



INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE

Providing interactive workshops and training on

“How to Understand the Bible” (H.U.B.) for Christian leaders worldwide

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The Gospel Message - “The Messiah King has come”

For thousands of years, ever since God had called the children of Israel to be his people, he sent prophets to be his spokesmen. They gave God’s people his warnings, his promises, his instructions and foretold future events.

By 400 B.C. all the prophecies which those prophets had foretold had been fulfilled. That is all except two. Two great events still had not happened. One of these was the coming of a great king called ‘The Messiah’ (English translation would be ‘The Anointed One’.) He would be a descendant of David, their greatest king, and would set up a new kingdom which would have no end. The prophecies told that his coming would be just before the fulfilment of the second prophecy, the end of God’s first covenant and the start of his new covenant with the children of Israel.

They knew many things about the Messiah King. However, much was still a mystery. They knew he would be the one to usher in God’s new covenant with Israel as the old one ended. However, they did not know how he would do that. They knew that he would be the king of Israel, yet other people would be drawn to him too. They knew that he would completely and forever reconcile them with God, but had no idea how he would accomplish it.

For years the people waited. By the time Christ (the Greek word for Messiah) was born, people knew that the time had finally come. They knew from Daniel Chapter 2 that the Messiah would come during the time of the Romans. They knew from the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Micah many events leading to his arrival. Everything that they had foretold had happened. We can almost imagine the anticipation among the people. *“When is the Christ coming?” “Has he already been born?” “Will I get to see him?”* All of Israel waited for their king.

Once Jesus was born, Mary wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger. An angel came to nearby shepherds to herald the announcement.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:8-11

The Gospel Announcement

“There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

In our last newsletter, which we sent out more than a year ago, we told about the launch of our new **HUB** (**H**ow to **U**nderstand the **B**ible) program in Burma and Kenya. The HUB Program is a series of workshops and seminars designed to teach leaders practical, simple and effective study habits so they will know how to understand the Bible. In that letter we explained some basics of how our program works, and shared with you the great need pastors have for this kind of training.

In 2012 - 2013, we developed more HUB workshops which we taught in Kenya, the United States and Thailand. We would like to take this opportunity to share with you one of our favorite workshops which we especially like to teach during the Christmas season.

HUB: What is the Gospel Message?

“What is the Gospel Message?” is the title of one of the workshops we use in our basic HUB classes. It is usually the first workshop we do on word studies because it is a simple one, fun to do, and drives home the point that it is important to understand how a word is used.

When we were in Kenya, we asked the pastors *‘What message does the Bible call the gospel?’* We also asked our students in Thailand *‘What message does the Bible call the gospel?’* During our latest trip to the United States we asked this same question at more than twelve locations. Only twice has someone ever answered it correctly. Most people responded by telling us about Jesus death, and resurrection, or that *‘Jesus paid for our sins,’* or even *‘if you simply believe in Jesus you will be saved and go to heaven.’* Most people were surprised to find out that the Bible does not call any of these messages “the Gospel.” I too grew up believing that the *‘Gospel’* is the *‘good news’* of our salvation. I was wrong! Although the message of our salvation is very good news, it is not the message the Bible calls “The Gospel.”

To find the answer to the question *‘What message does the Bible call the gospel?’* We took each of these groups (pastors, students, and churches in the USA) through a guided examination of the Bible to see how the scripture uses the word *‘gospel.’* This is a condensed lesson taken from that study.

The Gospel of Christmas

When we teach this workshop, we usually begin with the Christmas proclamation an angel gave to Zacharias (John the Baptist’s father) and later to the shepherds in the hills outside Bethlehem. In our English translations the story does not use the word gospel. However, the original Greek language does. In both these verses the angel uses the word euangelizomai which literally means *‘to proclaim the gospel message.’*

In Luke chapter 1, an angel told Zacharias that he would have a son, and that his son would be the herald of the long awaited Messiah. The angel then told him that he had been sent to *“bring you these glad tidings,”* which in the original Greek language says *“εὐαγγελισασθαί σοι ταῦτα,”* which would be more accurately translated as *‘proclaim the gospel message off these things.’*

In the same way, in Luke chapter 2, an angel told the shepherds *“Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy.”* Which is *“ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην”* and is more accurately translated as *‘Behold I proclaim the gospel message of great joy.’*

Stop for a moment and ask yourself *“is either of these two messages the one that we would normally consider to be ‘the Gospel’ message?”* Does either of these two gospel messages contain the news of Jesus’ death and resurrection? No, they are an official announcement by God that the time has come for the Messiah king to be born.

If you did not receive our previous newsletter or would like to receive an additional copy of the printed version, simply write to our Florida address requesting a copy. We will gladly mail you one. If you would like a PDF version for your computer, simply send us an e-mail to Doug@ILTI.org and we will gladly e-mail you one.

Where does the word 'Gospel' come from? What does it mean?

The English word 'Gospel' comes from the Greek noun εὐαγγέλιον ~ euaggelion. Most of us have been taught that it means "Good News." However, the word is never applied to just any good news. The word 'Gospel' is only used when it is an **'Official Proclamation of Good News'**.

It can also be a verb εὐαγγελίζω ~ euangelizomai. Which is to 'proclaim the official good news'. The English often translates this as 'to evangelize,' or 'preach the gospel'. Another related word would be εὐαγγελιστής ~ euangelistes. This is the title given to the person who is sent to be the 'herald of official good news' which is translated as 'evangelist'.

Gospel in the ancient Greek culture

In the ancient Greek culture, the word 'Gospel' was the official proclamation sent with news of victory. After a battle had ended, the victorious commander would dispatch a messenger (evangelist ~ herald of good news) to the Capitol City. The gospel letter was sent directly from the field of battle by ship, horseback, or by runner with instructions not to stop until he reached the city.

Once the evangelist would reach the city he would stand and read aloud (evangelize ~ proclaim the official good news) the message (the gospel.) He would proclaim the news to the inhabitants of the city who had been anxiously awaiting news of the victory of the army and the capture or death of the enemy.

The word 'Gospel' was sometimes used when a nobleman, royal, or king issued an official proclamation announcing such things as a person being appointed to a political office, and the birth or wedding of a noble or royal child.

Gospel in the Greek version of the Old Testament

In the same way that both the New Testament and the Greeks used it, the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) uses the word 'gospel' to mean an official proclamation of good news.

Here are a few examples:

Psalms 68:11 The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it: (evangelize)

2 Samuel 18:27 So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man, and comes with good news." (gospel)

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings (gospel) of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

The Gospel of the Kingdom

When studying the word gospel, one of the first things that a person may notice is that the Bible often calls it "*the gospel of the kingdom.*" In plain, simple English the Scriptures call it "***the proclamation of good news about the kingdom.***"

Jesus went around proclaiming the "gospel of the kingdom."

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Matthew 4:23

Jesus did not go around preaching about how he had died and resurrected; He had not done that yet. He was not proclaiming the good news that he had taken away sin; that would happen later. Those messages are not "the gospel of the kingdom."

The question is; What is the gospel of the kingdom? What is the message of good news about the kingdom? Thankfully we do not have to guess. Mark tells us what that message was.

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.*** Repent, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14,15

The message was the same gospel message given by the angel who announced Jesus' birth. The gospel of the kingdom was that "*The long awaited time has finally arrived. The kingdom of God is at hand.*" He was telling them that Messiah had arrived, and was inviting them to come be apart of his kingdom.

This is the true Gospel message. "**The Messiah King has Come!**" Jesus visited the synagogues throughout the land of Israel. He would go inside and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God. "*Your long wait is over.*" "*Your Messiah King has come.*" "*The kingdom of God is at hand.*"

Many of us have read Matthew, Mark, and Luke's "Gospels" several times and never noticed that most of Jesus' teaching revolved around "the Kingdom of God." (Matthew sometimes uses the term "*Kingdom of Heaven*" instead of "*Kingdom of God.*") Jesus spent three and a half years going from town to town teaching about the kingdom. Because the task of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom was so great, and Jesus could not travel to every town before his death, he sent the twelve to go into villages around Israel to *preach the kingdom of God* and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:2) Later he would also send seventy others, telling them to heal the sick there, and say to them, '*The kingdom of God has come near to you.*' (Luke 10:9) Luke tells us that even after Jesus died and resurrected, he spent forty days teaching the eleven about the kingdom. [Read Acts 1:2,3]

I encourage each of you to take time and reread the Gospels with eyes to see all that Jesus taught about the kingdom. You will find it enlightening and uplifting. May the Gospel message of Christmas be with you throughout the coming year. "The Messiah King Has Come! Rejoice!"

In Christ, I remain, His servant and yours,

Doug Heil

HUB is Expanding

We have begun expanding HUB by adding new workshops and increasing the scope and depth of existing ones. We are adding a 3-4 day set of workshops on word usage studies, enlarging our studies on context, and developing an advanced series of in-depth topical studies. Like our other HUB workshops, these workshops have the potential to transform leaders' understanding of the Bible. However, these new workshops are very intensive and require participants to work harder. But, once completed, they will have a far greater understanding of God and his principles.

Condensed, Streamlined Version of HUB

For those of you who desire HUB teaching, we have now developed a fast paced, condensed, highly interactive version of the workshops we teach pastors overseas. This streamlined version contains similar teachings to the pastors' workshops, but instead this version of HUB was designed for lay people, using Bible passages related to Christian life which are often misunderstood.

Yai and I are working on the 2014 HUB Workshop schedule for the United States. If your group, or church would like us to come conduct Hub workshops for an evening, weekend or week long camp please e-mail us at Doug@ilti.org.