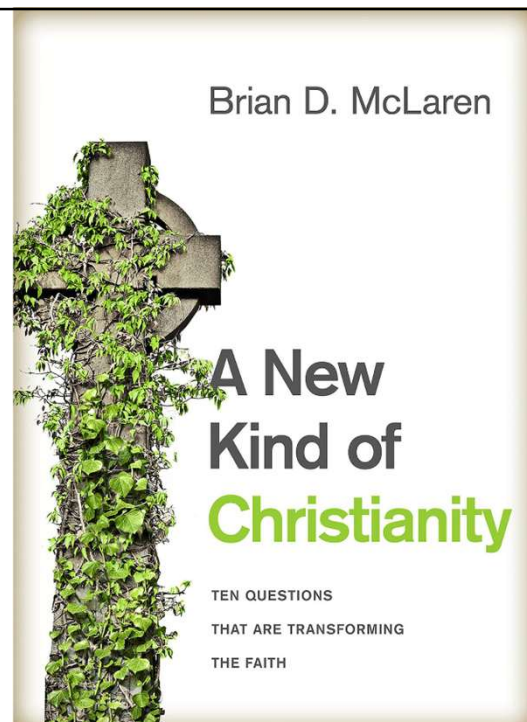


- **Book One**
- **Part V THE GOSPEL QUESTION**
- Chapter 14: What Is the Gospel?
- Chapter 15: Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Much of the material in this presentation was taken verbatim or almost verbatim from the book “A New Kind of Christianity” by Brian McLaren



1

### Chapter 14: What is the Gospel?

- If you were asked to explain what the Good News is, what would you say?
- A conversation at a Chinese restaurant confronted McLaren with this question. “Most Evangelicals haven’t got the foggiest notion of what the gospel really is. How would you define it?”
- McLaren answered with the usual scriptures from Romans.
- His lunch mate then said “You’re quoting Paul. Shouldn’t you let Jesus define the gospel?” When I gave him a quizzical look, he asked, “What was the gospel according to Jesus?”
- “For Jesus, the gospel was very clear: The kingdom of God is at hand. That’s the gospel according to Jesus.”

2

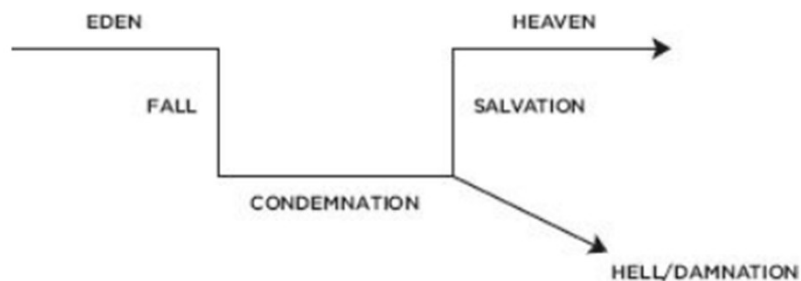
- This caused McLaren to start rereading the gospels in a new light.
- McLaren was a constitutional reader of the Bible.
- He considered the words of Jesus and Paul pretty much on a par.
- He had always assumed that “kingdom of God” meant “kingdom of heaven,” which meant “going to heaven after you die,” which required believing the message of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, which he understood to teach a theory of atonement called “penal substitution,” which was the basis for a formula for forgiveness of original sin called “justification by grace through faith.”

3

- Christ’s one word preface to His gospel – “Repent!” also warrants consideration.
- Repent means becoming pensive again or have a change of mind and heart.
- Rod Washington interprets “The kingdom of God is at hand” as “God’s new benevolent society is already among us.”
- “Christ” means “liberating king,” who will free God’s people from their oppressors.
- Early Christians understood the kingdom of Caesar. Calling Jesus Lord meant saying that Caesar wasn’t their lord.

4

- Jesus didn't come to start a new religion to replace first Judaism and then all other religions. He came to announce a new kingdom, a new way of life, a new way of peace that carried good news to all people of every religion.
- The gospel does not mean explaining the six line chart.



5

- The gospel also does not mean explaining to people that Jesus provides a fire escape so we don't have to suffer forever.
- It is also a fulfillment of the three prime narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- First, to accept the free gift of being "born again" meant participation in a new Genesis, a new creation.
- Second, to follow Jesus meant embarking on a new Exodus, passing through the waters once again, eating a new Passover.
- Third, to enter the "kingdom of God" meant to receive citizenship in a new peaceable kingdom inaugurated in Christ.
- Jesus proclaims "the kingdom is at hand", within reach, near, here, now, not just after we die.

6

- The time has come today to cancel debts, to forgive, to treat enemies as neighbors, to share your bread with the hungry and your clothes with the naked, to invite the outcasts over for dinner, to confront oppressors not with sharp knives, but with unarmed kindness.
- No wonder Jesus called people to repent: if the kingdom is at hand, we need to adjust our way of life and join in the joyful, painful mission of reconciliation right now, ASAP!
- The more we let Jesus's message of the kingdom of God sink in, the more it begins to unsettle all our existing understandings and categories. It changes everything.

7

## Chapter 15: Jesus and the Kingdom of God

- What are we to make of Paul's writings, especially Romans? Many Christians place Christ's words and Paul's words as on par.
- Romans has traditionally been understood as Paul's treatise on faith, salvation, Christian life, and the afterlife.
- "Kingdom of God" meant "kingdom of heaven," which meant going to heaven after you die.
- Romans taught a theory of atonement called "penal substitution," which was the basis for a formula for forgiveness of original sin called "justification by grace through faith." It seemed to reinforce the six line chart.

8

- McLaren's new insights into the gospel led to him reexamining Romans.
- Our class has already seen much of what McLaren describes in Chapter 15, thanks to Bob Berg's lessons on Romans.
- Romans was not written as a premeditated work of scholarly theology, edited and reedited, complete with footnotes. Rather, Paul is dictating a letter to some people he loves on a subject he loves, expressing the honest, unedited, natural flow of his thoughts and feelings.
- Together, the Holy Spirit and Paul make move after move toward the single goal of justifying the gospel as good news for Gentiles and Jews alike.

9

- First Move: Reduce Jew and Gentile to the same level of need (Rom. 1:18–3:20).
- Second Move: Announce a new way forward for all, Jew and Gentile: the way of faith (Rom. 3:21–4:25).
- Third Move: Unite all in a common story, with four illustrations: Adam, baptism, slavery, and remarriage (Rom. 5:1–7:6).
- Fourth Move: Unite all in a common struggle and a common victory, illustrated by two stories: the Story of Me and the Story of We (Rom. 7:7–8:39).
- Fifth Move: Address Jewish and gentile problems, showing God as God of all (Rom. 9:1–11:36).

10

- Sixth Move: Engage all in a common life and mission (Rom. 12:1–13:14).
- Seventh Move: Call everyone to unity in the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:1–16:27).
- Paul seems to conclude the letter no less than four times with a succession of premature benedictions (15:5–6, 13, 33; 16:20).
- Finally, Paul tells the Christian community in Rome how much he would like to come and visit them in person.
- Paul is a “Jesus and the kingdom of God” guy from first to last. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ and of his servant/apostle Paul: the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news. Be reconciled.