

## The Gospel of Jesus Is the Gospel of Paul

Jesus and Paul have some similar core commitments, as Gerry Schoberg makes clear in his *Perspectives of Jesus in the Writing of Paul: A Historical Examination of Shared Core Commitments with a View to Determining the Extent of Paul's Dependence on Jesus* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., 2013). It is important to keep in mind that the gospel is the *key* linkage between Jesus and Paul. It is the vital core shared by Jesus and Paul—and by the written gospels as well.<sup>1</sup> Certainly people will argue about exactly what goes back to Jesus in what form, but the most plausible default position is that the original closest followers had much time to absorb and discuss and repeat and remember and interpret quite a bit of their most extraordinary experiences of Jesus, including his words and deeds, which significantly revealed a self-concept behind his identity and his mission.

I see four necessary elements in Paul's understanding of this essential gospel message, based on 1 Cor 15:1-4:

1 Cor 15 Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you **the gospel**, which you received, in which you stand, 2 by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, **that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures**, 4 **that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.**<sup>2</sup>

### (1) Christ

— an identification of the messiah;

### (2) died and was buried and rose

— an historical narrative;

### (3) died for our sins

— the meaning of the event, suggesting a theology and christology;

### (4) according to the Scriptures

— a verification or warrant or proof, pointing both to a hermeneutic and to a large religious context, insofar as the Christ-event could be understood as the very “point” of scripture, being the fulfillment of the saving covenantal promises of God.

*Each of these elements significantly derives directly from Jesus.*

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on the written gospels, see the author's “The Origins of the Written Gospel in the Activity of Jesus of Nazareth” available at [https://www.academia.edu/3047295/The\\_Origins\\_of\\_the\\_Written\\_Gospel\\_in\\_the\\_Activity\\_of\\_Jesus\\_of\\_Nazareth](https://www.academia.edu/3047295/The_Origins_of_the_Written_Gospel_in_the_Activity_of_Jesus_of_Nazareth) and “Jesus Is the First Gospeler — and What That Says About Gospel Genre,” available at [https://www.academia.edu/31650334/Jesus\\_Is\\_the\\_First\\_Gospeler\\_and\\_What\\_That\\_Says\\_About\\_Gospel\\_Genre](https://www.academia.edu/31650334/Jesus_Is_the_First_Gospeler_and_What_That_Says_About_Gospel_Genre) (both accessed March 4, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> The RSVCE translation is used in this paper.

(1) The idea of the messiahship goes back to Jesus, who accepts the identification from Peter, and later fully reveals what he knew implicitly:

Mark 8:29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he charged them to tell no one about him.

Mark 14:61 But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 And Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

(2) The idea of the paschal mystery goes back to Jesus, who is notably remembered as someone who saw clearly his story / identity / mission :

Mark 8:31 And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly.

Mark 9:31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him.

Mark 10:32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; 34 and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise."

(3) The idea of dying for humanity's sins goes back to Jesus, who understands that his life must be given up:

Mark 10:45 For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 14:24 And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

(4) "In accordance with the Scriptures" (and therefore in accordance with the will of God) goes back to Jesus, who knows that he is following God's script.

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Mark 14:21 For the Son of man goes as it is written of him...

Luke 4:21 And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

John 5:46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me.

It is likely that “in accordance with scripture” lies behind the three passion predictions cited above, from Mark 8, 9, and 10. Jesus “teaches” the disciples that the Son of man will suffer. What basis would there be for the teaching about the Son of man and the messiah but scripture?

Luke 24:25 And he said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Jesus is remembered as having seen his career and identity and mission written in scripture. Also Jesus sees John the Baptist as the Elijah figure predicted in scripture:

Mark 9:13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

And this is how the gospel of Mark begins, with a clear scriptural subtext:

Mark 1:2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, / who shall prepare thy way; / 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: / Prepare the way of the Lord, / make his paths straight—”

The gospels have so many scriptural parallels that perhaps the written gospels can be imagined as developing out of them, with an important crystallization being “the Emmaus event,” where Jesus explained his mission, particularly its paschal elements, with reference to “all the scriptures.” Certainly Jesus pointed to the narrative of his life as significant for his identity:

Luke 7:22 And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.”

The written gospel expands upon the messiah-identifying narratives given here and it collects the messianic teachings as well. Though Paul did not see the detailed historical narratives of Jesus’s public ministry and teachings as essential for his presentation of “the gospel,” he certainly did have the important kernel of the historical narrative, namely the death and resurrection, which formed the oldest core of Mark’s gospel (“a passion narrative with an extended introduction,” as it was famously called). This was the key discourse of the earliest years of Christianity. In addition, Paul had the *meaning* of this event (“for our sins”) and the *hermeneutic* that is so well represented in the written gospels (“according to the scriptures”). All of these things confirmed the *messianic identity* of Jesus. And all of these things, along with the messianic identity, were part of Jesus’s self-presentation. The gospel of Paul is the gospel of Jesus.