether you knew it or not -- I Corinthians 15, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and that's what -- you know, my entire life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And that's true, and that is how Paul -- I would say death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah, but that is how Paul sums it up in the beginning of I Corinthians 15. But what Scot McKnight's book helped me to realize is that Paul goes on, later in the chapter, to really fill out a little bit more about what the gospel is all about. He talks about Jesus was buried -- or Jesus died, he was buried -- the Messiah was buried, he was raised from the dead, then he was seen by all of these people. And, of course, Paul, in I Corinthians 15 is going to go on to talk about the resurrection being the core of the Christian faith, but he goes on to say



things about the kingdom that I don't think sometimes we take into consideration.

So this is from I Corinthians 15, starting in verse 20: "In fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." So in other words, the resurrection has already begun. And it's weird because they expected a resurrection at the end of time.

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: But what happened was, there was a resurrection and not just a resuscitation, right? Not just a --

TRAVIS: Around for a couple minutes.

WES: Right, yeah, exactly. Not that. Not they're going to be raised just to die again, right?

TRAVIS: Right.

WES: So like Lazarus was raised, but he would die again. He wasn't transformed into an immortal person, an immortal human being, but Jesus was. They expected that was going to happen. The Jewish people expected that was going to happen to all of God's people, that there was going to be this resurrection and that they would be immortal and they would no longer be slaves to sin and death and that they would live forever. But they didn't expect someone -- for that to happen to someone right in the middle of the reign of sin and death. Right in the middle of the darkness, the light would break forth. And that's exactly what Jesus is. And so Paul says, he's the firstfruits. And I always think about like a tomato. Like if you go out to the garden and you pick a tomato and it's big, red, and juicy, you don't think, well, that's nice but I

doubt this garden will ever produce anything else like that. I mean, you don't think that. What do you think? You think there's more to come, right?

TRAVIS: More to come.

WES: This is just evidence of what's coming in the future. So Paul says, that's the way it is with Jesus. His resurrection is a foretaste of what's coming. This is the proof that the resurrection has already begun, that God will keep his promises and that he will raise his people from the dead.

He says, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ," the Messiah, "the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to the Christ. Then comes the end, when" -- Christ -- "when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet," under the Messiah's feet. "But when it says 'all things are put in subjection,' it's plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him."

In other words, when the scripture tells us that the Messiah will have all things put under his feet, obviously, the exception to that is God himself. God isn't put under the Messiah's feet. Everything else is put under the Messiah's feet. Everything else is made subject to him, but not God, the Father. And so he says the Father isn't made subject to him.

Let's see. It says, in verse 28, "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." Now, that -- that is the end goal of the gospel. We never say that. I've never heard anybody -- like if I was just to ask them, what's the goal of the gospel, I've never heard anybody say that God be all in all, that God reigns supreme over all, that God have everything under his rule and reign.

And we might say, well, doesn't God have everything under his rule and reign now? Well, yes and no. I mean, God is supreme. Yes, there's a sense in which that's true, but, obviously, there's a lot of things that are in rebellion to the will of God. A lot of things. In nature, in humanity, in what we do. God doesn't want people dying. Death is an enemy of God. God doesn't want these things to happen. These things are in rebellion to God's rule and reign. When God rules and reigns over everything, it is the Garden. It's the Garden. Everything is in harmony; everything is at peace. There is peace and prosperity and blessing. This is what it looks like for God to rule over all things.

And we look at the world today -- yes, we see so much good and we see so many good things, and that's always been true to a certain extent. I always say it's almost like there's a song that's being played that's just slightly off key. You know, you look at a sunset, or you look at a beautiful mountain range, or you hold a newborn baby, and it's like, yes, there's so much right, and then you think, but this baby is going to grow up and then they're going to make really bad choices and they're going to hurt, and people are going to hurt them, and eventually they're

going to die, and there's this looming darkness around everything. You know, it's like there's so much good, but yet at the same time, there's so much pain and so much hurt, and so it's obvious that all things are not subject to God. All things are not brought under his rule and reign yet, but they will be, and that's the end goal of the gospel. Good news: God is in charge.

And you say, well, is he, though? I mean, because things are still broken. And Jesus says, yes, he's in charge and it started as a seed and it's growing and it's growing and it's growing. Well, why doesn't God just wipe out all the evil? Well, because you're tied up with the evil and he doesn't want to wipe you out with it. He wants you to be changed and transformed and sanctified and redeemed so that now you can be a part of God's rule and reign, not just in the future, but right now. You can be a part of God's rule and reign now so that when all the enemies are subject to Christ, and then Christ subjects himself and all things to the Father and God rules and reigns over all things and that God is all in all, you will enjoy the blessings of that harmony and peace. Because those that are tied to the evil and that refuse to repent of that and disconnect themselves and be forgiven and live in obedience to the good news and embrace the good news, they'll be swept up with the evil and they'll be thrown into the lake of fire, as well.

And so, when we embrace the good news, we say, I want to live under God's rule and reign now in anticipation of what it's going to be like when God rules and reigns over all things and all things are made subject to him and God is all in all. That's the goal of the gospel. That's

what Jesus means when he says "good news." The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of heaven is here. And we say, I embrace that truth right now. Even though it may not look like God rules and reigns, I believe that he does by faith, and I believe that, eventually, all things will be put under his feet. All things will be put in subjection to him, and that God will be all in all.

TRAVIS: Amen to that.

WES: Any thoughts?

TRAVIS: Well, you answered a question I had, that, you know, why does he continue to let it go on? And as I was preparing to ask that, I thought of a million reasons why, but I think you answered it -- I think you crystallized it perfectly, that he doesn't -- he wants time. He wants time for more people to come to him. And so, if anything, it's like, you know, yeah, this life has a lot of suffering and a lot of darkness, but it's like we can endure, you know? That's -- that's a confidence in the kingdom. That's a confidence in the good news and in what Christ came to do. And it's like, yeah, I can take this. I can take whatever is thrown at me in order to -- in order that more might be saved.

WES: And that phrase even -- I mean, that's exactly how Peter puts it. He says, listen, God isn't slow as some count slowness. You know, his patience means your salvation. He wants all people to come to a knowledge of the truth and to be set free from sin and death. That's what he desires, and so that's why he's waiting.

In fact, I had an atheist on -- or agnostic. I'm not sure how he would classify himself. But he often comments. He may be listening

today; I don't know. But he often comments on Radically Christian stuff, and I appreciate his comments, but he asked the other day how long do we have to wait for God to subject all enemies under his foot before we call him a failed God? And that's -- that's exactly what Peter says will happen. Peter says, listen, you know, as you embrace this by faith and you announce it to people, people are going to say, yeah, well, why doesn't he show up? Why doesn't he do this? Because he wants you to be saved. Because he wants you to embrace it now. He wants your tongue to confess and your knee to bow to King Jesus now so that when he shows up to deal with the evil and to sweep away all the things that are in rebellion to him and to bring all things in subjection to him, that you're not caught up with that.

And even if that means that, in our waiting, we die, so what? Our body dies and then we'll be raised with a new body transformed to be immortal and imperishable and live forever with him, so what difference does it make? So we don't have to fear that we wait so long we die. And I think maybe that's been -- you know, that was some of the early Christians -- maybe that's what they thought. You know, like, what if we die before he comes back? And Paul addresses that to the letter to the Thessalonians -- or to Thessalonica, and he says that, listen, you know, those that have fallen asleep, they will be raised and will meet the Lord in the air and welcome him. And so he says, you don't have to worry about them. You don't have to mourn as those who have no hope. There is no waiting too long. God will keep his promises. God will be all in all. All things will be made subject to him. Jesus is -- Ephesians 1:10, Jesus is

uniting all things in heaven and earth.

*I want to thank my church family, the church of Christ on McDermott Road, and our editor, Travis Pauley, for making this podcast possible. And thank you for listening. If you haven't already done so, please rate, review, and subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcast, or wherever you're listening. I also want to invite you to check out Logos Bible Software, who has partnered with us to give our listeners a great discount. Just go to [RadicallyChristian.com/logos](https://RadicallyChristian.com/logos). I think you'll love the software and you'll get a great discount by using that link.*

*As always, I love you, God loves you, and I hope you have a wonderful day.*