

# *Evangelical Review of Theology*

**EDITOR: DAVID PARKER**

**Volume 25 • Number 1 • January 2001**

*Articles and book reviews original and  
selected from publications worldwide for  
an international readership for the purpose  
of discerning the obedience of faith*



Published by  
**PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS**



for  
**WORLD EVANGELICAL  
FELLOWSHIP**  
Theological Commission

# Amsterdam 2000

## The Content of the Gospel

James I. Packer

**Keywords:** Bible, gospel, preaching, truth, Kingdom of God, salvation, fellowship, heaven

### Introduction

In the Bible, the gospel is the entire saving plan of God, all revolving around the person, the place and power of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the incarnate, crucified, risen, reigning, returning Lord.

Preaching the gospel requires us to show how Jesus Christ relates to every part of God's plan, and how every part of it relates to us who are savingly related to the living Christ

through faith. Evangelism involves explaining life in Christ as well as inviting sinners to him. This means dealing with six main topics, as follows:

### 1. The Truth about God

The one God who made and rules everything is revealed as three persons through his plan of salvation. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit love us, and work together to save us from sin and make us holy. Jesus Christ, God the Son incarnate, is Lord over all the powers of evil. Any other view of God is idolatry.

### 2. The Truth about Ourselves

We were made for God, to bear his image and be like him in moral character, but sin controls and spoils us so that we need to be brought back to God to be forgiven and remade. Jesus Christ, who brings us back, is himself the model of true godliness. Any other view is deception.

---

**Dr James I. Packer, a senior editor of *Christianity Today*, is Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada where he has served since 1979. Previously he was associated with Tyndale Hall and Trinity College, Bristol, and Latimer House Oxford. An influential lecturer and writer respected around the world, Dr. Packer's many books include *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, *Knowing God* and *Growing in Christ*. His most recent publications are *Collected Shorter Writings of J.I. Packer* in four volumes and *Never Beyond Hope*. He was convenor of the Theologians' Task Force at Amsterdam 2000. This paper is a brief summary of his plenary address to the conference, and is used with permission.**

### 3. The Story of God's Kingdom

Step by step, as Scripture tells, God has been working to establish his kingdom in this fallen world. Jesus Christ is the King, and our lives are to be his kingdom. King Jesus is also the Judge, and those who have not bowed to his kingship here will not share his joy hereafter. Trusting, loving and honouring Jesus, and serving others for his sake, is true godliness at its heart. Any other form of religion is error.

### 4. The Way of Salvation

Jesus Christ, our sin-bearer on the cross, now from his throne reaches out to rescue us who are lost in the guilt and shame of sin. He calls for faith (trust in him as Saviour) and repentance (turn to him as Master). He sends his Holy Spirit to change us inwardly so that we hear his call as addressed to us personally and respond wholeheartedly to it. Whereupon we are forgiven and accepted (justified); received as God's children (adopted); made to rejoice at our peace with him (assurance); and made to realize that now we are living a new life in Christ (regeneration). Any other view of salvation is deficient.

### 5. The Life of Fellowship

Christians belong in the church, the family of God, sharing its worship, work, witness and warfare, and enjoying its worldwide brotherhood in Christ. Any other view of the Christian is sectarian.

### 6. Walking Home to Heaven

Helped by the ministry in the church of word and sacrament, prayer and pastoral care, spiritual gifts and loving support, Christians live in our constantly hostile world as travellers, heading for a glorious destination. Led and inspired by their Saviour through the Holy Spirit, they seek to do all the good they can as they go, and to battle all forms of evil that they meet. Any lesser view of the Christian life is wordly.

All this is permanently and universally true, transcending all differences of colour, race, culture, age, gender, health, economic standing, social position and political background. As the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit sustain us all, so the gospel levels us all, teaching us to know ourselves as great sinners saved by God's greater grace, and to see all non-Christians as needing that same grace themselves.

## The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

Editor: Colin Brown

0-85364-432-2 / 4 Volumes, total 3506pp / hb / 240x165mm / £119.99



The Paternoster Press, PO Box 300 Carlisle Cumbria CA3 0QS UK