

In the New Testament, we find an expression which is puzzling to understand. Both Peter and Paul mention this term in their writings. And, both times the phrase is used in a rather disturbing setting. Of course, as the title of this Bible Talk indicates, we are talking about the phrase “**obey the gospel.**” In I Peter 4:17 we read, “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” Paul uses the term in II Thessalonians 1:7-9 where he says, “... The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

In both passages, a bleak destiny awaits those who do not “**obey the gospel.**” Perhaps, if we understood the meaning of the word “gospel,” we might understand “obey the gospel.” Literally, the word “gospel” means “good news.” Paul defined exactly which “good news” he meant when he wrote I Corinthians. In I Cor 15:1-4 we find this: “Now I make known to you, brethren, **the gospel** which I preached to you ... that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was **buried**, and that He was **raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures.” The “good news” that Paul referred to involved three events in the life of Jesus.

1. He **died** for our sins.
2. He was **buried**.
3. He was **raised** on the third day.

Thus, we see what Paul meant when he used the term “gospel”; for indeed, the **Death, Burial, and Resurrection** of Jesus is “good news.” If Jesus had not done these things, we would be without hope. What Jesus did is “good news.”

But still, what did Peter and Paul expect from us. How does one “**obey the gospel**”? How can we “obey” what someone else “did”? We could understand how to “obey” what someone else “told” us to do. But, how do we “obey” what Jesus did? Surely God does not expect us to **Die, Be Buried, and Rise Again** like Jesus! But how else can we “obey the gospel”?

Well, Paul explains this mystery in Romans 6:1-4. He wrote these words: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

It seems that the **Death, Burial, and Resurrection** of Jesus (which Paul called “the gospel”) is reenacted when a person is baptized. Paul says that we are baptized into “His” death. In a way, we participate in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection when we are baptized into Christ. From previous Bible Talks, we have seen that baptism is the point at which we benefit from His divine sacrifice. Thus, when we **die** to our sinful self, are **buried** in the waters of baptism, and are then **raised** from those waters as a new person, we have demonstrated our faith in the gospel. Or as Peter and Paul described it, we have “obeyed the gospel.”

When we think about the staggering consequences of failing to do this, we are reminded again of the importance of baptism into Christ. Peter asked, “What will be the outcome for those who do not **obey the gospel** of God?” Paul answered, “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

1. Literally, the word "gospel" means " _____ ."

2. In I Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul defined the "gospel" he preached by highlighting what three events in Jesus' life?

3. What act of obedience does God require of us which reenacts these three deeds in the life of Christ? (Romans 6:1-4)

4. Why do you think Peter used the expression "obey the gospel" to describe this act of obedience? (I Peter 4:17)

5. What will be the fate of those who do not "obey the gospel"? (II Thessalonians 1:7-9)

6. Have you "obeyed the gospel"?