

I. WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Although we have considered this question previously and even proposed a definition, I would like to focus the question by surveying the usage of the word in the Bible. This will become important as we look at the questions of effectiveness and human response to the message of salvation.

In the NIV the word "gospel" is used 95 times in 91 verses. These uses fall into five basic categories:

- (1) 27 uses simply mention the gospel
- (2) 10 uses speak of the content of the gospel
- (3) 42 uses speak of the communication of the gospel
- (4) 2 uses refer to human response to the gospel
- (5) 14 uses speak of the results of the gospel

Of the 27 cases that simply mention the gospel, 18 are variations of "the gospel," such as "my gospel," "our gospel," "His gospel," or "this gospel." The other 9 speak of "the gospel of God," "the gospel of His Son," "the gospel of Christ," "a different gospel from the one you accepted," and "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

Of the 10 cases that speak of the content of the gospel, various items are found, including "the gospel of the kingdom," "the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God," "the gospel of God's grace," "a righteousness from God is revealed by faith . . . in the gospel," "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ," "the truth of the gospel," "the mystery of the gospel," "the faith of the gospel," "the word of truth, the gospel," and "the hope held out in the gospel."

In the 42 cases of the communication of the gospel, 30 are translated "preach the gospel." The remaining 12 uses are all action oriented and include "to proclaim the gospel," "to advance the gospel," "to contend in the cause of the gospel," "to defend the gospel," "to confirm the gospel," "to spread the gospel," to communicate "the message of the gospel," and to engage in "the work of the gospel."

The 2 cases that speak of human response to the gospel are found in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 and 1 Peter 4:17. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we are told that God "will punish those who do not know God and who not obey the gospel of our