



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## What Is the Gospel?

by Nathan Combs

There are many words in our Bibles that aren't like the words we use every day; words that seem like part of a special spiritual vocabulary. *Gospel* is one of those words. It's a word that describes the message Jesus taught and the early Christians believed. It's a word that's used as the title of the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). It has a simple meaning in the original language, "good news;" but this leads us to another question. What is this news, and why is it good?

This gospel is a message about many things, but this is the core truth: Jesus of Nazareth is the king over all. Consider what Jesus Himself said as He began to travel around Israel preaching and collecting disciples: "Repent, for the *kingdom* of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4.17). Throughout the rest of Jesus' story, we see a king very different from the average human ruler. Jesus spent His time healing people's bodies of all their diseases and casting out their demons. Most importantly, He healed people's souls by teaching them the way of heaven and forgiving their sins. On His road to becoming king, Jesus rolled back the power of Satan and the destruction, death, and sin he brought into God's good world. In short, Jesus brought heaven to earth.

This came to a climax when Jesus freely laid down His life. When someone becomes a king, that person is usually placed on a throne and crowned in front of an adoring crowd. When Jesus became king, He, too, was enthroned, but it was on a Roman cross. A crown was put on His head, but it was a crown of thorns. Instead of cheering supporters, He faced a mob of mockers and died beneath a sign that read, "This is Jesus, *the king of the Jews.*" Even though this looked like Jesus' moment of defeat, His death and resurrection three days later made Him the glorious king He now is! Now, "all authority in heaven and on earth" belongs to Jesus (Matt. 28.15), and His people have gone everywhere preaching this message for two thousand years.

Why is it good news for us that Jesus is king? Because you and I face chaos that we can't rule over. We were born into a sinful, broken world, and we've all contributed to its brokenness. We've hurt other people, and we've been hurt ourselves. We live in bodies that eventually fall apart. We experience pain in many forms, and we've all come under the power of Satan. But if we will submit to Jesus as our king, He will free us and count us as righteous. He will give us a new life purpose: spreading the way of heaven to earth. One day, He will raise our bodies from the grave and give us new ones, so we can live and work with Him in a renewed world. The king has come! Will we repent and join the kingdom of heaven?

# ***REMEMBER THE MAINE!***

--Mike Noble

Yesterday (February 15, 2014) marked the 116th anniversary of the sinking of the USS Maine. The Maine was one of the first American battleships, a little more than a football field in length and weighing more than 6,600 tons. Not long after it first left harbor it was sent to Cuba to protect U.S. interests, after a rebellion broke out in Havana against Spanish rule.

At 9:40 pm, February 15, a massive explosion rocked the Maine, obliterating the forward third of the ship. The remaining wreckage quickly settled to the bottom of Havana's harbor, 266 U.S. servicemen losing their lives as a result. Only 89 survived.

A year later the recovered bodies of sailors who died on the Maine were brought back to the United States for burial at Arlington National Cemetery. In 1915 President Woodrow Wilson dedicated a memorial, which included the ship's main mast, to those who died. The remains of *some 165 sailors are buried beneath that mast. Tara and I have visited the memorial several times on visits to our nation's capital. It's a sobering monument to the catastrophe.*

What sank the USS Maine? Foul play was suspected by many. But no one, save God, knew the cause at the time. The New York Journal (owned by William Randolph Hearst) and New York World (Joseph Pulitzer) both devoted intense coverage to the story, exaggerating and twisting information, insisting that the Maine had either hit a mine or been bombed. While neither explicitly blamed Spain for the tragedy, they did their best to bring their readers to form that conclusion. They succeeded. Partly due to the coverage from these papers, the American public and many in Congress were ready to retaliate against Spain. "Remember the Maine!" became a popular slogan. While the Maine's destruction did not result in an immediate declaration of hostilities, the press' coverage of it was a factor that led to the start of the Spanish-American War just two months later, April 1898.

QUESTION: Have we ever behaved like those newspapers? Have we ever spread information about some person(s) – information which we knew we weren't sure about but, because it would help form a 'right' conclusion in the minds of our hearers, nevertheless circulated?

Before we ever think about circulating some rumor, there are things we ought to consider:

[1] Admittedly, there is a good percentage of accurate information which, while true, still shouldn't be circulated. Surely, then, any bogus or questionable information never should be. Right?

[2] The dispensing of any misleading information, even if 'only' implied (but not explicitly stated), is deceptive and wrong. Read the description of the 'worthless person' (Proverbs 6:12-15). God will 'break' such a person!

[3] Described above are actually the ways of the majority of gossipers. They think their cause is good and just, while yet failing to see their lack of objectivity. Beloved, do we think we're not susceptible to such self-bias? (Proverbs 26:12) The truth of the matter is, the 'end' never justifies the 'means,' no matter how 'righteous' one's cause. This goes for the information-spreading business. (Especially the information-spreading business.)

[4] Finally, such information, once disseminated, can destroy reputations and lead to 'war' – war between neighbors, friends, or brothers (Proverbs 16:28; 26:20-21). God will hold responsible anyone who spreads such (6:19).

Remember the Maine? Yes – let's. Let's remember to watch our words. Let's remember the potential power of words, whether explicitly or implicitly spoken. And let us be resolved to never be one who furthers their agenda, no matter how just, by spreading tales.