

# Wrapping It Up

Mike Atnip

## ¡Adios!

Yes, it is true. I am “retiring” from my work here at *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*. The word “retire” has a literal meaning of “drawing back from.” So while I by no means plan to go into what our society calls “retirement,” I am drawing back from my labors with this magazine.

I suppose some will have a simple question stirring in their minds: Why? ☺

Many reasons have played into the decision to “retire,” but the most prominent one has to do with seeing a need to focus on needs in my family. Minor issues factoring into the decision include trying to spend less time in front of a computer monitor, a desire to focus my editorial energies on other projects, and an inner feeling that it is simply time to have this part of my life pruned from me.

What does NOT figure into the decision? Well, several have asked me if I am quitting because I had a fallout with Ephrata Christian Fellowship or *The Remnant* board. Simply said, “No.” In a roundabout way, the board has let me know that they hope I come back after a break.

So with this little explanation I now say, “Adios.” Many will recognize this as the Spanish word for “Good-bye.” But there is more to that word than good-bye. Those who know Spanish may recognize it as a compound word made up of “a” (meaning “to”) and “Dios” (meaning “God”). “Adios” is rooted in the idea of “[I commend you] to God.”

## Summary of the last four years ...

Our main burden over the last twenty-some issues has been to stem the “leak” that our churches have towards the Evangelical world. Both Dean and I have come into today’s Anabaptist churches after reading church history and realizing that while Anabaptism was not “perfect,” it was one of the best revivals of primitive Christianity that still has any remnant left. The old Waldensian church is nowhere to be found today. The Bohemian Brethren (Moravian Brethren) revival has likewise gone into worldliness and apostasy. The old Methodist/Wesleyan type of Christianity is fast disappearing, and simply was not as doctrinally sound as the Anabaptists. Simply said, the “Plain People” are about the only revival movement left that still holds, in varying degrees, to practicing Jesus’ teachings.

So with great excitement Dean and I have “charged” in the front door, excited to find people who actually do what Jesus has said, only to find that there is a mass exodus out the back door into churches that explain away Jesus’ words. (Not to mention that too many still inside are very complacent and lukewarm, if not plain cold ...)

So we are left scratching our heads. Do those people realize where they are headed out that back door? Do they know that “out there” is a false Christianity that says, “Lord, Lord” but does not do what the Lord told us to do?

For that reason we have focused on the error of the Protestant/Evangelical world. We have said it before and we will say it again: the label is not the issue; the terms we use are labels to signify a mindset. There are plenty of people who might use the label “Evangelical” to describe themselves who are walking with God in the light they have. And certainly not everyone who uses the label “Anabaptist” is right with God.

Yet we have not been ashamed to use the label “Anabaptist” to describe the kingdom gospel. Unfortunately one can hardly say just plain old “gospel” because there are various “gospels” out there. So we use the term “kingdom gospel” to designate, well, “the gospel of the kingdom” as Jesus called it. In fact, Jesus did not call it any other name. So what is that gospel?

## Defining the gospel

“The gospel is that Jesus died on the cross so you could have your sins forgiven and go to heaven.”

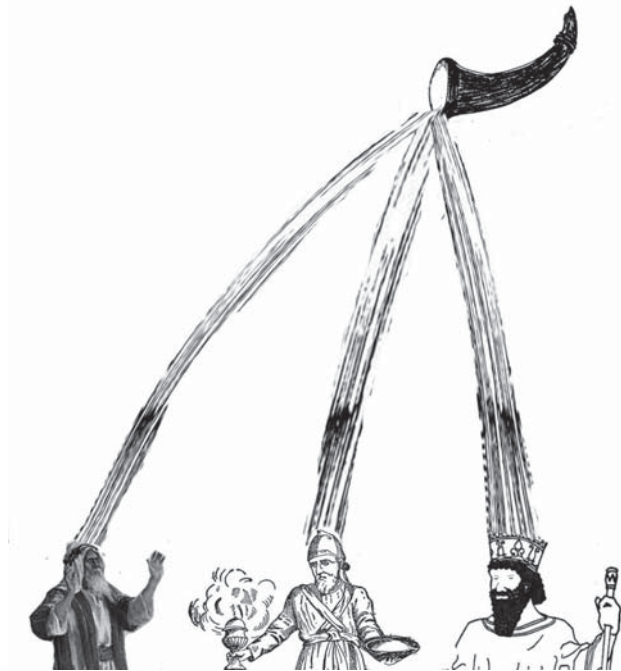
If that is your definition of “the gospel,” you need to take another look at the Bible. The gospel *includes* both forgiveness of sins and going to heaven, but those two details are only *part of the gospel*. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Elijah all had their sins forgiven and will be in heaven for eternity. If our gospel consists only of having our sins forgiven so we can go to heaven, *we have nothing more than the Old Testament had!*

Just what is it that we have in the New Testament that the Old Testament saints did not have? We have the kingdom of God! Here and now! (And some day, at the second coming, in a more glorious way yet!)

The gospel, the good news, was that Jesus was incarnated and came to live among us to teach us about His kingdom, and to provide a way for us to enter therein. Up until He came to establish that kingdom, men could be forgiven of their sins ... but they could not have a new birth that would so infuse the character of God into them that they could have power to live the way God originally intended men to live. But now, in the new covenant, we can do it. God’s will done on earth, here and now! What a gospel!!!!!!

## The gospel in a picture

The following little picture is an illustration of the gospel.



For centuries the Jews awaited the coming of Messiah. Messiah is a Hebrew transliteration that means anointed. The Greek word was *christos*, which also means anointed. The Law required the High Priest to be anointed, and by custom all kings were anointed with oil in their inauguration ceremony. Prophets were also sometimes anointed with oil. This anointing was so unique that the Jews began to call their kings and priests “the anointed.”

When Jesus came, God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) in recognition of His offices as prophet, high priest, and king. Melchisedek was the only man who had held all three offices simultaneously.

Jesus was the prophet that Moses had promised would come. De. 18:15 Moses was a law-giving prophet, and Jesus fulfilled Moses’ prophecy by giving us the “laws” of the kingdom of God, the new morals and ethics, which were in reality a revelation of the character of God.

Jesus was the High Priest, the only one allowed to minister in the inner sanctuary (the spirit of man). He took His own blood and cleansed the sanctuary of sin.

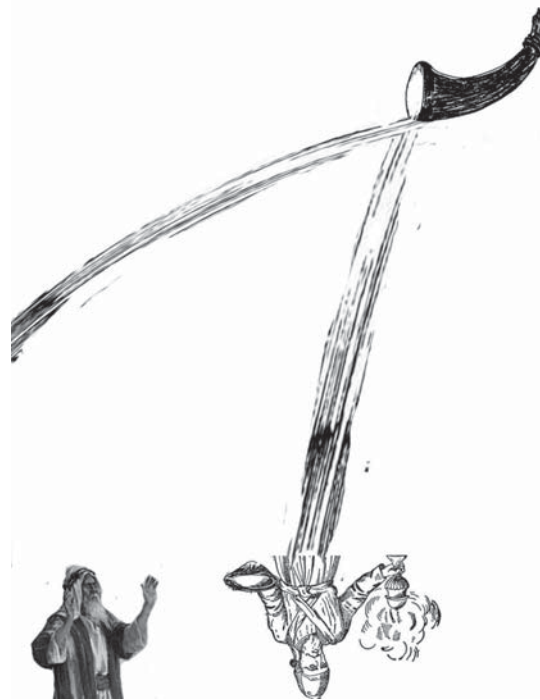
And, Jesus was the promised King whose kingdom would never end, and who would lead His people into victory over the world.

The coming of Messiah (Christ, Anointed One) who would be prophet, high priest, and king was the good news ... the gospel.

So how is that gospel twisted today?

## The twisted gospel in a picture

The following little picture tells another story.



Here we see the anointing oil completely missing the prophet. This illustrates how many people treat Jesus’ teachings where He said, “You have heard it has been said, but I say unto you ...” I mean, most churches end up reverting to what Moses said. Think about divorce, war, wealth, and swearing oaths: most churches end up going by what Moses said, rather than what Jesus said! So, we might as well say that Jesus wasn’t the Anointed Prophet that Moses talked about in Deuteronomy 18:15.

And the poor high priest ... he is upside down. Yes, he got the anointing. But what happens is that his ministry is made to be that of converting God, rather than converting man. Think about what many people say about salvation and atonement, and you end up with a view of salvation that converts God from an angry God to a happy God, but essentially leaves man unchanged! Of course, if the atonement is such that it cleanses *man* from sin—actually removes the sin out of the sanctuary as per Leviticus 16:30—then God can be at peace with man. But many salvation/atonement teachings of today try to appease God’s wrath without cleansing the sanctuary from sin.

And the king? What happened to him?

Well, he won’t be here until the second coming according to many gospels of today. Some say that Jesus came as Saviour the first time, but will come the second time as King.

Not so. He established His kingdom with His first coming; His second coming will expand it exponentially.

The kingdom of God is mentioned over 120 times in the four gospel accounts. The bottom line is that the focus of Jesus' teaching was on the kingdom: its values, ethics, morals, and function. It was to be set up right in the midst of evil, and overcome that evil with good. Some day the evil will be completely removed, but for now the kingdom functions surrounded by evil spirits and evil men.

Jesus' work as prophet and high priest were in fact only channels or means so that the kingdom could be realized. He gave the "laws" of the kingdom (the "laws" of Jesus are simply a reflection of the character of God, not just another set of rules to obey) so that men would know if their heart was like God's heart or not. The Mosaic Law was not evil or bad, it was simply inadequate, with no means to put Eternal Life back into the heart of man.

Jesus then gave His own blood to quicken (give life to) sinners who were dead in sins. After all, God is Eternal Life, and life and death cannot mix. So to make the atonement between God and man, Jesus gave life to dead men so that life could be united (or, better said, reunited) with Life. But this atonement was for a purpose: to establish the kingdom of God. Men cannot live the kingdom ethics without the life of God within to empower him.

And, of course, those who are given Eternal Life have their sins forgiven, and if they remain faithful in the kingdom here, they will inherit it forever in heaven!

### **Four years later ...**

We have been trying to say these things for four years now. Some have agreed; others (whole congregations, in fact) have asked to be removed from the mailing list. We try not to be too hard on those who do not understand the distinction between the gospel of the kingdom and the kingdomless gospel. After all, not too many years ago we ourselves were caught up, unawares, in typical Evangelical/Protestant ideas.

But we consider the kingdom gospel to be fundamental to everything the Bible has to say. Anabaptism was founded on a kingdom gospel, and today's North American Anabaptism is in danger of degenerating into Evangelicalism by reason of the flood of teachings that come through hymnbooks, devotionals, and preachers who do not preach the gospel of the kingdom. So while we come rejoicing in the front door, we raise our voices in alarm at the mass exodus at the back door.

May God bless you now. ¡Adios! To God I commend you! May His kingdom come, may His will be done *on earth*, in you ... and me! ~