

The Gospel Before During and After Paul

Good News Rightly Divided

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VerseQuest Ministries





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The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: Good News Rightly Divided

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VerseQuest Ministries

Proclaiming the King James Bible through rightly divided teaching.

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The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: Good News Rightly Divided

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Series Introduction

Key Passage: Second Timothy 2:15 — “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The word “**gospel**” has been handled so carelessly by modern religion that most Christians assume it functions like a doctrinal rubber stamp. Find the word anywhere in the Bible, press it against the passage, and everything instantly becomes First Corinthians 15:1–4. The gospel preached unto Abraham becomes Paul’s gospel. The gospel of the kingdom becomes Paul’s gospel. The message preached by the Twelve before they understood the cross becomes Paul’s gospel. Peter’s appeal to Israel at Pentecost becomes Paul’s gospel. The everlasting gospel proclaimed by an angel while divine judgment falls becomes Paul’s gospel. Once that trick is finished, every audience, covenant, commandment, condition, and prophetic setting has been flattened beneath one convenient label. Religion then wonders why its Bible seems to contradict itself. It pours Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, the 144,000, and an angel in midheaven into the same doctrinal blender, holds down the lid, and blames God for the noise.

The word “gospel” means good news, but good news is not a complete doctrinal definition until the passage tells us what news is being announced. A woman may receive good news that she is expecting a child. A soldier may receive good news that a battle has been won. A prisoner may receive good news that the governor has signed a pardon. A nation may receive good news that its rightful king is returning. Each announcement is genuinely good news, but nobody with enough sense to operate a doorknob would claim that pregnancy, military victory, legal pardon, and royal restoration are one identical message. The shared description does not erase the differing contents. Yet when men open a Bible, common sense is frequently checked at the church door beside the umbrellas. The label “gospel” appears, and every distinction immediately disappears beneath a cloud of religious enthusiasm.

God commands the Bible student to do something more demanding than collect familiar words. Second Timothy 2:15 says, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God.” Study requires work. It requires comparing Scripture with Scripture, recognizing speakers and hearers, locating events historically, and respecting what God had revealed at each stage of His program. The approved workman must be “rightly dividing the word of truth.” Notice that he divides truth, not error. The Bible’s dispensational divisions do not separate inspired Scripture from uninspired Scripture. Every word is true. Noah was truly commanded to build an ark. Abraham was truly commanded to circumcise his household. Israel was truly

commanded to keep the sabbath. The Twelve were truly forbidden to enter Gentile cities. Peter truly told Israelites to repent and be baptized for remission of sins. Paul truly said Christ sent him not to baptize but to preach the gospel. An angel will truly command the Beast's world to fear God because judgment has arrived. The statements become contradictory only when a careless workman changes the addresses.

This series will examine the gospel before, during, and after Paul because God's revelation unfolded through history. God knew the entire plan from eternity, but He did not reveal the whole plan to every person at the same time. Adam did not know everything Noah knew. Noah did not know everything Abraham knew. Abraham did not know everything Moses knew. Moses did not know everything David knew. David did not know everything Peter knew after the resurrection. Peter during Christ's earthly ministry did not know what Peter understood after Christ opened the disciples' understanding. Even the Twelve after the resurrection did not receive the distinctive stewardship later entrusted to Paul in its completed doctrinal fullness. Divine omniscience does not automatically become human knowledge. God may possess the completed blueprint while giving a servant only the instructions needed for his appointed portion of the building.

That truth does not make earlier saints ignorant fools, nor does it make God's earlier words defective. Abraham displayed great faith because he believed exactly what God told him. God promised that a son would come from Abraham's own body and that his seed would become innumerable as the stars. Genesis 15:6 says, "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Galatians 3:8 calls the promise "In thee shall all nations be blessed" the gospel preached beforehand unto Abraham. That was genuine good news, but Abraham did not stand beneath the stars preaching that Jesus Christ of Nazareth had died for his sins, been buried, and risen the third day. Those events had not happened, the saving explanation had not been entrusted to Paul, and the name "Jesus" had not been revealed to Abraham. Abraham believed the light God gave him. Faith does not guess unrevealed information; faith takes God at the words He has spoken.

The next great announcement concerned Israel's promised kingdom. God had covenanted with Abraham concerning a nation and land, promised Judah a sceptre, sworn to David concerning an everlasting throne, and filled the prophets with descriptions of Messiah's earthly reign. Isaiah saw Jerusalem exalted and the nations beating swords into plowshares. Jeremiah described a righteous Branch executing judgment and justice in the earth. Daniel saw the Son of man receiving everlasting dominion over all nations. When John the Baptist appeared crying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Israel did not need a philosophy professor to explain what kingdom he meant. The King was

approaching, the prophetic kingdom had drawn near, and the covenant nation needed to prepare for her Messiah.

Jesus Christ continued that kingdom announcement. He came as “the son of David, the son of Abraham,” made under the law and ministering to the circumcision. He preached “the gospel of the kingdom” and authenticated His claim through the exact signs Israel’s prophets had connected with Messiah. Blind eyes opened, deaf ears heard, lame men walked, lepers were cleansed, devils fled, storms obeyed, bread multiplied, and dead bodies returned to life. These were not exhibition tricks for a travelling faith-healing circus. They were samples of kingdom power and credentials of Israel’s King. Christ sent the Twelve to preach the same message, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and empowered them to perform the same works. He also told them, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles,” but rather to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The audience matched the announcement because the kingdom was Israel’s covenanted hope.

Here the religious blender encounters a blade it cannot digest: the Twelve preached a gospel before they understood Christ’s death and resurrection. Luke 9 says they went through the towns “preaching the gospel.” The same chapter says they did not understand when Christ spoke of being delivered into the hands of men. In Matthew 16, Peter rebuked the Lord for announcing His coming death. In Luke 18, Christ described His betrayal, mocking, scourging, death, and resurrection in plain words, yet Scripture says the Twelve “understood none of these things,” the saying “was hid from them,” and they did not know what He meant. A man cannot preach the death, burial, and resurrection as saving content while opposing, misunderstanding, and remaining divinely blinded to that information. The Twelve preached the kingdom. Paul would later proclaim the completed cross.

Following Christ’s resurrection, Peter stood at Pentecost and confronted Israel with the murder of her Messiah. His audience was not an unmarked mass of Gentile sinners. He addressed “Ye men of Judaea,” “ye men of Israel,” and “all the house of Israel.” He charged them with taking Jesus of Nazareth and crucifying Him by wicked hands. God had raised the rejected King and made Him both Lord and Christ. When the convicted hearers asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter told them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” The command belonged to Israel’s national and apostolic crisis. In Acts 3 Peter again called Israel to repentance and connected that repentance with the times of refreshing, the return of Jesus Christ, and the restitution spoken by all the prophets. Peter stood before Israel with a murder charge in one hand and the kingdom door in the other.

Israel’s rulers rejected that witness. They arrested the apostles, resisted the Holy Ghost, and finally murdered Stephen while Saul of Tarsus guarded the garments. God then

stopped Saul on the Damascus road, revealed the risen Christ, and called the chief persecutor to become the apostle of the Gentiles. Paul did not receive his gospel from Peter, borrow his commission from the Twelve, or inherit Israel's kingdom ministry. Galatians 1 says his gospel came "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The same Christ who had ministered to Israel on earth now spoke from heaven and entrusted Paul with "the gospel of the grace of God." Grace walked through a door religion had barricaded, knocked the Pharisee into the dust, and gave him a message in which human boasting could not survive.

Paul's gospel declares that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures," was buried, and rose again the third day. Through that finished work, the ungodly sinner who believes is justified freely, reconciled to God, redeemed through Christ's blood, forgiven, accepted, sealed, and placed by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Romans 4 says, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," faith is counted for righteousness. Ephesians 2 says salvation is by grace through faith, "not of works, lest any man should boast." First Corinthians 1:17 says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," permanently separating Paul's saving gospel from every system making water baptism part of justification. Religion keeps arriving with buckets, ordinances, ceremonies, and membership forms. Paul keeps pointing to a bloodstained cross and an empty tomb.

Through Paul, Christ also revealed the mystery of one body. Gentile blessing had been prophesied since Abraham, but the formation of a new spiritual organism in which saved Jews and Gentiles possessed equal standing was a truth previously hidden. Ephesians 3 identifies the mystery: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body." First Corinthians 12:13 says, "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." This body is not Israel repainted, a Gentile replacement for Israel, or a religious corporation continuing Israel's ordinances beneath Christian names. It is the body of Christ, joined to a heavenly Head and blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Romans through Philemon furnish this body with its governing doctrine. Ignore those epistles, and the Church will spend its life wearing Israel's clothes and answering to somebody else's name.

Paul repeatedly called the message "my gospel." That possessive expression did not mean Paul invented salvation or owned the cross. The gospel belonged to God, centred upon Christ, and was Paul's by stewardship. Romans 16:25 says God is able to establish believers "according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery." Second Timothy 2:8 speaks of Jesus Christ raised from the dead "according to my gospel." Romans 2:16 says God will judge men's secrets by Jesus Christ "according to my gospel." Those three words identify the doctrinal message and

commission entrusted to the apostle of the Gentiles. Remove “my gospel,” and a thousand pulpit traditions remain standing. Believe it, and their foundations begin cracking before the sermon ends.

The series will then move beyond Paul’s present stewardship into Revelation, where an angel flies through the midst of heaven possessing “the everlasting gospel.” His message is not First Corinthians 15. He commands every nation, kindred, tongue, and people to fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator because the hour of judgment has come. The setting is the Beast’s world, where satanic government controls commerce, demands worship, marks its followers, and kills those refusing its image. The angel announces that the Creator is about to repossess His creation. That is excellent news for persecuted saints and terrible news for the occupying power. A king’s return always sounds different in the ears of loyal subjects and armed traitors.

During Daniel’s seventieth week, the gospel of the kingdom will again occupy the prophetic foreground. Matthew 24 declares that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” The passage concerns Judaea, the temple, the sabbath, Daniel’s abomination of desolation, unprecedented tribulation, endurance to the end, false Christs, and the visible coming of the Son of man. The 144,000 are sealed from Israel’s tribes, two witnesses prophesy in Jerusalem, Beast worship governs buying and selling, and saints must refuse the mark while maintaining the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Those are Tribulation conditions, not Paul’s instructions to a sealed member of Christ’s body. The bride waits for Christ in the air; Israel’s remnant waits for Him through the fire.

This series is therefore not an argument for several unrelated Saviours or competing divine plans. Every true saving provision rests ultimately upon Jesus Christ and the value of His finished work. He is Abraham’s promised Seed, David’s royal Son, Israel’s Messiah, the Lamb of God, Paul’s risen Lord, the Head of the body, the Judge of the Beast’s world, and the King who will return to reign. The unity resides in the Person and purpose of Christ, not in pretending that every announcement contains identical words. A man may be a son, husband, father, employer, and citizen without those relationships becoming interchangeable. Christ occupies several revealed offices without any one of them cancelling the others.

The doctrinal map becomes clear when the reader asks five honest questions of every passage: Who is speaking? To whom is he speaking? What message is being announced? What response is required? Where does the passage stand in God’s unfolding program? Those questions will clear more confusion than a wagonload of denominational commentaries written to avoid them. They explain why Abraham could hear a gospel

without knowing Calvary, why the Twelve could preach a gospel while the cross remained hidden from them, why Peter could command baptism for remission, why Paul could distinguish baptism from his gospel, why an angel can preach an everlasting gospel without mentioning justification, and why the kingdom gospel returns before the end.

The practical stakes are enormous. When the gospels are blended, believers are dragged beneath commands never addressed to them. Israel's law becomes the Church's rule of justification. Peter's baptism becomes a requirement for present salvation. Matthew's kingdom forgiveness becomes a threat that God will revoke Pauline forgiveness. Tribulation endurance becomes a denial of eternal security. The mark of the Beast becomes an object of present panic. Israel's earthly promises replace the Church's heavenly calling, and the believer who is "complete in him" is told to complete himself through ordinances, signs, sacraments, and survival. The religious blender never produces assurance because its operators need uncertainty to keep customers returning.

Right division restores assurance without weakening holiness, accountability, prophecy, or any other portion of Scripture. The Christian can believe Matthew without pretending he is an Israelite fleeing Judaea. He can believe Acts 2 without forcing Peter's answer to Israel upon Paul's Gentile converts. He can believe Hebrews and Revelation without placing the body of Christ inside Daniel's seventieth week. He can learn from every verse while receiving his governing doctrine from the apostle Christ appointed for the Gentiles. All Scripture remains profitable, but not all Scripture carries the same address. A wise man reads the entire mailbox; he simply refrains from stealing the neighbour's bills.

The goal of these ten essays is to let every gospel announcement stand with its own inspired content intact. Abraham's promise will remain Abraham's promise. The kingdom proclamation will remain Israel's kingdom proclamation. Peter's appeal will remain Peter's national appeal. Paul's gospel will remain the present gospel of grace. The everlasting gospel will remain Revelation's warning of judgment. The future kingdom witness will remain preparation for Christ's visible reign. Once the labels, addresses, audiences, and conditions are restored, the supposed contradictions disappear. God's Book becomes clearer, Christ's finished work becomes brighter, and religion loses another hiding place.

One Bible does not require one undivided set of instructions. A courthouse contains laws for judges, witnesses, prisoners, attorneys, officers, and jurors without contradicting itself. Confusion begins when the prisoner climbs into the judge's chair, the witness attempts to sentence the jury, and the attorney starts wearing the handcuffs. God has placed every person, nation, apostle, covenant, and dispensation where it belongs. The approved workman respects those placements. The ashamed workman rearranges them and calls the confusion "historic Christianity."

The sinner today does not need to believe merely that nations will be blessed through Abraham, prepare for Israel's kingdom, answer Peter's Pentecost indictment, endure through Antichrist's reign, or wait for an angel to announce judgment. He must believe the gospel now addressed to him: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The instant he believes, God justifies him freely, seals him with the Holy Spirit, and places him into Christ's body. No law can improve that standing, no sacrament can complete it, and no religious blender can reproduce it. The saving work was finished before religion opened its hardware store.

The gospel before, during, and after Paul reveals one Lord accomplishing His perfect purpose through distinct announcements across the ages. The Bible is not confused, God has not misplaced the instructions, and the Holy Ghost does not need a scholar to erase the differences He inspired. The reader needs only enough humility to believe the words and enough diligence to keep them where God placed them. **Read the address. Mark the audience. Believe the message. Honour the division. And keep the religious blender unplugged.**

1 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: Abraham Heard Good News—But He Never Preached First Corinthians 15

Key Passage: Galatians 3:8 — “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”

Introduction

One of the quickest ways to scramble the Bible is to find the same word in two different places and assume that it must carry the same doctrinal cargo in both. That is how a man finds the word “gospel” in Galatians 3:8, sees the word “gospel” in First Corinthians 15:1, and decides that Abraham must have known everything Paul knew about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Never mind that Abraham lived nearly two thousand years before Calvary. Never mind that the name “Jesus Christ” had not been revealed to him, that the cross had not occurred, that the blood had not been shed, that the body of Christ had not been revealed, and that Paul's apostleship was still buried in the unrevealed counsel of God. The fellow has located the same label on two different bottles, so he pours them together and calls the resulting doctrinal indigestion “sound theology.” But a word does not erase its context, a label does not determine every ingredient, and the Holy Ghost did not inspire a Bible so careless that its audiences, covenants, promises, and dispensations can

be thrown into a religious blender. Every gospel contains good news, but not every item of good news contains the same message. A birth announcement and a battle victory are both good news, but only a theologian could confuse the maternity ward with the battlefield and then demand that everyone admire his scholarship.

Galatians 3:8 says exactly what it means: “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham.” The verse then tells us the content of that announcement: “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” The Holy Ghost did not leave a blank after the word “gospel” and invite a seminary committee to fill it with whatever doctrinal system was currently fashionable. He stated what was preached. Abraham was told that blessing would extend through him to all the families and nations of the earth. That was glorious news. It reached beyond one tent, one tribe, and one lifetime. It involved a promised seed, a chosen nation, a particular land, and ultimately the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ through Abraham’s line. Yet the fact that God’s later purpose was contained within that promise does not mean Abraham understood every truth that God would eventually unfold from it. An acorn contains the appointed life of an oak, but Abraham was not sitting beneath the finished tree simply because God placed the seed in his hand. Revelation progresses because God reveals it; it does not travel backward through history because a modern commentator owns a concordance.

The issue is not whether Abraham believed God. He did. The issue is not whether God counted righteousness to Abraham. He did. The issue is not whether Christ’s finished work ultimately made every righteous transaction possible. It did. The issue is what God revealed to Abraham, what Abraham was required to believe, and whether that revealed content was identical to the gospel Paul later received from the risen Christ. Scripture’s answer is plain enough to disturb every system built upon fog: Abraham believed God’s promise concerning his seed and God counted it to him for righteousness, while the sinner today is commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in His completed death, burial, and resurrection. The same God acted in both cases, faith was present in both cases, and the merits of Christ stand beneath all divine mercy; but the revealed messages were not identical. Faith does not mean guessing tomorrow’s revelation. Faith means believing what God has said. Abraham was not saved because he successfully predicted First Corinthians 15. He was counted righteous because “he believed in the LORD” when the Lord promised him a seed. Biblical faith begins where God speaks; religious presumption begins where man adds words that God had not yet spoken.

1. The Gospel in Galatians 3:8 Says What It Contained

The first duty of an honest Bible reader is to allow the verse to finish its own sentence. Galatians 3:8 does not merely say that God “preached before the gospel unto Abraham”

and then leave the content unidentified. It continues, “saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” That declaration reaches back to Genesis 12:3, where God told Abram, “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,” and to Genesis 18:18, where He said, “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.” The announcement was good news because God chose a man from an idolatrous world, promised to make of him a great nation, and declared that worldwide blessing would proceed through his line. Nothing in the passage says, “Christ will die for your sins, be buried, and rise again the third day.” Nothing says that Abraham heard of the Church as Christ’s body, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly calling, or the catching away of the saints. Those truths were in God’s counsel, but they were not in Abraham’s ears. God knew the finished architecture while Abraham received the first set of measurements. Confusing God’s foreknowledge with Abraham’s knowledge is a fine way to make the Bible say anything while pretending to believe everything.

Notice the wording: “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith.” The Scripture foresaw it; Abraham did not foresee every doctrinal detail attached to it. God, who knows the end from the beginning, embedded the future blessing of Gentiles within the Abrahamic promise. Paul, writing by inspiration centuries later, explains the reach and significance of that promise. This is retrospective revelation: the Holy Ghost shows us what God was accomplishing through words whose complete implications Abraham himself did not possess. There is nothing strange about that unless a man imagines that every Bible character carried a bound King James Bible under his arm before Genesis was written. Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation and “not for that nation only,” yet John 11:51 plainly says, “this spake he not of himself.” Caiaphas uttered more than he understood. Likewise, God’s promise to Abraham contained a reach greater than Abraham could have charted. Divine words can carry a fullness known completely to the Author before it is known completely to the hearer.

The theological shell game begins when a teacher substitutes Paul’s explanation of the promise for Abraham’s original understanding of it. Paul can look back through Calvary, resurrection, and revealed mystery and show how Gentile justification accords with the ancient promise. Abraham could not look forward with the same revealed information. The text never says Abraham understood the phrase “all nations” to mean that uncircumcised Gentiles would one day be baptized by one Spirit into one body during a parenthetical dispensation in which Israel had fallen. That explanation belongs to later revelation. The man who puts all of Romans through Philemon into Abraham’s tent is not honoring Abraham’s faith; he is replacing it with his own imagination. Abraham believed the words God actually gave him. That is why the passage is so powerful. Faith does not require possession of every truth God will ever reveal. It requires confidence in the truth God has

revealed. When men insist that Abraham secretly knew Paul's gospel, they do not exalt faith—they turn faith into clairvoyance.

2. Abraham's Good News Concerned a Seed, a Nation, and a Blessing

The call of Abram begins with promises whose plain earthly and national features cannot be dissolved in theological perfume. Genesis 12:1–3 records God's command and pledge: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." God promised Abram a land, a nation, a great name, personal blessing, protection, and worldwide blessing through him. These promises did not originate in Abraham's moral worth, religious achievement, or tribal importance. Joshua 24:2 reveals that his fathers "served other gods." God called a man out of idolatry and attached His own faithfulness to that man's future. The announcement was therefore grace in the broad biblical sense of divine favor, but it was not yet the fully revealed "gospel of the grace of God" entrusted to Paul in Acts 20:24. Every undeserved favor is gracious, but not every gracious dealing constitutes Paul's present dispensational gospel. Sunshine is from God, but a man would be foolish to call the weather report the gospel of Christ.

As Genesis unfolds, the promise becomes more specific. Abram would have an heir from his own bowels. His descendants would become innumerable as the stars and as the sand. They would possess a defined territory stretching "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" according to Genesis 15:18. Kings would come out of him, and he would become "a father of many nations" according to Genesis 17:4–6. The covenant sign of circumcision would be placed in his flesh. Through Isaac the promised line would be called, not through Ishmael; through Jacob, not Esau; through Judah the sceptre would proceed; and through David the royal line would lead to Israel's Messiah. God's promise was not a misty religious sentiment about everyone learning to be nicer. It had names, boundaries, descendants, covenants, and a throne. Modern theology loves to "spiritualize" such particulars because a literal promise is harder to steal. Once the land becomes a metaphor, the nation becomes the Church, and Israel becomes anybody except Israel, the religious pickpocket can walk away with the entire Abrahamic covenant while explaining that the original owner no longer needs it.

The blessing of all nations does ultimately center in Jesus Christ, the promised Seed, but that fulfilment confirms rather than cancels the distinctions in the promise. Galatians 3:16 says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Christ is the singular Seed through whom the spiritual blessing reaches believing Gentiles, yet the same chapter does not authorize the Church to confiscate every national promise given to Abraham's physical

descendants. God can accomplish more than one purpose through the same covenant without asking a theologian for permission. Through Abraham came Israel; through Israel came Christ; through Christ comes salvation to the world; and through the returning Christ Israel's national promises will yet be fulfilled. The line is not complicated until a system has something to hide. Abraham's gospel announced blessing through the promised line. Paul's gospel later explains the finished redemptive work accomplished by the promised Person. A promise that the Physician will come is good news, but it is not identical to the later announcement that the Physician has completed the operation.

3. Abraham Believed God's Promise Concerning His Son

Genesis 15 supplies the inspired account of Abraham's faith being counted for righteousness. Abram had already obeyed God's call, entered the land, built altars, survived his failure in Egypt, separated from Lot, rescued the captives, and met Melchizedek. Yet he remained childless, and the apparent heir of his house was Eliezer of Damascus. God came to him in a vision and said, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Abram answered with the burden pressing upon his heart: "Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" The Lord then brought him abroad and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." The next verse states, "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The object of Abraham's faith in that immediate setting was God's promise that a son would come from his own body and that his seed would become innumerable. The passage does not need a denominational mechanic crawling under it and installing a doctrine the Holy Ghost forgot to mention.

Romans 4 appeals to this event to demonstrate the principle of imputed righteousness apart from works. Paul asks, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Abraham could not boast before God because righteousness was counted, not earned. He received it before circumcision, making him "the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." That is Paul's inspired use of Abraham as an example, but the similarity of the principle does not require identity of revealed content. Abraham believed God concerning the promised seed; a sinner today believes God's record concerning His Son. Both abandon confidence in human production and take God at His word, but they do not live at the same point in revelation. A man in Noah's day entered an ark because God warned of a flood. A man today cannot build a boat behind his garage, declare himself obedient to Genesis 6, and expect the construction project to substitute for faith in Christ. Faith is not a free-floating religious emotion. Its content is determined by the words God addresses to the hearer.

Romans 4 itself distinguishes Abraham's immediate object of faith from the believer's present object. Abraham believed the God "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." He considered not his own body now dead nor the deadness of Sarah's womb. He "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," but was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Then Paul applies the principle to us: "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." The passage does not say that Abraham believed Jesus had already died and risen. It says that the account was written for our instruction and that righteousness is imputed to us when we believe on the God who raised Jesus. The principle crosses the dispensational boundary; the revealed content does not remain frozen. God has always been true, but He has not always required every man to believe truths that He had not yet revealed.

4. Calvary Was in God's Purpose but Not in Abraham's Message

The death of Jesus Christ was never an emergency repair devised after Israel rejected her King. Acts 2:23 declares that Christ was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." First Peter 1:19–20 speaks of "the precious blood of Christ" and says He "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." Revelation 13:8 calls Him "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The cross stood in the settled counsel of God before Abraham drew breath, before Adam was formed, and before sin entered the world. But a purpose established in eternity is not necessarily a message revealed in history. God knew about Calvary; Abraham did not therefore preach Calvary. God knew Paul would write Romans; Moses did not therefore carry the Scofield Reference Bible down from Sinai. Omniscience belongs to God, not automatically to every servant whom God addresses.

The prophets later spoke of Christ's sufferings, but even they did not possess the full light that shines after the event. First Peter 1:10–12 says that the prophets "inquired and searched diligently" concerning the salvation of which they prophesied, "searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." They ministered truths whose complete timing and application exceeded their own understanding. Isaiah 53 describes the wounded, bruised, sin-bearing Servant with astonishing accuracy, but Acts 8 shows an Ethiopian reading that chapter and asking, "of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" Accurate prophecy did not automatically produce complete understanding. If men living after Isaiah required explanation, it is nonsense to insist that Abraham possessed the complete Pauline gospel merely because God's promise to him ultimately pointed to Christ. Revelation is not measured by what a later

reader can find in a passage after God supplies the key. It is measured by what God had disclosed at the time.

Even the Lord's own apostles did not understand the death and resurrection while preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Luke 9:6 says, "And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where." Yet when Christ later declared that He would be delivered, mocked, spitefully entreated, spitted on, scourged, put to death, and raised the third day, Luke 18:34 states, "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Peter rebuked the Lord for announcing His death in Matthew 16. The Twelve preached a gospel while ignorant of the cross and resurrection. That single fact puts a stick of dynamite beneath the lazy claim that every gospel in Scripture is First Corinthians 15. If men walking beside Christ did not understand Calvary while preaching a gospel, Abraham certainly was not conducting Pauline evangelistic meetings beneath the stars. The Bible settles the matter; only the funeral arrangements for the system remain.

5. Isaac Portrayed Calvary Without Turning Abraham Into Paul

Genesis 22 contains one of the clearest Old Testament pictures of the sacrifice of Christ. God commanded Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest," and offer him upon a mountain in the land of Moriah. Isaac carried the wood upon which he was to be offered, just as Christ bore His cross. The father and son went "both of them together," presenting a picture of agreement between the Father and the Son in redemption. Isaac asked, "where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" and Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." A ram caught by his horns in a thicket became the substitute, and Hebrews 11:19 says Abraham received Isaac from the dead "in a figure." The chapter is drenched with Calvary's shadow. Yet a shadow is not the finished revelation, and a picture is not an apostolic doctrinal statement. The tabernacle portrayed Christ too, but nobody was justified in the present Pauline sense by correctly identifying the doctrinal symbolism of every badger skin.

Abraham acted because God commanded him to offer Isaac, and he trusted that God could raise him from the dead because God had already said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Hebrews 11:17-19 explains his reasoning: Abraham accounted "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." His faith rested upon God's prior promise concerning Isaac. He knew that Isaac could not remain dead if God's word concerning his descendants was to be fulfilled. That is magnificent faith, but it is still not a confession that Jesus of Nazareth would die for Abraham's sins and rise bodily on the third day. Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad according to John 8:56, but the verse does not say he possessed Romans through Philemon in advance. He glimpsed promise, person, and coming

fulfilment; he did not receive Paul's completed stewardship. To turn every type into fully understood doctrine is to confuse the picture on a seed packet with a field ready for harvest.

James 2 appeals to the offering of Isaac when stating that Abraham's faith was "made perfect" by works and that "the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." Genesis 15 and Genesis 22 are separated by years. The first records righteousness counted when Abraham believed; the second demonstrates and completes that faith through obedient action under a severe test. James is not teaching that a lost sinner today must offer a child to complete faith in Christ. He is showing living faith vindicated through works in a context that addresses "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." Paul uses Abraham to establish justification apart from works before God; James uses Abraham to expose an empty profession that produces nothing. The passages are not enemies, and they do not become contradictory until somebody tears the addresses off the envelopes. Right division does not damage Scripture. It keeps religious mail thieves from opening every letter and claiming every instruction inside.

6. Paul's Gospel Is a Revealed Accomplishment, Not an Ancient Hint

Paul defines the saving gospel with a precision not found in God's original words to Abraham. First Corinthians 15:1–4 declares, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved," and then gives its historical foundation: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." This gospel announces an accomplished transaction. Christ died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again. The sinner is not waiting for the Seed to appear, wondering how the nations will be blessed, or looking for a son to come from a barren womb. The redemptive work has occurred in history, its meaning has been revealed, and its sufficiency is proclaimed. Abraham received a promise pointing forward. We receive a report of a work finished. Promise says God will do it; gospel preaching today says Christ has done it.

Paul insists that his gospel came by revelation. Galatians 1:11–12 states, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." If Paul merely preached the same message already fully known by Abraham and continuously preached without doctrinal distinction, the force of this claim evaporates. Paul did not learn his commission by sitting at the feet of Peter, nor did the Twelve manufacture his apostleship. The risen Christ revealed the message and ministry entrusted to him. Romans 16:25 speaks of "my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the

mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” A thing “kept secret” was not being publicly expounded by Abraham. Religion can say it was secret and preached at the same time, but religion also thinks water can wash away sin while the blood of Christ waits politely in the hallway. The Bible is less confused than its handlers.

Paul’s gospel also stands within a body of revealed doctrine concerning justification, reconciliation, identification with Christ, the indwelling Spirit, the one body, and the believer’s heavenly position. Romans 3 declares that the righteousness of God is manifested “by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Romans 4 connects our justification with Christ “who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Romans 5 announces peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 6 identifies the believer with Christ’s death and resurrection. First Corinthians 12:13 reveals baptism by one Spirit into one body. Ephesians 2 seats believers together “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Abraham’s blessing is part of the great scriptural foundation upon which Paul argues, but Paul’s full doctrinal structure was not the message preached to Abraham. The foundation stone and the completed house belong to one plan, but only a religious real-estate agent would advertise the stone as a furnished mansion.

7. Right Division Preserves Both Abraham’s Faith and Paul’s Gospel

Right division does not deny unity in God’s purpose; it refuses to counterfeit unity by erasing God’s distinctions. Second Timothy 2:15 commands, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Notice that the object divided is “the word of truth.” A division can be necessary precisely because every part is true. Genesis 6 truthfully instructed Noah to build an ark. Genesis 17 truthfully required circumcision as the token of Abraham’s covenant. Exodus 20 truthfully placed Israel beneath the law. Matthew 10 truthfully forbade the Twelve from going to the Gentiles and commanded them to preach to the lost sheep of Israel. Acts 15 truthfully records the apostles deciding not to place Gentile believers under Moses’ yoke. Ephesians 2 truthfully reveals Jew and Gentile reconciled in one body. All are true; they are not all the same instruction to the same people. The cook who throws every ingredient in the pantry into one pot is not honoring the whole pantry. He is ruining supper.

Recognizing the distinction between Abraham’s gospel and Paul’s gospel protects Abraham from being forced to believe unrevealed information and protects Paul’s gospel from being diluted into a vague promise of blessing. Abraham’s faith was genuine because he believed the promise God gave him. Our faith is genuine when we believe the record God has now given concerning His Son. First John 5:10 warns that “he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” Today the issue is

not merely whether a person believes that God exists, blesses nations, performs miracles, rewards sincerity, or keeps promises in some broad religious sense. The devils believe and tremble. A sinner must confront the crucified and risen Christ. Paul told the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The content is now clear because the event is complete. To retreat from that revelation into Abraham's earlier promise is not deeper faith. It is walking backward out of a lighted room and boasting about the atmosphere in the hallway.

The danger of flattening the gospels is not confined to a classroom debate. Once men decide that every gospel is identical, they begin importing kingdom signs, baptismal conditions, Tribulation endurance, Mosaic ordinances, and national promises into the salvation of a sinner under grace. Soon the believer is told that he must repent like Israel, be baptized for remission as in Acts 2, endure to the end as in Matthew 24, refuse the mark of the beast as in Revelation, keep commandments attached to another setting, and hope that grace will make up the remaining balance. The finished work of Christ is buried beneath a pile of stolen instructions while the preacher congratulates himself for using the whole Bible. But salvation today is not a religious obstacle course assembled from every dispensation. Christ "by himself purged our sins" according to Hebrews 1:3, and Paul says in Romans 4:5, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Right division does not weaken the gospel. It removes the religious barnacles so the finished work can be seen.

Conclusion

Abraham heard good news, and the Holy Ghost identifies that good news for us: "In thee shall all nations be blessed." He heard of a promised seed, believed the Lord, and received counted righteousness. He left his country because God called him, dwelt as a stranger in the land of promise, trusted God concerning the son who would come from his own body, and later demonstrated that trust by offering Isaac. His life became a monumental testimony to the faithfulness of God and the nature of faith. Yet Abraham never stood beneath the stars and preached that Jesus Christ of Nazareth had died for our sins, been buried, and risen again the third day. He could not announce as completed history what had not occurred, identify by revealed name the Saviour not yet manifested, or explain a mystery God had kept secret. Abraham believed all the light God gave him, but he was not required to manufacture light God had withheld. Faith takes God at His word; it does not forge additional pages and sign the Holy Ghost's name at the bottom.

The gospel of Christ preached today rests upon a work that Abraham's promised blessing anticipated but did not fully disclose. The Seed came. The Son of God took upon Him the seed of Abraham. He fulfilled the law, bore our sins in His own body on the tree, shed His

blood, entered death, was buried, and rose in victory. Paul was then entrusted with the inspired explanation of what that finished work means for the ungodly sinner who believes. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is not a vague expectation of future blessing. It is a present declaration of peace grounded in accomplished redemption. God does not ask the sinner to produce a nation, inherit Canaan, offer Isaac, keep Sinai, or wait for the kingdom to appear. He commands him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Calvary is not a down payment awaiting the sinner’s religious installments. The receipt is written in blood, and the empty tomb bears the stamp: **Paid in full.**

The lesson reaches far beyond Galatians 3:8. Every time the word “gospel” appears, the Bible student must ask who is speaking, to whom he is speaking, what has been revealed, what is being promised, and what response God requires. Those questions do not arise from unbelief; they arise from respect for every word God preserved. Abraham’s gospel was good news. The kingdom gospel was good news. Paul’s gospel is good news. The everlasting gospel will be good news in its appointed setting. But good news addressed to different people under different circumstances must not be boiled into one pot of religious stew. God’s Book contains no contradictions, but it contains divisions sharp enough to cut the fingers of a careless workman. Read the address. Honor the setting. Believe the words. Abraham heard good news and believed God; we have heard the finished gospel of Christ, and now the question stands before every sinner with nowhere left to hide: **“What will you do with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?”**

2 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: A Crown Before a Cross—When the Kingdom Drew Nigh

Key Passage: Matthew 3:1–2 — “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Introduction

The New Testament does not open with John the Baptist telling Israel that Jesus Christ is about to die for their sins, be buried, and rise again the third day. John does not march out of the wilderness carrying a Roman road, distributing church membership cards, or explaining the believer’s heavenly position in the body of Christ. He appears as “The voice of one crying in the wilderness,” clothed in camel’s hair, eating locusts and wild honey, and announcing, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The announcement was not a vague promise that God might improve the listeners’ inner attitudes. A kingdom was

drawing near because its King was standing among them. Israel's covenanted Messiah had arrived, the throne promised to David was in view, and the nation was commanded to repent in preparation for the kingdom her prophets had described. The first recorded gospel preaching in Matthew concerns a crown before it concerns a cross. The King was presented before His sacrificial rejection was openly declared, and the kingdom was proclaimed before the death, burial, and resurrection were understood by those doing the proclaiming. That order is not theological clutter. It is the inspired arrangement of the Book.

Religious tradition dislikes this arrangement because it has trained generations to treat the four Gospels as though Jesus Christ spent His earthly ministry conducting Gentile church services under Pauline doctrine. Every "gospel" becomes First Corinthians 15, every "kingdom" becomes a spiritual feeling, every baptism becomes Christian baptism, every sermon becomes a Church-age sermon, and every command becomes a standing order for everyone carrying a Bible. The result is a doctrinal junk drawer containing Moses' law, John's baptism, Peter's keys, Paul's mysteries, Tribulation endurance, and Revelation's judgments. When the drawer will no longer close, the same teachers who filled it announce that the Bible contains "tensions." The tension is not in the King James Bible. The tension is in a system attempting to stretch one doctrinal label over several distinct divine dealings. A man can call an army barracks a bridal chamber, but the new sign will not change who sleeps inside. The passage, audience, message, and historical setting still govern what the words mean.

The gospel of the kingdom was genuine good news. Israel's long-promised King had come. The kingdom promised through the prophets had drawn near in the person of Jesus Christ. The blind received sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them. These signs were not stage tricks designed to fill an offering plate; they were prophetic credentials showing that the powers associated with the promised kingdom were breaking into Israel's history. Yet this gospel cannot be made identical to Paul's gospel without mutilating both. The kingdom gospel announced a coming reign and demanded national preparation; Paul's gospel announces a finished redemptive work and offers justification freely to the ungodly who believes. One presents the King and His throne to Israel; the other declares the saving value of the King's rejected, crucified, buried, and risen work to Jew and Gentile alike. Both are good news, but a crown is not a cross, an approaching kingdom is not an accomplished atonement, and Israel's national repentance is not the sinner's present justification by faith apart from works.

1. The Kingdom Was Promised Long Before John Announced It

John's proclamation did not fall from an empty sky. The kingdom of heaven had a long Old Testament history rooted in God's promises to Abraham, Judah, David, and the nation of Israel. God promised Abraham a land with defined borders, descendants as the stars and sand, kings proceeding from him, and blessing extending to all nations. Jacob prophesied in Genesis 49:10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." God then covenanted with David in Second Samuel 7:12-16, promising to establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. Psalm 89 declares, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." Those words concern a seed, a throne, a realm, and governmental dominion. They are not describing a congregation thinking positive thoughts in a rented storefront. God did not promise David an invisible influence in human hearts while a Gentile political machine continued running the earth. He promised him a throne, and thrones are built for kings who rule.

The prophets filled in the kingdom's features. Isaiah 2 foretold that "the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains," that all nations would flow unto it, and that the law would go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The nations would beat their swords into plowshares and cease learning war. Isaiah 11 announced a righteous Branch from Jesse who would judge with righteousness, smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and produce conditions in which the wolf would dwell with the lamb and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Jeremiah 23 promised a righteous Branch of David who "shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Daniel 2 saw the stone cut without hands destroy the Gentile image and become a great mountain filling the whole earth. Daniel 7 saw the Son of man receive "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom" that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. The prophets did not need a modern theologian to rescue them from the embarrassment of plain language. Their kingdom had geography, government, justice, a capital, subjects, enemies, laws, and a King.

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" therefore does not mean that Israel was being offered a trip to heaven when she died. It concerns heaven's authority established over the earth under heaven's appointed King. Daniel 4:26 says, "the heavens do rule," while the same chapter calls God's dominion "an everlasting dominion." Matthew's kingdom announcement concerns the rule of heaven arriving upon the earthly stage. Israel expected Messiah to sit upon David's throne because that was what God had promised. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke in Luke 1 of "an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" and deliverance "from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." Gabriel told Mary that the Lord God would give Jesus "the throne of his father David," that He would reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and that of His kingdom there would be no end. The Holy Ghost did not inspire those words as bait and then switch the throne into a

metaphor. When John announced that the kingdom was at hand, Israel already had centuries of inspired detail identifying what kingdom he meant.

2. John's Cry Was a National Alarm to Israel

Matthew introduces John as the fulfilment of Isaiah 40:3: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Malachi 3:1 had likewise promised a messenger who would prepare the way before the Lord, while Malachi 4:5–6 looked toward Elijah's prophetic ministry before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. John entered the scene as Israel's forerunner, not as a wandering motivational speaker with a self-improvement seminar. His location, clothing, conduct, and message carried prophetic significance. He preached in Judaea, baptized in Jordan, rebuked Israel's religious rulers, and identified the One coming after him. His cry was addressed to a covenant nation whose King was ready to be manifested. God was not opening a vague spiritual conversation with humanity. He was summoning Israel to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah promised in her own Scriptures.

John's command was "Repent ye." Biblical repentance is not psychological self-loathing, religious moodiness, or a theatrical promise to become a better specimen of Adam's ruined stock. Israel needed to change her mind and direction concerning her sin, her covenant unfaithfulness, her religious corruption, and the approaching King. Matthew 3:5–6 says that Jerusalem, all Judaea, and the region round about Jordan went out to John and "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." The baptism was connected with national preparation and confession. Mark 1:4 calls it "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." That language must be left where the Holy Ghost placed it instead of being quietly repackaged as present-day Christian baptism. John's baptism belonged to Israel's preparation for Messiah. It was administered before Calvary, before Christian baptism could picture a believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and before the body of Christ had been revealed. A photograph cannot portray an event that has not happened yet unless somebody has replaced history with imagination.

John's sharpest words were directed toward the Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious professionals who assumed that physical descent from Abraham guaranteed divine approval. "O generation of vipers," he said, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He commanded them, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," and warned them not to say within themselves, "We have Abraham to our father." God could raise up children unto Abraham from stones. The axe was already laid unto the root of the trees, and every tree not bringing forth good fruit would be hewn down and cast into the fire. This was not a soft invitation to enhance their personal spirituality. It was a prophetic

ultimatum to a nation nearing judgment. The King's arrival meant blessing for the repentant and exposure for the pretender. A crown always looks attractive in a stained-glass window; it becomes less popular when the King walks through the door and inspects the building.

3. Jesus Christ Continued the Same Kingdom Announcement

After John was cast into prison, Matthew 4:17 says, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The wording is not accidental. Christ continued the announcement already entrusted to His forerunner because the kingdom remained near in the person of the King. Matthew 4:23 describes Him "preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." The message and miracles belong together. He did not announce that an abstract moral principle had entered the atmosphere. He proclaimed a kingdom and demonstrated the authority of its King. His teaching displayed the righteousness of the kingdom, His miracles displayed its power, and His person fulfilled the promises concerning David's Son. When He said the kingdom was "at hand," He did not mean it had dissolved into an invisible institution unrelated to Israel's prophetic hope. Something can be at hand precisely because it has not yet been established in its completed form.

Christ's early ministry was plainly connected with Israel. Matthew 1:1 identifies Him as "the son of David, the son of Abraham." Matthew 2:2 records the wise men asking, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Matthew 2:6 cites the prophecy that a Governor would come from Bethlehem to rule God's people Israel. At His baptism, anointing, temptation, and public ministry, Jesus stood as Israel's Messiah and rightful King. He entered synagogues, observed the law, attended Jewish feasts, instructed healed lepers to show themselves to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, and confronted the religious rulers occupying Moses' seat. Galatians 4:4 says that He was "made of a woman, made under the law," and Romans 15:8 calls Him "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Those verses are not footnotes to be discarded whenever they inconvenience a sermon outline. They identify the historical and dispensational setting of His earthly ministry.

The gospel of the kingdom announced that the promised reign had drawn near because the promised King was present. It did not yet announce the cross as a completed payment for sin. Christ certainly knew that He would die, and His death stood in God's determinate counsel, but His early public proclamation did not begin with First Corinthians 15:1-4. The people were called to recognize the King, repent, and prepare for His kingdom. Andrew told Simon, "We have found the Messias." Philip told Nathanael, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." Nathanael confessed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." None of them said, "We now understand that He

must be crucified for our sins and rise again the third day.” The central issue placed before Israel was the identity and authority of her King. The nation wanted relief from Rome, bread without labor, miracles without repentance, and a crown without submission. Fallen man has always welcomed a kingdom where he receives the benefits and the King minds His own business.

4. The Miracles Were Credentials of the Coming Kingdom

The signs accompanying Christ’s preaching were not random displays of supernatural power. They corresponded directly to prophetic descriptions of Israel’s restoration and the Messianic kingdom. Isaiah 35:4–6 declared, “Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” When John, imprisoned and facing death, sent disciples to ask whether Jesus was the One who should come, Christ replied in Matthew 11:4–5, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.” Christ pointed to the prophetic credentials. The miracles testified that the One performing the works was the promised Messiah and that kingdom power stood before Israel.

The casting out of devils carried the same kingdom significance. Matthew 12:28 records Christ saying, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” Satan had exercised tyrannical influence over fallen humanity, and the King demonstrated His authority over the powers of darkness. Christ calmed storms, multiplied bread, healed every kind of disease, raised the dead, and commanded unclean spirits because creation, death, disease, and devils all answer to Him. These miracles offered a preview of conditions under the righteous reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom would not be established through parliamentary debate, educational reform, or a collection of interfaith committees drinking coffee around a circular table. It would be established by a King possessing absolute authority over the natural world, the spiritual world, and every rebel inhabiting either one.

The Twelve were given the same credentials when sent to preach the same kingdom message. Matthew 10:7–8 commands them, “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” The message and signs are again joined. Mark 6:12–13 says they preached that men should repent, cast out many devils, and healed the sick. Luke 9:1–2 says Christ gave them “power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases” and sent them “to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” If this commission is the standing pattern for the Church

today, then the signs must accompany it exactly as stated. The fellow who claims Matthew 10 as his commission but sends the sick to a physician, leaves the dead in the cemetery, and avoids the leper colony has selected the parts that look good on a ministry brochure. He carries the command to preach but somehow misplaces the command to raise the dead. When a commission is stolen from another dispensation, its thief usually drops the heavier pieces while running away.

5. The Twelve Were Sent to Israel and Forbidden to Go to the Gentiles

Matthew 10:5–6 states with embarrassing clarity, “These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The order is not ambiguous. The Twelve were forbidden to carry that kingdom mission to the Gentiles and Samaritans because the announcement concerned Israel’s King and Israel’s covenanted kingdom. Their audience matched the message. They were to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, perform its signs, travel according to special instructions, and warn cities in Israel that rejected them. Christ said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for such a city. This was a national visitation carrying national responsibility. God was knocking on Israel’s door with prophets fulfilled, credentials displayed, and the King Himself standing outside.

Christ’s encounter with the Canaanitish woman in Matthew 15 reinforces the same priority. When she cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David,” He answered, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She approached Him under a Davidic title connected with Israel’s covenant and throne, although she stood outside that national relationship. Christ declared, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” The woman did not organize a protest against offensive terminology or accuse the Son of God of insufficient inclusiveness. She took the place assigned to her and answered, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Her faith was rewarded, and her daughter was healed. Grace reached beyond Israel, as it repeatedly had in the Old Testament, but the exception did not erase the order. A crumb falling from Israel’s table was not yet the revelation of Jew and Gentile seated together in one body.

Paul’s later commission stands in marked contrast. The risen Christ told him, “I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” Romans 11:13 says, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles.” Ephesians 3 explains a dispensation of grace involving a mystery previously hidden, “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body.” Under Paul’s gospel there is no command to avoid Gentiles, no confinement to Israel’s cities, and no requirement that the preacher authenticate his message by cleansing lepers or raising corpses. The gospel now goes to every creature

because Israel's national rejection has opened a different dispensational door. Anyone who claims that Matthew 10 and Paul's commission are identical must explain why one says, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles," while the other sends its apostle directly to them. Putting those orders under one heading does not harmonize them. It turns the Commander into a man who cannot remember what He said.

6. The Twelve Preached the Kingdom Before They Understood the Cross

Luke 9:1–6 records Christ sending the Twelve to preach the kingdom of God, heal the sick, and exercise power over devils. They departed through the towns "preaching the gospel, and healing every where." The inspired record therefore establishes that the Twelve preached a gospel during Christ's earthly ministry. Yet later in the same chapter, when Christ said, "The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men," verse 45 states, "But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not." The truth of His coming death was hidden from the very men already preaching a gospel. The doctrinal conclusion is unavoidable: the gospel they preached could not have been the death, burial, and resurrection as later defined by Paul. A man cannot preach as saving content a truth hidden from his understanding. He can repeat words he does not comprehend, but the Twelve were not even announcing those words as the substance of their gospel.

The case becomes still stronger in Luke 18:31–34. Christ took the Twelve and plainly declared that He would be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, spitefully entreated, spitted on, scourged, put to death, and rise again the third day. Then the Holy Ghost supplies a threefold barricade against doctrinal carelessness: "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." They understood none of it. It was hidden from them. They did not know what He meant. Peter's response in Matthew 16 was to rebuke Christ after He began showing His disciples that He must suffer, be killed, and be raised again. Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." The future preacher at Pentecost opposed the idea of the cross when it was first announced to him. That does not make Peter insincere; it proves that he had been preaching a different gospel—the approaching kingdom—whose content did not require understanding Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

Paul's gospel, by contrast, rises or falls upon those very events. First Corinthians 15 says Christ died "for our sins according to the scriptures," was buried, and rose again the third day. Paul continues, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The resurrection is not a decorative appendix to Paul's message. It is essential saving truth. Romans 4:25 says Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." How then can the kingdom gospel preached by men who neither

expected nor understood the cross be identical to the gospel by which sinners are now saved through believing that finished work? It cannot. The only way to make them identical is to treat “gospel” as a magic word that erases every sentence around it. That is not Bible study. That is doctrinal taxidermy—killing the passage, stuffing it with another message, and displaying the corpse as though it were alive.

7. Israel Rejected the King, but the Kingdom Promise Did Not Die

Israel’s leaders did not merely fail to understand Christ; they progressively hardened themselves against the evidence identifying Him. In Matthew 12, after Christ healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, the people asked, “Is not this the son of David?” The Pharisees answered by attributing His work to Beelzebub, the prince of devils. They looked at kingdom credentials performed by the Holy Ghost and labeled them satanic. Christ responded with the warning concerning blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and declared that an evil tree brought forth evil fruit. Matthew 12 marks a decisive national crisis. The religious authorities had heard the preaching, witnessed the signs, and chosen to call the Spirit of God the devil. When men reject light, God is under no obligation to replace it with a brighter bulb. Rebellion does not need more evidence; it needs repentance.

From that point, Christ increasingly taught in parables concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 13:11 records Him telling the disciples, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” The kingdom program would assume a concealed form during the King’s absence because the public establishment of the throne awaited His rejection, departure, and future return. In Matthew 21, Christ entered Jerusalem as the promised King, but the same city soon cried for His crucifixion. He told the chief priests and Pharisees, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” He warned Jerusalem that her house was left desolate and declared that she would not see Him again until she said, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” The King’s rejection postponed the kingdom’s visible establishment, but it did not cancel the oath God made to David. Man’s unbelief can delay his participation in a promise; it cannot bankrupt the Promiser.

After the resurrection, the disciples asked Christ in Acts 1:6, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Christ did not rebuke them for expecting a literal restoration, explain that Israel had become a metaphor, or announce that David’s throne was now a spiritual influence in the Church. He answered, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Their timing was withheld; the nature of the promised restoration was not denied. Israel’s kingdom hope remains because God’s covenants remain. Paul later insists in Romans 11:1, “Hath God

cast away his people? God forbid.” Israel is presently blinded in part “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,” after which “all Israel shall be saved.” The crown refused at the First Advent will be worn at the Second. The crucified “King of the Jews” will return as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,” and this time no committee in Jerusalem will be invited to vote on the matter.

Conclusion

The gospel of the kingdom was the good news that Israel’s promised King and covenanted kingdom had drawn near. It emerged from the promises made to Abraham and David, the visions of the prophets, and the settled purpose of God to place His Son upon a throne governing the nations from Jerusalem. John prepared the way by calling Israel to repentance. Jesus Christ continued the announcement and demonstrated His identity through the precise signs Scripture associated with Messiah and His reign. The Twelve preached the same kingdom message, performed the same credentials, and were sent specifically to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Every feature of the record points in the same direction: the message was national, prophetic, Messianic, and royal. It concerned a King ready to wear His crown, not yet an apostolic explanation of His blood atonement to an undifferentiated world.

The cross was always in God’s purpose, but it was not the understood content of the gospel initially preached by John, Christ, and the Twelve. The inspired text is merciless toward any system pretending otherwise. The Twelve preached “the gospel” in Luke 9, yet failed to understand repeated declarations of Christ’s death and resurrection. Peter opposed the announcement. Luke says the truth was hidden from them. Paul later defines the saving gospel through the very events they did not comprehend: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The gospel of the kingdom announced what was drawing near; Paul’s gospel announces what has been finished. One placed Israel before her King; the other places a guilty sinner before the cross. One carried signs of an approaching reign; the other offers justification through faith in shed blood. Calling them both “gospel” does not make them identical any more than calling both Solomon and Satan “sons of God” would make them the same person. Context is the lock, and right division is the key that keeps a fool from forcing the wrong door.

The kingdom has not vanished. Its King was rejected, crucified, raised from the dead, and received into heaven, but He will return to claim the throne men refused Him. Until then, the sinner is not saved by attempting to reproduce Israel’s kingdom commission. He is saved by believing the gospel of the grace of God: that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again. No leper must be cleansed to certify the message. No corpse must be raised by the preacher. No journey through the cities of Israel must be completed. The

proof rests in an empty tomb and the authority of God's written record. Yet after the Church's course is finished, the prophetic kingdom program will again move to the foreground, and the gospel of the kingdom will be preached before the end comes. The crown that appeared before the cross will return after the cross, and the wounded King will rule with a rod of iron. At His First Advent, men crowned Him with thorns because they would not have Him reign. At His Second Advent, He will wear many crowns—and He will not ask the world's permission.

3 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: The Minister of the Circumcision the Church Keeps Reinventing

Key Passage: Romans 15:8 — “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”

Introduction

Modern religion has manufactured an earthly Jesus Christ who would have been unrecognizable to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, or Paul. This reinvented Christ wanders through first-century Israel preaching directly to twenty-first-century Gentile congregations, conducting Church-age services before the Church's doctrinal position has been revealed, and handing out Pauline salvation tracts several years before He dies on the cross. Israel is quietly removed from the room, Moses is pushed behind a curtain, David's throne is turned into a spiritual metaphor, and every command spoken beneath the law is mailed directly to the body of Christ. Then, after scrambling the setting beyond recognition, the religious craftsman points to his creation and calls it “following Jesus.” He is not following the Jesus Christ revealed in the King James Bible. He is following a wax figure assembled from selected red-letter quotations, sentimental pictures, and denominational traditions. The genuine Lord Jesus Christ came “made of a woman, made under the law,” was sent to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” presented Himself as Israel's Messiah, confirmed promises made to Israel's fathers, and preached a kingdom whose prophetic roots extended through Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets.

Romans 15:8 states the matter so plainly that a man needs theological training to miss it: “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” The circumcision refers to Israel, the covenant people distinguished from the Gentiles by the sign given to Abraham. The fathers are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the patriarchs to whom God had made specific covenants and promises. Christ's earthly ministry confirmed those promises because God is true. He did

not come to explain that God had changed His mind about Israel, transferred David's throne to a Gentile religious corporation, and converted every land promise into a pleasant feeling. He came as "the son of David, the son of Abraham," born King of the Jews, preaching the kingdom of heaven, fulfilling Israel's Scriptures, and demonstrating Israel's promised kingdom powers. The words "minister of the circumcision" do not belittle His ministry. They locate it. A street address does not insult a house; it keeps the mail from being delivered to the wrong occupant.

This distinction is necessary because all Scripture is written for us, but all Scripture is not written directly to us. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," while Second Timothy 3:16 declares, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." A Christian should study every word Christ spoke during His earthly ministry, believe every statement, learn every principle, worship the Speaker, and receive every spiritual lesson the Holy Ghost intends. Yet he must not pretend that every command was doctrinally addressed to the body of Christ. When Christ told a cleansed leper to offer the gift Moses commanded, that instruction was true; it is not the Church's standing procedure for healed lepers. When He told the Twelve not to go to the Gentiles, the command was divine; it is not our present missionary commission. When He warned about fleeing Judaea on the sabbath day, the warning was exact; it concerns a future Jewish setting, not the route from a Sunday service to a restaurant. Right division does not remove Christ's words from the Bible. It removes man's hands from Christ's envelopes.

1. Christ Entered Israel Under the Law, Not the Revealed Church Age

Galatians 4:4–5 provides the inspired location of Christ's earthly ministry: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law." The Son of God entered history through the virgin birth as a Jew of the tribe of Judah, submitted to circumcision on the eighth day, and lived within Israel's covenantal order. Luke 2 records Mary and Joseph bringing Him to Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord" and offering the sacrifice required by the law. He attended Israel's feasts, entered Israel's synagogues, recognized the temple as His Father's house, and kept the law without sin. He did not enter the world as a Gentile pastor carrying an Ephesians commentary. He entered as Israel's Messiah beneath the very law He had given through Moses, fulfilling its demands perfectly before bearing its curse at Calvary.

The historical setting matters because Christ often instructed people according to the law then in force. In Matthew 8, after cleansing a leper, He commanded, "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Leviticus 14 prescribed the priestly examination and offerings

associated with a cleansed leper. Christ did not tell the man that Moses had become irrelevant because grace was already operating in its later Pauline form. He directed him to comply with Mosaic law. In Matthew 23:1–3, Christ said, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do,” while condemning the hypocrisy of leaders who said and did not. No apostle of the body of Christ ever commands a Gentile congregation to submit to men occupying Moses’ seat. Paul asks the Galatians who had bewitched them and warns that anyone seeking justification by the law is fallen from grace. The dispensational line is not drawn by nervous theologians afraid of Jesus. It is drawn by the words of Jesus and His apostles.

This does not mean Christ taught salvation by human merit or that grace was absent from His earthly dealings. John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Christ forgave, healed, restored, and received sinners with divine mercy. Yet grace appearing within the law’s administration is not identical to the later revelation of the dispensation of the grace of God. Noah found grace in Genesis 6, but that does not place him in the body of Christ. God graciously fed Israel with manna, but they remained under Moses. David received mercy, but he prayed, “take not thy holy spirit from me,” a prayer no sealed member of Christ’s body needs to imitate. Grace describes God’s unmerited favor wherever it appears; “the dispensation of the grace of God” identifies a particular revealed stewardship entrusted to Paul. To confuse the two is like finding water in Genesis and concluding that Noah must have been a Baptist. The presence of an element does not establish the identity of the dispensation.

2. The Minister of the Circumcision Confirmed Israel’s Promises

The title “minister of the circumcision” identifies both Christ’s primary earthly audience and the covenantal purpose of His mission. Circumcision began as the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. It marked Abraham’s physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob as a separated covenant people. Paul later uses “the circumcision” as a recognized designation for the Jews, distinguishing them from “the uncircumcision,” or Gentiles. Romans 15:8 therefore does not say merely that Christ happened to conduct ministry in a Jewish neighborhood. It says He served Israel “for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” His coming vindicated God’s faithfulness to covenants reaching back through the nation’s history. Every healed blind man, every cleansed leper, every fulfilled prophecy, and every kingdom announcement testified that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David had remembered His word.

Gabriel’s announcements surrounding Christ’s birth are saturated with this covenant language. He told Mary in Luke 1:32–33, “the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.” Zacharias prophesied that

God had “visited and redeemed his people,” raised up “an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,” and remembered “his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham.” Mary declared that God had helped “his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” None of those Spirit-inspired speakers imagined that Messiah had come to cancel Israel’s identity and give her promises to an institution not yet formed. They expected God to do what He had said. Modern replacement theology considers that expectation primitive because it has spent so long stealing Israel’s mail that the rightful address now looks offensive.

Matthew opens by calling Christ “the son of David, the son of Abraham.” The order is significant: David connects Him with the throne, and Abraham connects Him with the covenant people and worldwide blessing. The wise men asked, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Herod understood their question literally enough to begin murdering children. John the Baptist announced the approaching kingdom. Christ preached the kingdom. The Twelve preached the kingdom. Nathanael confessed, “thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” Bartimaeus cried, “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.” The multitudes shouted, “Hosanna to the son of David.” Even the superscription above the cross declared, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” From the genealogy to Golgotha, the earthly ministry stands inside Israel’s prophetic story. The Church does not honor Christ by erasing the people to whom He came. A Christ detached from Israel is not a more universal Saviour; he is a religious counterfeit missing his biblical identification papers.

3. His Primary Mission Was to the Lost Sheep of Israel

Christ stated His earthly mission in Matthew 15:24: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Those words were spoken during His encounter with a Canaanitish woman who sought deliverance for her demon-possessed daughter. She addressed Him as “O Lord, thou son of David,” but as a Gentile she had no covenantal claim upon Israel’s Davidic King. Christ initially answered her not a word, then declared the limits of His mission and said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” The children were Israel; the bread represented blessings connected with Israel’s Messiah; the dogs represented Gentiles outside those covenants. The woman humbled herself beneath the divine order, saying, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Christ commended her great faith and healed her daughter. Grace reached her, but it reached her as a Gentile acknowledging Israel’s priority, not as a member of the one body where the middle wall of partition had already been abolished.

Matthew 10 places the same limit upon the Twelve: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” They were commissioned to preach, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” while healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and casting out devils. That commission cannot be the Church’s present mission unless the Church is forbidden to evangelize Gentiles. It cannot be Paul’s gospel unless Paul’s direct commission to the Gentiles contradicts Christ’s command. The contradiction disappears when the passages are left in their proper settings. Christ sent twelve Jewish apostles to twelve-tribed Israel with Israel’s kingdom message. Later, the risen Christ sent Paul far hence unto the Gentiles with the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord changed the commission because the historical and dispensational circumstances changed. A military commander may order one unit to defend a bridge and another to advance across it without contradicting himself. Only a poor reader insists that both units received the same orders.

Even Christ’s broader statements must be understood through this Israel-first setting. John 1:11 says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The “world” appears throughout John’s Gospel, and Christ was always destined to become the Saviour of the world, but the historical order remained “to the Jew first.” Simeon described Him as “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Gentile blessing would come through Israel’s Messiah, just as God had promised Abraham. Christ ministered to certain Gentiles, praised the faith of a Roman centurion, traveled through Samaria, and spoke with the woman at the well, but exceptions do not erase the stated direction of His earthly commission. In John 4:22 He told the Samaritan woman, “salvation is of the Jews.” The river of blessing was intended to reach the nations, but the channel ran through Israel. Religion wants the water while dynamiting the channel, then wonders why its doctrine becomes a swamp.

4. His Commands Often Belonged to Israel’s Mosaic and Kingdom Setting

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most admired and most mishandled passages in the New Testament. Christ spoke as the King setting forth the righteousness and constitution of His kingdom. He addressed disciples living beneath the law, surrounded by the temple, altar, Sanhedrin, Jewish courts, and expectations of an earthly inheritance. Matthew 5:5 says, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:23–24 instructs a man bringing his gift to the altar to leave it there, reconcile with his brother, and then return to offer it. Matthew 5:35 identifies Jerusalem as “the city of the great King.” Matthew 5:19 speaks of being called least or great “in the kingdom of heaven” according to one’s relation to the commandments. These words contain tremendous moral and spiritual instruction, but their doctrinal furniture belongs to a Jewish kingdom house. A Gentile

Christian today does not travel to Jerusalem with an animal sacrifice whenever he quarrels with his brother.

Matthew 6 attaches forgiveness to a condition expressed with unmistakable force: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Compare that with Ephesians 4:32, where Paul commands believers to forgive one another “even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” In Matthew, forgiveness is presented in that kingdom context as conditioned upon forgiving others. In Ephesians, the believer forgives because God has already forgiven him for Christ’s sake. One says forgive in order to be forgiven; the other says forgive because you are forgiven. The moral duty of forgiveness appears in both, but the doctrinal basis differs. The religious mixer pours them together and then tells a saved believer that God will revoke forgiveness if he fails to maintain proper feelings toward an offender. That may keep the counseling department busy, but it makes the finished work dependent upon the believer’s emotional bookkeeping.

Other commands reveal the same setting. Christ instructed a rich young ruler concerning the commandments and told him to sell what he had, give to the poor, and follow Him. He told kingdom disciples in Luke 12:33, “Sell that ye have, and give alms.” In Matthew 10 the Twelve were to carry neither gold, silver, brass, scrip, extra coats, shoes, nor staves. In Matthew 24, Christ warned those in Judaea to flee when they saw the abomination of desolation and pray that their flight would not occur “on the sabbath day.” If every red-letter command is a direct standing order to the body of Christ, then consistent believers should liquidate their property, abandon travel provisions, observe sabbath-distance concerns in Judaea, present gifts at a Jewish altar, and obey the Pharisees whenever they sit in Moses’ seat. Almost nobody does this, including the preacher insisting that “we just follow Jesus.” He follows the passages he can spiritualize cheaply and sends the expensive commands to the dispensationalist.

5. His Miracles Displayed the Credentials of Israel’s Messiah

Christ’s miracles were acts of compassion, but they were also inspired signs proving His Messianic identity and displaying the powers of the promised kingdom. Isaiah 35 foretold that when Israel’s God came to save her, the eyes of the blind would be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame would leap, and the tongue of the dumb would sing. When John the Baptist sent disciples asking, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Christ pointed to His works: “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.” He did not merely claim the prophetic office; He supplied the credentials described in Israel’s Scriptures. The signs

were heaven's identification card, showing that the Man from Nazareth was the promised One.

The miracles also previewed the coming kingdom's reversal of the curse. Disease yielded to His word. Devils fled before His authority. Storms became calm. Bread multiplied in His hands. Dead bodies returned to life. These were not merely illustrations for devotional calendars; they were demonstrations that creation's rightful King had entered His realm. Matthew 12:28 says, "if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Satan's kingdom was being confronted by the stronger Man. Christ bound the strong man and spoiled his house, proving His ability to liberate Israel and ultimately the earth from satanic dominion. The kingdom promised by the prophets would not arrive through gradual social improvement. The lion would not become a vegetarian because a government agency printed a brochure. Creation would be restored because its King possessed authority over the curse.

Christ delegated these signs to the Twelve and later to the seventy in connection with the kingdom proclamation. They healed the sick, cast out devils, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead. The signs belonged especially to Israel, for First Corinthians 1:22 says, "the Jews require a sign." God had dealt with Israel through signs from Moses onward. The sign gifts persisted during the Acts transition as the apostolic witness confronted Israel and authenticated the new revelation. Yet Paul's later epistles do not instruct local churches to employ official corpse raisers, leper cleansers, or miracle workers. Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick, advised Timothy concerning his stomach and frequent infirmities, and carried in his own body a thorn God did not remove. The kingdom-healing program was not operating indiscriminately. A man can advertise Matthew 10 miracles on television, but when the cameras are turned off, his private jet generally flies over the cemetery without landing.

6. The New Testament Was Not in Force Throughout Christ's Earthly Ministry

One of religion's most damaging assumptions arises from the printed page separating Malachi from Matthew. Because a title page reads "The New Testament," readers imagine that the New Testament became operative the moment Matthew's genealogy began. But Hebrews 9:16-17 states, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." The New Testament was established by Christ's blood and put into force through His death. At the Last Supper Christ said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Before that blood was shed, the Testator was still alive, Israel remained under the Mosaic covenant, animal sacrifices

continued, priests served at the temple, and Christ instructed people accordingly. A typesetter's page division cannot make Hebrews 9 disappear.

This explains why doctrines and practices present during Christ's earthly ministry cannot automatically be treated as Church-age instructions. The thief on the cross was promised paradise without Christian baptism because the death, burial, and resurrection had not yet occurred as the saving message later entrusted to Paul. The disciples observed Passover because they were Jews under the law; the Church later remembers Christ through the Lord's supper under Pauline instruction. Christ told men to comply with Moses because Moses' law still governed Israel; Paul later teaches that believers are "not under the law, but under grace." Christ spoke of an approaching kingdom because the King was present among Israel; Paul later revealed the body of Christ and its heavenly calling after Israel's rejection. Doctrine must move with revelation and history. A man cannot freeze the Bible at Matthew 5 and then accuse Romans 6 of changing the subject.

Christ Himself anticipated further revelation. In John 16:12 He told the disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." The Spirit of truth would come and guide them into all truth. The statement proves that Christ's earthly teaching, though flawless, did not exhaust everything He intended to reveal. After His resurrection He continued instructing the apostles, opened their understanding concerning the Scriptures, and commissioned them according to the unfolding program. Later He appeared from heaven to Saul of Tarsus and revealed mysteries not made known in other ages. The risen Christ did not become less authoritative when He spoke through Paul. Red letters do not outrank black letters when every word is "given by inspiration of God." The ink color came from publishers; the authority came from the Holy Ghost. A red-letter Bible can be useful, but a red-letter religion usually ends by treating Paul like an intrusive footnote in his own epistles.

7. The Risen Christ Gave the Church Its Doctrine Through Paul

Paul's apostleship originated in a direct encounter with the risen and glorified Jesus Christ. He did not appoint himself, borrow a message from Jerusalem, or earn a position through rabbinical credentials. Acts 9 records Christ stopping him on the Damascus road. Acts 26 states that Christ appeared to make him "a minister and a witness" and promised further appearances. Galatians 1:11-12 declares, "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul's doctrine is therefore Christ's doctrine from heaven. To reject Paul under the pretense of following Jesus is to reject what Jesus chose to reveal after ascending to glory. The same Lord who preached the kingdom to Israel later revealed the gospel of grace and the mystery of the body through His apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul repeatedly identifies his special stewardship. Romans 11:13 calls him “the apostle of the Gentiles.” Acts 20:24 refers to “the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Ephesians 3:2 speaks of “the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward,” while Colossians 1:25 says Paul was made a minister “according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God.” Through Paul the Holy Ghost provides the Church’s clearest doctrine concerning justification, identification with Christ, the one body, the believer’s spiritual circumcision, the sealing of the Spirit, the judgment seat of Christ, and the catching away of the saints. These truths do not contradict Christ’s earthly teaching; they reveal what the risen Christ appointed for a different people under a different stewardship after Israel’s rejection.

This is why Romans through Philemon occupy a governing doctrinal place for the body of Christ. The four Gospels reveal the King, His character, His ministry to Israel, His rejection, His atoning death, and His resurrection. Acts records the transition from Israel’s kingdom opportunity toward the Gentile mission. Hebrews through Revelation address important truths with strong Hebrew, Tribulation, and prophetic settings. Every book is inspired, necessary, and profitable, but Paul’s epistles give the present Church its doctrinal address. A believer who ignores them to build his life entirely from Israel’s kingdom instructions resembles a Florida resident who reads an Alaskan winter manual, purchases a dog sled, and blames the manufacturer when it will not cross the beach. The manual is true. The information is valuable. The problem is the location.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry must be believed exactly as the King James Bible presents it. He came as Israel’s promised Messiah, born under the law, descended from Abraham and David, sent primarily to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and commissioned to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. He preached the gospel of the kingdom, called the covenant nation to repentance, fulfilled the law, displayed Messianic signs, confronted Israel’s corrupt shepherds, and presented Himself as the rightful King. The Jewish setting is not an inconvenience to be removed so Gentile congregations can feel included in every sentence. It is part of the inspired truth. The universal saving reach of Christ’s finished work does not require us to falsify the historical purpose of His ministry before the cross.

Every red-letter word remains true, holy, authoritative, and profitable. The answer to red-letter confusion is not to neglect the Gospels but to study them more carefully. Their commandments reveal God’s righteousness, their miracles reveal Christ’s identity, their confrontations expose religious hypocrisy, their parables unveil kingdom mysteries, and their record leads directly to the cross and empty tomb. Yet those words must be

understood according to their audience and setting. Christ's command to offer a Mosaic sacrifice is not Christian worship. His prohibition against going to Gentiles is not the Church's mission. His warning about flight from Judaea on the sabbath is not Paul's doctrine of the Rapture. A command can reveal divine truth without becoming a direct order to everyone in every dispensation. Wisdom reads the entire Bible; presumption signs its own name on every envelope.

The risen Christ did not leave the Church doctrinally homeless. He called Paul, sent him to the Gentiles, revealed the gospel of grace, and committed to him the doctrine governing Christ's body. Paul's words do not compete with the words of Jesus; they are the words of Jesus delivered through His chosen apostle. The Christ who ministered to the circumcision on earth is the same Christ who spoke from heaven to Paul. Right division honors both ministries by refusing to force either into the other's setting. Modern religion may keep reinventing Jesus as a sandal-wearing Gentile pastor who quotes half the Sermon on the Mount and never reaches Romans, but the Bible will not cooperate. Its Christ is Israel's Messiah, the world's Saviour, the Church's Head, and the coming King. He confirmed the promises made to the fathers, completed redemption at Calvary, and then revealed the believer's present calling from glory. The best way to follow Jesus Christ is not to drag Him into our preferred setting—it is to meet Him where His Book says He is speaking.

4 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: They Preached the Kingdom Without Understanding the Cross

Key Passage: Luke 18:31–34 — “Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.”

Introduction

The Twelve preached a gospel before they understood the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That fact is not hidden in a difficult Greek tense, buried under a disputed manuscript reading, or waiting for a seminary professor to remove three layers of dust. It sits openly in the King James Bible where any reader willing to believe the words can see it. Luke 9 says Christ sent the Twelve to preach the kingdom of God, and verse 6 says they

went through the towns “preaching the gospel.” Later, when Christ plainly announced that He would be delivered, mocked, scourged, killed, and raised the third day, Luke 18:34 erects three barriers against every attempt to pretend the apostles already knew Paul’s gospel: “they understood none of these things,” the saying “was hid from them,” and they did not know “the things which were spoken.” They preached a gospel, but the cross and resurrection were hidden from them. The case should be closed, the lights turned off, and the theological lawyers sent home. Instead, religion keeps appealing the verdict because its system cannot survive the evidence.

The difficulty exists only because men have been trained to believe that the word “gospel” is the name of one unchanging doctrinal package appearing identically in every age. They see the label and assume the ingredients. The gospel preached to Abraham becomes First Corinthians 15. The gospel of the kingdom becomes First Corinthians 15. The everlasting gospel in Revelation becomes First Corinthians 15. Every use of “gospel” is pressed into the same mould even when the passage gives a different audience, message, demand, and expectation. By that method, “the day of the Lord,” “the day of Christ,” and “the last day” must all be identical because they contain the word “day.” The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, and the kingdoms of this world must be identical because they contain the word “kingdom.” A physician and a witch doctor must be the same because both call their mixtures “medicine.” Words have meanings, but context determines their doctrinal content. A label tells you what kind of announcement you are handling; the surrounding words tell you what the announcement actually says.

The kingdom gospel proclaimed before Calvary announced that Israel’s promised King and covenanted kingdom had drawn near. It called Israel to repentance, was carried by Jewish apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and was authenticated by healings, exorcisms, cleansing of lepers, and resurrection of the dead. Paul’s later gospel declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. It rests upon a finished historical work whose saving meaning was revealed after the events occurred. Both messages concern Jesus Christ, both belong to God’s unfolding purpose, and both are good news in their proper setting, but they are not identical. The crown was preached before the Twelve understood the cross. The King was announced before His servants comprehended His sacrifice. God’s program unfolded in stages, and no amount of religious glue can paste later revelation into earlier minds.

1. Luke 9 Identifies the Gospel the Twelve Actually Preached

Luke 9 begins with a formal commission: “Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.” Verse 2 gives the message and accompanying work: “And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and

to heal the sick.” Verse 6 then reports their obedience: “And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.” The passage interprets itself. What did they preach? The kingdom of God. What did Luke call their preaching? “The gospel.” What accompanied it? Supernatural healing and authority over devils. The inspired record never says they went out announcing that Christ would die for their sins, be buried, and rise again. It says they preached the kingdom. The kingdom announcement was the gospel entrusted to them at that stage of revelation.

Matthew 10 supplies additional details. The Twelve were commanded, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.” Their field was restricted: “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Their message was specified: “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Their credentials were likewise specified: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” The audience, proclamation, and signs fit Israel’s prophetic kingdom program. The Twelve announced that the promised kingdom had drawn near because Israel’s King stood among His people. They did not travel through Gentile cities establishing congregations in the doctrinal position later explained in Ephesians. They did not teach that Jew and Gentile had been reconciled in one body because the middle wall of partition was still standing. They did not preach reconciliation through an already shed blood because Calvary had not occurred. The commission belonged to its hour, and its details refuse to move merely because a preacher needs a convenient missions text.

If the Twelve were preaching Paul’s gospel in Luke 9, several impossibilities immediately follow. They would have been preaching Christ’s death before they understood or accepted that He would die. They would have been preaching His resurrection before they understood what rising from the dead meant. They would have been preaching reconciliation to the world while forbidden to enter Gentile territory. They would have been preaching a finished work that was not yet historically finished. They would have been proclaiming justification through shed blood before that blood was shed. Such a system requires apostles who speak a message they do not know about an event they oppose to people they are forbidden to visit. Religion may call that “the continuity of the gospel.” The Bible calls it confusion. God did not send twelve men to preach an unopened mystery while hiding the central facts from all twelve.

2. Their Signs Belonged to the Kingdom They Announced

The supernatural works given to the Twelve were not religious entertainment added to make their meetings more attractive. They were credentials of the kingdom and its King. Isaiah had prophesied that Israel’s God would come and save her, at which time the eyes of the blind would be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame would leap, and the

tongue of the dumb would sing. When John the Baptist sent disciples to ask whether Jesus was the promised One, Christ answered by pointing to those exact works: “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.” The miracles verified that the prophetic kingdom had drawn near. They were advance samples of a coming reign in which the curse would retreat before the authority of the King.

The Twelve were empowered to reproduce those credentials because they carried the King’s proclamation. They healed the sick, cast out devils, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead. Luke 10 records the seventy returning with joy because even the devils were subject unto them through Christ’s name. Christ told them He beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven and gave them power over serpents, scorpions, and “all the power of the enemy.” These were not ordinary Church-age ministry tools promised to every believer who learns the correct formula. They displayed kingdom authority in Israel. First Corinthians 1:22 says, “the Jews require a sign,” and Israel’s history from Moses onward had been marked by divine credentials. When the kingdom was announced to the sign-seeking nation, kingdom signs accompanied it.

Paul’s gospel is authenticated by the inspired record of Christ’s finished work, not by requiring every preacher to reproduce Matthew 10. Paul states in First Corinthians 15 that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and was seen by appointed witnesses. Salvation comes through receiving and believing that gospel. Romans 10 says, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” A sinner does not need to watch a leper cleansed before believing that Christ’s blood justifies the ungodly. He needs to hear and believe God’s record. Apostolic signs continued during the Acts transition, and Paul himself possessed sign gifts authenticating his unique apostleship, but his later ministry shows their decline: Trophimus was left sick, Timothy suffered frequent infirmities, Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death, and Paul’s thorn remained. The travelling healer who claims to possess the Twelve’s commission but never empties a cemetery is carrying a kingdom business card with no kingdom authority behind it.

3. Peter Rebuked the Cross He Supposedly Had Been Preaching

Matthew 16 records Peter’s magnificent confession at Caesarea Philippi: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Christ pronounced him blessed because flesh and blood had not revealed that truth unto him, but the Father in heaven. Peter knew Jesus was the Christ. He knew He was the Son of God. He had preached the kingdom, healed the sick, cast out devils, and followed the Messiah throughout Israel. Yet immediately after this confession, Christ “began” to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and be raised again the third day. The word “began” matters. The

Lord was now introducing information that had not constituted the content of their earlier proclamation.

Peter's reaction destroys the fantasy that he had already been preaching the cross. Matthew 16:22 says, "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Peter did not respond, "Yes, Lord, that is precisely the saving gospel we have been preaching from city to city." He opposed the announcement. He could confess Christ's identity while remaining ignorant of the redemptive necessity of Christ's death. He expected the Messiah to take the kingdom, not be murdered by the nation He came to rule. His thinking was naturally shaped by the crown, throne, restoration, and victory promised in the prophets. The suffering Servant and reigning King belonged to one divine plan, but Peter had not understood how those streams met in one Person through two advents.

Christ rebuked Peter with extraordinary severity: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me." Peter's attempt to preserve the crown by preventing the cross placed him, however unwittingly, in line with Satan's opposition to redemption. Christ then taught the cost of discipleship and spoke of the Son of man coming "in the glory of his Father with his angels." Peter needed correction because his kingdom expectation lacked the necessary path of suffering. That correction does not retroactively place the cross inside the gospel he had already preached. It proves that further revelation was required. The kingdom message was true, but Peter's understanding of the King's path was incomplete. God had not lied to him; God had not told him everything yet. Progressive revelation means later light completes the picture without turning yesterday's faithful witness into tomorrow's fully instructed apostle.

4. Luke 18 Builds a Threefold Wall Against Religious Evasion

As Christ approached Jerusalem, He gave the Twelve an unmistakable description of what awaited Him. He said the prophetic Scriptures concerning the Son of man would be accomplished. He would be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, spitefully entreated, spit upon, scourged, put to death, and raised again the third day. The statement contained rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection in plain order. Christ was not speaking in the veiled language of a parable about seed falling into the ground. He named the participants, treatment, death, and outcome. If the Twelve had already preached First Corinthians 15, they should have recognized the outline immediately.

The Holy Ghost then shuts every escape hatch. Luke 18:34 says first, "they understood none of these things." Not some things—none. Second, "this saying was hid from them." Their ignorance was not merely the result of inattentiveness; the meaning had not yet been

opened to them. Third, “neither knew they the things which were spoken.” They heard the vocabulary without grasping the revealed significance. A man must climb over all three inspired statements before claiming that the Twelve understood and preached the death and resurrection as saving truth. He has to turn “none” into “most,” “hid” into “revealed,” and “neither knew” into “fully understood.” By the time he finishes correcting the passage, the Holy Ghost has been dismissed and tradition occupies His chair.

Mark 9 records the same condition after Christ taught His disciples that He would be killed and rise the third day: “But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.” Mark 10 records another announcement of His death and resurrection, followed by James and John requesting the chief seats in His glory. They heard “scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him,” but their minds moved directly to cabinet positions in the kingdom. Luke 24 shows that even after the crucifixion the disciples spoke in disappointed terms: “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” They saw the cross as the collapse of their kingdom hope because they had not yet understood it as the foundation of redemption. A man does not mourn the failure of an event he has been preaching as God’s saving triumph.

5. Prophecy Contained the Cross Before the Disciples Comprehended It

The Old Testament testified beforehand of Christ’s sufferings. Psalm 22 described pierced hands and feet, enemies surrounding the sufferer, garments divided, and lots cast upon His vesture. Isaiah 53 declared that the Servant would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, led as a lamb to the slaughter, cut off out of the land of the living, and made an offering for sin. Daniel 9:26 foretold that Messiah would be cut off. Zechariah spoke of the Shepherd being smitten and later of Israel looking upon the One whom they pierced. The cross was according to the Scriptures, just as Paul states in First Corinthians 15.

Yet the existence of prophecy is not identical to the comprehension of prophecy. First Peter 1 says the prophets searched diligently to understand “what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify” when testifying beforehand of Christ’s sufferings and the glory that should follow. The prophets recorded words carrying more than they fully understood. Isaiah could accurately describe the suffering Servant while the timing, identity, and full redemptive application awaited later revelation. Acts 8 shows an Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 and asking whether the prophet spoke of himself or another man. He possessed the correct passage after Calvary but still needed Philip to preach Jesus unto him. Printed prophecy does not automatically install revealed understanding in the reader.

The disciples faced an additional obstacle: their expectation of one triumphant Messianic appearance left little room for a rejected Messiah dying before the kingdom's establishment. They knew the promises concerning David's throne, Israel's restoration, the defeat of enemies, and the righteous government of Messiah. They had not yet understood the interval between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. Like men viewing two mountain peaks from a distance, they saw both in prophecy but not the valley separating them. The First Advent brought rejection and sacrifice; the Second will bring conquest and coronation. Christ's resurrection would eventually join the truths together, but before Calvary the disciples could not fit a murdered King into their expectation of an approaching kingdom. Their ignorance was not proof that the prophecies were absent. It was proof that revelation requires God's light, not merely man's eyesight.

6. The Resurrection Opened What Had Previously Been Hidden

After Christ rose, the disciples did not simply announce that events had unfolded exactly as they had always expected. They required direct instruction. Luke 24 records the risen Lord meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were sad and confused, recounting that Jesus had been condemned and crucified while expressing their disappointed hope that He "should have redeemed Israel." Christ rebuked them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, "he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Their hearts burned as He opened the Scriptures. What had been present in prophecy now had to be interpreted in the light of fulfilled events.

Later in the same chapter, Christ appeared to the gathered disciples and showed them His hands and feet. He ate before them, demonstrating bodily resurrection, and reminded them that everything written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms concerning Him had to be fulfilled. Luke 24:45 then says, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Their understanding was opened after the resurrection. That statement would be unnecessary if they had already possessed a complete doctrinal grasp of the cross while preaching through Israel. Christ then explained that it was necessary for Him to suffer, rise the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, "beginning at Jerusalem." Revelation advanced because the decisive events had occurred and the risen Lord supplied their meaning.

John 20 displays Thomas moving from unbelief to confession when confronted with the risen Christ. John 21 shows Peter restored and commissioned after having denied the Lord. Acts 1 records the apostles receiving further instruction for forty days concerning the kingdom of God. Even then, the New Testament program did not emerge all at once in its

completed Pauline form. The apostles initially remained centered in Jerusalem, ministered to Israel, and continued kingdom expectations. Peter's Pentecost sermon charged Israel with crucifying her Messiah and offered repentance in a national and prophetic framework. The calling of Paul and the gradual opening of the Gentile door would move the record toward the full revelation of grace. Resurrection opened the cross to the Twelve, but Paul's later commission would explain the cross with a doctrinal breadth not entrusted to them during the kingdom mission.

7. Paul's Gospel Rests Upon the Cross as a Finished Work

First Corinthians 15:1–4 gives the clearest inspired definition of Paul's gospel: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved." Paul then states the content: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." The gospel announces completed facts and their saving significance. Christ did not merely die; He died "for our sins." He did not merely disappear; He was buried. He did not merely survive in His followers' memories; He rose again bodily on the third day. Paul's message is inseparable from the cross the Twelve initially resisted and the resurrection they did not understand.

Paul received his gospel by revelation from the risen Christ. Galatians 1:11–12 says it was "not after man," for he neither received it of man nor was taught it by man, "but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Acts 20:24 identifies his ministry as testifying "the gospel of the grace of God." Romans 3 explains justification freely by grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus. Romans 4 declares that Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Romans 5 announces peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5 proclaims reconciliation, stating that God made Christ "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The cross is no longer a hidden saying producing confusion among kingdom disciples. It is the blazing center of the message entrusted to the apostle of the Gentiles.

This gospel must not be diluted with conditions stolen from the kingdom commission. A sinner today is not told to wait for Israel's throne, sell all he possesses, take neither purse nor scrip, seek miraculous credentials, or endure through Daniel's seventieth week. He is told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Paul says in Romans 4:5, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The finished work does not need a religious supplement. Christ did not cry, "It is almost finished—please consult your denomination for the remaining requirements." He completed redemption, rose in triumph, and offers justification freely to

the believer. Right division guards that clarity by refusing to mix the crown's announcement with the cross's accomplishment.

Conclusion

The scriptural evidence is exact and cumulative. The Twelve were sent to preach the kingdom of God. Their preaching is explicitly called "the gospel." They carried it to Israel while being forbidden to enter Gentile and Samaritan territory. Their message was accompanied by kingdom credentials: healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, and raising the dead. After they had preached this gospel, Christ began explaining His approaching death and resurrection. Peter rebuked Him. The disciples failed to understand Him. Luke says the truth was hidden from them and that they understood none of those things. No honest reading can turn that kingdom proclamation into Paul's completed gospel without first dismantling the verses that define it.

This does not place the kingdom gospel and Paul's gospel at war with each other. Both belong to the one unfolding purpose of God centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. The promised King had to become the rejected Lamb before returning as the conquering Lion. Israel's crown was presented, the King was refused, and the cross became the place where human rebellion unknowingly fulfilled God's redemptive counsel. The resurrection then opened the Scriptures and transformed apparent defeat into declared victory. What the Twelve did not understand before Calvary became the foundation of apostolic witness after Calvary. Later, Paul received the full saving explanation of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for the present dispensation. Progressive revelation is not contradiction. Sunrise does not contradict the stars; it reveals what the darkness had concealed.

Every preacher should therefore stop treating the word "gospel" as a rubber stamp that makes every passage say the same thing. Ask what good news was announced, to whom it was sent, what revelation had been given, what response was required, and where the passage stands in God's unfolding program. Abraham heard good news concerning promised blessing. Israel heard good news concerning an approaching kingdom. Paul proclaimed good news concerning a finished cross and an empty tomb. A future angel will announce the everlasting gospel during the hour of judgment. The labels are related, but the contents must be read. The Twelve could preach the kingdom while failing to understand the cross because the crown had been revealed before the sacrifice was explained. Today the sacrifice has been completed, the tomb stands empty, and the saving gospel is clear: **Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The crown is coming—but the cross is what saves the sinner now.**

5 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: Peter’s Pentecost Appeal— Israel’s Murder Charge and Kingdom Door

Key Passage: Acts 2:36–38 — “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Introduction

The book of Acts is a bridge, and a bridge is a dangerous place to build a permanent house. It begins with Jewish apostles in Jerusalem asking about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and it ends with Paul in Rome proclaiming that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. It opens with the Twelve, the temple, Jewish feast days, signs, tongues, communal property, and an appeal to “all the house of Israel.” It closes with the apostle of the Gentiles preaching from a rented house while Israel’s national blindness is judicially pronounced. Between those points the record moves through conversion, confrontation, rejection, revelation, and dispensational change. Acts is inspired history, but it is inspired history in motion. The reader who stops the movement at Acts 2, removes Peter’s audience, and turns every transitional command into permanent Church doctrine is like a man who pitches a tent on a railway track and complains that the Bible keeps running over him.

Peter’s sermon at Pentecost was not a modern invitation addressed indiscriminately to every sinner in the world. It was a Spirit-filled indictment delivered in Jerusalem during a Jewish feast to “Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.” Peter addressed them as “Ye men of Judaea,” “ye men of Israel,” “Men and brethren,” and finally “all the house of Israel.” He proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth had been approved among them by miracles, wonders, and signs; that they had taken Him and by wicked hands crucified and slain Him; and that God had raised Him from the dead. The sermon drove Israel’s murder charge into the conscience of its hearers. When they cried, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter answered according to the kingdom and apostolic program then operating: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” The command meant exactly what Peter said, but Peter did not say it to a Gentile congregation studying Romans thirty years later.

Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19–21 are regularly detached from their national and prophetic setting, polished smooth, and used to cut the throat of salvation by grace through faith.

One group makes water baptism part of the present gospel. Another turns the Holy Ghost into a second blessing obtained by following Pentecostal steps. Another imagines that the Church should reproduce Jerusalem's signs, languages, communal property, temple attendance, and apostolic wonders—although it usually keeps its checking account and leaves the cemetery undisturbed. The trouble disappears when the passages are read in order. Peter was using kingdom keys among Israel. The promised Holy Ghost had been poured out. The nation was being confronted with its risen Messiah. Repentance opened the possibility of “the times of refreshing” and the return of Jesus Christ. Pentecost was not Paul standing in Jerusalem preaching First Corinthians 15 under another name. It was Peter standing before Israel with a murder charge in one hand and a kingdom door still open in the other.

1. Acts Records a Transition, Not a Frozen Doctrinal Moment

Acts 1 establishes the continuing kingdom setting before Pentecost ever arrives. The risen Christ spent forty days speaking to the apostles “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Their final recorded question before His ascension was, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Christ did not rebuke them for believing in a literal restoration, announce that Israel had been permanently replaced, or explain that David's throne had become a metaphor for the Church. He answered, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” The timing was withheld; the promised restoration was not denied. The apostles still expected God to fulfil His covenants with Israel because forty days of instruction from the risen Christ had not taught them to become replacement theologians.

The Twelve then returned to Jerusalem, where Peter led the selection of Matthias to fill Judas's place. Peter cited the Psalms and insisted that another take Judas's “bishoprick.” The number twelve mattered because Christ had promised the apostles that they would sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul was not God's replacement for Judas. Paul belonged to a different apostleship with a different commission, while Matthias restored the kingdom number before Pentecost. Everything in the opening chapter points toward Israel: Jerusalem, the Twelve, Davidic prophecy, the kingdom question, and the expectation of national restoration. The body of Christ as one new man composed of Jew and Gentile had not yet become the subject of their public preaching.

As Acts proceeds, conditions change. The gospel reaches Samaria in Acts 8. An Ethiopian eunuch receives the word. Saul is confronted and called in Acts 9. Gentiles receive the Holy Ghost in Acts 10. Jerusalem debates Gentile obligations in Acts 15. Paul's ministry increasingly dominates the narrative until the Twelve nearly disappear from view. God did not change because He discovered an unforeseen problem; He changed His

administration according to His foreknown purpose and Israel's developing rejection. Acts shows the transition occurring historically. A reader must therefore distinguish between description and prescription, between an event recorded during the transition and doctrine later established for the body of Christ. The book of Acts tells us how God crossed the bridge. Paul's epistles tell us where the Church stands after He crossed it.

2. Pentecost's Audience Was Israel Gathered at a Jewish Feast

Pentecost was not invented in Acts 2. It was an Israelite feast prescribed in Leviticus 23 and connected with the firstfruits of harvest. Deuteronomy 16 required Israel's males to appear before the Lord at the feast of weeks. When Acts 2 says devout Jews from every nation were dwelling at Jerusalem, it describes Israelites and Jewish proselytes gathered in obedience to the feast calendar. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Crete, and Arabians heard the apostles speak in their native languages. These were not representatives of modern Gentile denominations attending an international prophecy conference. They were Jewish worshippers and proselytes assembled in Israel's capital on an appointed Jewish feast.

The tongues in Acts 2 were recognizable human languages, not ecstatic syllables produced after the music reached a suitable volume. The crowd said, "how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" They heard "the wonderful works of God" in known languages. The sign addressed Israel, for First Corinthians 1:22 says, "the Jews require a sign," and First Corinthians 14:21–22 connects tongues with Isaiah's warning to "this people." God had repeatedly used signs to authenticate His messengers before Israel. At Pentecost, the supernatural languages demonstrated that the promised Spirit had been poured out and that Israel stood at another decisive point in her dealings with God. The sign was intelligible, prophetic, and judicial—not a spiritual ventriloquist act conducted for religious amusement.

Peter's sermon never loses sight of that audience. "Ye men of Judaea," he begins. Then, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words." He speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you." He says, "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." He invokes David, Israel's king and prophet, and concludes, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly." Even the promise in Acts 2:39 is expressed through Israel's covenantal pattern: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." Peter was not erasing Israel's position; he was summoning Israel to respond to her risen Messiah. A sermon's pronouns are not ornamental. When the Holy Ghost repeats "ye," "you," and "all the house of Israel," a Gentile two thousand years later should hesitate before replacing every pronoun with his own name.

3. Peter Charged Israel With the Murder of Her Messiah

Peter began his explanation by rejecting the accusation that the apostles were drunk. He cited Joel's prophecy concerning the last days: God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; sons and daughters would prophesy; young men would see visions; old men would dream dreams; and wonders would appear in heaven and signs in the earth before "that great and notable day of the Lord." Peter did not quote Joel to reveal the mystery of the body of Christ. Joel contains no revelation of Jew and Gentile baptized into one body and seated together in heavenly places. Peter cited an Israelite prophet concerning Israel's last-days expectation. Pentecost bore a relationship to those promised events, although Joel's entire prophecy was not exhausted that morning. There was no blood, fire, vapour of smoke, darkened sun, or moon turned to blood in Acts 2.

Peter then placed Jesus of Nazareth before Israel as the Man God had publicly authenticated "by miracles and wonders and signs." Those works had occurred "in the midst of you," and Peter added, "as ye yourselves also know." Israel could not plead lack of evidence. The blind had seen, the deaf had heard, lepers had been cleansed, devils had been expelled, and the dead had been raised. Lazarus had walked from a tomb near Jerusalem, and Israel's rulers responded by discussing how to kill both him and Christ. The nation had not rejected Jesus because the credentials were insufficient. It rejected Him because the credentials threatened the authority of men who preferred Moses' seat without Moses' God. Religious officeholders can forgive almost any miracle except one that proves they are unnecessary.

The murder charge follows: Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," yet Peter told Israel, "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Divine foreknowledge did not excuse human guilt. The cross fulfilled God's redemptive plan, but those who demanded Christ's death acted wickedly. God raised Him because death could not hold Him. David had prophesied that the Holy One would not see corruption, and Peter argued that David's sepulchre remained among them; therefore, David spoke of Christ's resurrection. The crucified Jesus was alive, exalted, and made both Lord and Christ. Israel had murdered the King whom God enthroned at His own right hand. Pentecost was not a gentle altar call asking whether the audience might consider adding Jesus to an already successful life. It was a courtroom, and Peter had just placed the bloody evidence before the defendants.

4. "What Shall We Do?" Was Israel's Response to Israel's Indictment

Acts 2:37 says the hearers "were pricked in their heart." They did not ask, "What must I do to be saved?" as the Philippian jailer later asked Paul and Silas. They said to Peter and the

other apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Their question followed a collective accusation against “all the house of Israel.” They had learned that the Jesus rejected by their nation was alive and exalted as Lord and Christ. They stood under the shadow of national guilt and prophetic judgment, asking what response God required. Peter’s answer must be interpreted according to that question, audience, and moment rather than imported into a later Gentile setting as though Acts had no forward movement.

Peter replied, “Repent.” Israel needed to reverse her verdict concerning Jesus Christ. The nation had called Him a blasphemer, deceiver, Sabbath breaker, Samaritan, devil-possessed man, and false king worthy of death. God had overturned that verdict by raising Him from the dead. Repentance meant acknowledging that the crucified Jesus was indeed Lord and Christ. This was not vague sorrow over human imperfection. It was a direct reversal concerning the identity of Israel’s Messiah and the nation’s crime against Him. John the Baptist had called Israel to repentance before the kingdom presentation. Christ had issued the same call. Now Peter called Israel to repent after the crucifixion and resurrection had vindicated the King she rejected.

Peter continued, “and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Water baptism publicly identified the repentant Israelite with the Messiah whom the nation had rejected. John’s earlier baptism had prepared Israel for Messiah’s manifestation, but now baptism was administered in the name of the rejected and risen Jesus Christ. The command was not an optional ceremony added later for anyone interested in church membership. In that apostolic kingdom setting, Peter attached baptism to remission exactly as the verse reads. Men who alter “for” to mean “because of,” insert invisible punctuation, or pretend water is absent are not defending grace; they are editing Peter. The correct answer is not to rewrite Acts 2:38. It is to stop pretending Peter’s command to convicted Israelites at Pentecost is Paul’s gospel to the uncircumcision.

5. Acts 2:38 Is Not Paul’s Formula for Present Salvation

The difference becomes unmistakable when Acts 2 is compared with later passages. Peter told his Pentecost hearers to repent and be baptized, after which they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 8, believing Samaritans were baptized but did not receive the Holy Ghost until Peter and John came from Jerusalem and laid hands upon them. In Acts 10, Cornelius and the Gentiles heard Peter preach, believed, and received the Holy Ghost before they were baptized in water. In Acts 19, certain disciples who knew only John’s baptism were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and received the Holy Ghost when Paul laid hands upon them. The order varies because Acts records a transition and because God used apostolic authority to govern the opening of new doors. Anyone using

Acts alone to construct one unchanging sacramental formula will need several formulas before reaching chapter 19.

Paul's answer to the Philippian jailer is strikingly different from Peter's Pentecost command. When the jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." They did not say, "Repent, be baptized for remission, wait for an apostle to lay hands upon you, and then receive the Holy Ghost." Paul later writes in Ephesians 1:13 that after hearing the word of truth, "the gospel of your salvation," and believing in Christ, the Ephesians "were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." Galatians 3:2 asks, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" The present believer receives the Spirit by faith, not through a sequence of water, hands, signs, or national repentance.

First Corinthians 1:17 delivers another blow to baptismal salvation: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." If water baptism were an inseparable part of Paul's saving gospel, Christ could not have sent Paul to preach that gospel while not sending him to baptize. Paul thanked God that he had baptized only a few Corinthians because factions had formed around personalities. No apostle could thank God for performing only a few acts essential to salvation. Paul defines his gospel in First Corinthians 15 through Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection. Water baptism is an important ordinance of obedience and public identification for believers, but it is not part of the finished payment for sin. Water can wash dirt from the flesh; only Christ's blood can clear the record in heaven. The baptistry has its place, but Calvary does not share its saving glory with the plumbing.

6. Acts 3 Kept the Kingdom Door Open to Israel

Peter's next recorded sermon strengthens the national and kingdom character of his ministry. After healing a lame man at the temple's Beautiful gate, Peter addressed the crowd as "Ye men of Israel." He invoked "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers," saying that this God had glorified His Son Jesus. Again he brought the accusation: "ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate," "ye denied the Holy One and the Just," desired a murderer, and "killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead." The miracle supplied another sign to Israel, and Peter used it to confront the nation with the risen Messiah.

Yet Peter acknowledged that the people and their rulers had acted "through ignorance." This did not make them innocent, but it provided a basis for divine mercy. God had fulfilled what the prophets foretold concerning Christ's sufferings. Peter therefore commanded, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The appeal

again addressed Israel corporately in a prophetic context. Her crime had fulfilled the suffering side of Messianic prophecy, but the glory of the kingdom remained available through repentance. Peter was not announcing that every covenant had been cancelled at Calvary. He was showing Israel that the rejected Christ remained her promised Messiah and that God's prophetic program could yet move toward restoration.

Acts 3:19–21 then states the kingdom prospect: “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.” Heaven had received Christ “until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” The prophets had spoken of Israel's restoration, David's throne, Jerusalem's exaltation, the judgment of nations, the healing of creation, and Messiah's worldwide reign. Peter connected Israel's repentance with those promised times and the sending of Jesus Christ from heaven. That is a kingdom door standing open. It is not the Rapture of the body of Christ, which was a mystery later revealed through Paul. Peter was offering Israel the return of her King in fulfilment of prophecy. The passage is so Jewish that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, and all the prophets march through it, yet modern religion hangs a Gentile Church sign over the entrance and hopes nobody reads the names.

7. Israel's Rejection Prepared the Way for Paul's Gentile Ministry

Israel did not respond nationally to Peter's appeal. Thousands of individual Jews believed, and a faithful remnant formed in Jerusalem, but the nation's rulers hardened themselves. Acts 4 records the priests, captain of the temple, and Sadducees arresting Peter and John. Acts 5 shows the council filled with indignation and plotting against the apostles. Acts 6–7 brings Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, before the council. His speech recounts Israel's repeated history of resisting God's messengers and concludes, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” As their fathers had done, so did they. The charge reached the centre of Israel's leadership, and the response was not repentance but murder.

Stephen saw heaven opened and “the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Psalm 110 had said, “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Christ's standing carried the fearful possibility of judgment as Israel repeated her rejection—first of the Father through the prophets, then of the Son during His earthly ministry, and now of the Holy Ghost's witness through the apostles. The council stopped their ears, ran upon Stephen, cast him out of the city, and stoned him. Their garments were laid at the feet of a young man named Saul. Israel slammed the kingdom door against herself, and the Holy Ghost placed the future apostle of the Gentiles beside the scene. One

chapter closes with Jerusalem stoning God's witness; two chapters later heaven stops Saul and reveals another ministry.

Paul's calling marks the great shift that increasingly governs Acts. Christ declared that Saul was a chosen vessel to bear His name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Acts 13 records Paul turning to the Gentiles after Jewish contradiction and blasphemy. Acts 18 repeats the pattern. Acts 28 concludes with Paul citing Isaiah's judicial-blindness prophecy against Israel's leaders and declaring, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." The movement is unmistakable: Jerusalem gives way to the uttermost parts of the earth; Peter gives way to Paul; Israel's kingdom appeal gives way to the gospel of grace among the Gentiles. Acts is not confused. It records men resisting each stage of revelation while God advances His purpose in spite of them.

Conclusion

Peter's Pentecost sermon must be allowed to remain what the Holy Ghost made it: a national confrontation addressed to Israel concerning her rejected and risen Messiah. Its setting was Jerusalem during a Jewish feast. Its audience consisted of Jews and proselytes. Its sign was supernatural speech in recognizable languages. Its Scriptures came from Joel, David, and Israel's prophetic promises. Its accusation charged Israel with crucifying Jesus of Nazareth. Its conclusion addressed "all the house of Israel," and its command answered convicted Israelites asking what they should do in light of that national crime. Removing those facts from Acts 2 is not interpretation. It is spiritual identity theft.

Acts 2:38 means what it says in the setting where Peter said it. The answer is not to shave the verse until it fits a modern denominational creed. Peter commanded repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, promising the gift of the Holy Ghost. That order belonged to the apostolic kingdom transition and cannot be imposed upon the body of Christ as Paul's saving gospel. Later in Acts, the sequence changes as Samaritans, Gentiles, and others enter through divinely governed stages. Paul ultimately declares justification by faith apart from works, reception of the Spirit through believing, and a gospel from which baptism can be distinguished. God did not contradict Himself. The program moved, and the Book recorded the movement. A moving ambulance appears inconsistent only to the man demanding that it remain parked at the first address.

Acts 3 shows that Peter's appeal looked toward Israel's kingdom restoration. National repentance would lead toward the times of refreshing, the return of Jesus Christ, and the restitution spoken by the prophets. Israel's rulers refused, resisted the Holy Ghost, and murdered Stephen. The record then turns toward Paul and the Gentile mission, where the

risen Christ reveals the gospel of grace in its full doctrinal clarity. The sinner today is not standing in Jerusalem beneath Israel's murder charge asking the Twelve what the nation must do. He stands guilty before God and is commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for his sins, was buried, and rose again. Peter's kingdom door was genuinely opened to Israel; Paul's gospel now opens salvation freely to the ungodly who believes. The man who reads the addresses finds harmony. The man who tears them off manufactures contradictions—and then charges God with losing the mail.

6 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: When Grace Walked Through the Door Religion Had Barricaded

Key Passage: Acts 20:24 — “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Introduction

Religion has always been in the barricade business. Give fallen man a clear doorway into the presence of God, and before sundown he will have erected a tollbooth, appointed a committee, printed a rulebook, and begun charging admission. God says believe; religion says perform. God provides righteousness; religion rents out costumes. God offers peace through the blood of the cross; religion hands the sinner a shovel and points toward a mountain of ordinances. By the opening of Acts, Israel's religious rulers had rejected their Messiah, crucified the Prince of life, resisted the witness of the Holy Ghost, and murdered Stephen while a young Pharisee guarded the coats. That Pharisee was Saul of Tarsus, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” If salvation had been awarded according to religious pedigree, Saul would have entered at the head of the procession. If it had been awarded according to guilt, he would have stood nearest hell's door. Instead, grace met him on the Damascus road and turned the chief persecutor into the apostle of the Gentiles.

Paul's calling was not a minor administrative adjustment inside the Jerusalem ministry. The risen and glorified Christ appeared from heaven, arrested His enemy without help from a priest, council, ordinance, or apostolic election, and appointed him to a ministry that would unfold through repeated revelations. Paul later testified that his gospel was “not after man,” for he neither received it of man nor was taught it by man, “but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” He did not borrow his apostleship from the Twelve, inherit their kingdom commission, or receive a certificate from Jerusalem authorizing him to preach. The Lord

Jesus Christ Himself sent him “far hence unto the Gentiles.” Through Paul, the gospel of the grace of God emerged in full doctrinal clarity: justification without the deeds of the law, redemption through Christ’s blood, reconciliation to God, spiritual baptism into Christ, the formation of one body, and a heavenly standing shared by believing Jews and Gentiles.

Grace was not born with Paul, for God had always dealt graciously with fallen men. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Israel received manna it had not earned. David obtained mercy after committing sins for which Moses’ law offered no sacrifice. But “the dispensation of the grace of God” was a particular stewardship given to Paul for the Gentiles, just as Ephesians 3:2 declares. The difference between grace appearing throughout Scripture and the dispensation of grace is the difference between rain falling in scattered showers and a river being opened to the nations. Through Paul, God explained the cross from heaven’s side, unveiled the mystery of Christ’s body, and placed the Church’s doctrine in Romans through Philemon. Religion has spent centuries trying to rebuild the barricade by dragging believers beneath Israel’s law, baptismal conditions, priesthood, sabbaths, signs, covenants, and Tribulation warnings. Yet grace walked through the door once, and no ecclesiastical carpenter can nail it shut again.

1. Grace Chose Its Apostle From Religion’s Most Decorated Enemy

Saul of Tarsus did not begin his journey toward Christ as a sincere seeker attending an introductory Bible class. He began as a violent enemy of Christ and His people. Acts 8 says he consented unto Stephen’s death and made havoc of the church, entering every house and dragging men and women to prison. Acts 9 finds him carrying letters from the high priest authorizing further arrests in Damascus. He possessed zeal, education, Hebrew lineage, Pharisaical discipline, and official religious authority. Philippians 3 lists the medals hanging upon his old nature: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, touching the law a Pharisee, and concerning zeal persecuting the church. Saul was what organized religion produces when it reaches full maturity: a man certain he serves God while attacking everyone who actually belongs to Him.

The risen Christ stopped him with light from heaven and the question, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Saul was persecuting believers on earth, but Christ identified their suffering with Himself in heaven. The question contains the seed of the body truth Paul would later explain: to touch Christ’s members is to touch Christ. Saul answered, “Who art thou, Lord?” and heard the devastating reply, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” In one sentence, Saul’s theology collapsed. The Jesus he considered a dead impostor was alive, glorified, and speaking from heaven. The men Saul hunted were joined to the very Lord Saul

claimed to serve. Grace did not negotiate with his résumé; it knocked him to the ground and introduced him to reality.

Paul never forgot the character of that mercy. First Timothy 1:13–16 calls him one who “was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,” yet obtained mercy because he acted ignorantly in unbelief. He declares, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Paul did not call himself the chief sinner because he won a private contest in depravity. His persecution was directed against Christ’s emerging body, making him the outstanding enemy of the very truth he would later proclaim. Yet he obtained mercy so that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth “all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” God took the adversary at the head of religion’s armed column and made him a pattern of grace. When God wanted to display the power of works, He gave Moses tables of stone. When He wanted to display the exceeding abundance of grace, He saved the man helping religion throw stones.

2. Paul Received His Commission From the Risen Christ

Paul’s apostleship rested upon a heavenly appearance and a direct commission. Acts 26 records Christ telling him, “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.” The wording anticipates further revelations. Paul’s understanding did not arrive as one undivided packet on the Damascus road; the Lord would appear and disclose truth as his ministry unfolded. Christ promised to deliver him from the Jews and Gentiles, unto whom He now sent him, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Paul’s commission originated above Jerusalem’s religious headquarters. Heaven had opened a mission the council could neither authorize nor cancel.

Galatians 1 guards this truth with a drawn sword. Paul says his gospel was not after man, received from man, or taught by man. After his conversion, he “conferred not with flesh and blood,” nor did he immediately go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him. He went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Only after three years did he visit Peter, remaining with him fifteen days. A two-week conversation three years after the calling cannot account for the gospel Paul insists he received by revelation. He later went to Jerusalem “by revelation” and communicated the gospel he preached among the Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders perceived the grace given to him and recognized that “the gospel of the uncircumcision” had been committed unto Paul as “the gospel of the circumcision” was unto Peter. The right hands of fellowship acknowledged distinct spheres and stewardships; they did not install Paul as Peter’s assistant.

Paul defended his apostleship because attacks against the messenger were designed to weaken the message. He begins Romans by calling himself “a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” First Corinthians opens with “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God.” Galatians begins, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ).” He was not one of the Twelve and never claimed their throne over Israel’s tribes. He was an apostle “born out of due time,” a chosen vessel entrusted with a ministry to Gentiles, kings, and Israel. Religion resents that arrangement because it would rather trace authority through human hands, institutional succession, and ceremonial chains. Paul’s authority dropped from heaven without passing through the correct office downstairs, and the gatekeepers have never forgiven grace for entering without an appointment.

3. Paul Proclaimed Justification Apart From the Works of the Law

The gospel of grace declares that a guilty sinner can be justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3 first shuts every human mouth. Jews possessed the law, Gentiles possessed conscience, and both had failed. “There is none righteous, no, not one.” “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The law could not justify because “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” It functioned like a mirror exposing the filth, not a basin capable of washing it away. A mirror may accurately show mud on a man’s face, but only a theologian would grind the glass into powder and prescribe it as soap. The law diagnoses the sinner; it does not cure him.

Romans 3:21 then announces the great turn: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.” This righteousness is “by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” The sinner is “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” God set Christ forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, allowing God to remain just while becoming “the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Grace does not ask God to ignore sin. It announces that Christ has satisfied God’s holiness through His blood. The cross did not persuade God to lower His standard; it met the standard completely. Salvation is free to the sinner because it cost the Son of God everything.

Romans 4 removes works even from the accounting room. “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” If a man earns salvation, God owes him wages, and grace disappears. Paul continues, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Religion hears “worketh not” and immediately reaches for a bucket of water, a membership form, a sacramental schedule, or a list of commandments. Grace takes the bucket away and points to Christ. Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his

mercy he saved us.” Ephesians 2:8–9 says salvation is “by grace” through faith, “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Heaven excludes boasting because Calvary has left man nothing to brag about except the Saviour.

4. The Blood of the Cross Reconciled the Guilty to God

Paul’s gospel does more than cancel a debt; it reconciles an enemy. Romans 5 says, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” Fallen man is not spiritually neutral, slightly confused, or merely searching for the right religious vocabulary. His carnal mind is enmity against God. His sins separate him from God, his nature bends away from righteousness, and his best works cannot repair the breach. Religion attempts to reconcile God to man by improving man’s behaviour. The gospel announces that God has acted through Christ to reconcile man to Himself. The direction matters. God is not the wandering party who needs to find His way home.

Second Corinthians 5 presents the ministry and word of reconciliation. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Paul and his fellow labourers stood as ambassadors for Christ, beseeching sinners, “be ye reconciled to God.” The foundation appears in verse 21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Christ knew no sin, yet God treated Him at Calvary according to the sinner’s guilt. The believing sinner possessed no righteousness, yet God treats him according to Christ’s righteousness. That is not moral improvement. It is a divine exchange no sacrament can imitate and no priest can administer.

Colossians 1 says God made peace “through the blood of his cross” and reconciled believers “in the body of his flesh through death.” Ephesians 1 declares redemption “through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Romans 5 says believers are “justified by his blood” and saved from wrath through Him. The blood is not religious symbolism, theological decoration, or a primitive expression modern scholarship must clean up. God’s life is in the blood, sin earns death, and Christ poured out His spotless life as the substitutionary payment. Religion keeps offering God water, wafers, incense, candles, vows, pilgrimages, and improved behaviour. God points to the blood. Men build elaborate altars because they cannot bear the simplicity of a cross upon which somebody else finished the work.

5. Paul Unveiled One New Man in One Body

Before Paul’s ministry, Scripture maintained a sharp covenantal distinction between Israel and the Gentiles. Ephesians 2 describes Gentiles as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.” They were without Christ, without

hope, and without God in the world. Christ's earthly ministry confirmed promises made to Israel's fathers, and the Twelve were initially forbidden to go to Gentile and Samaritan cities. Yet through the blood of Christ, those who were far off were made nigh. Christ broke down "the middle wall of partition" and abolished in His flesh the enmity, "for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

The one new man is not Israel improved, Gentiles naturalized into Israel, or a Gentile institution wearing Israel's stolen garments. It is a new creation in which saved Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God "in one body by the cross." First Corinthians 12:13 explains the divine operation: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." This is not water baptism performed by a minister. The baptizer is the Spirit, the element into which believers are placed is one body, and the result is spiritual union with Christ. Galatians 3:27-28 likewise declares that those baptized into Christ have put on Christ, so that in this body there is neither Jew nor Greek regarding standing and inheritance.

Ephesians 3 calls this truth "the mystery of Christ," which in other ages "was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Paul then identifies its content: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." God had always promised to bless Gentiles through Abraham and Israel. That was not a mystery; it had been proclaimed since Genesis. The mystery was that believing Jews and Gentiles would become members of the same spiritual body, possessing a heavenly position apart from Gentile conversion to Israel. Prophecy had announced Gentiles blessed under Israel's restored kingdom. The mystery revealed Gentiles joined with believing Jews in one body during Israel's national fall. The difference is as plain as the difference between guests invited to a royal banquet and members joined to the King's own body.

6. Romans Through Philemon Give the Church Its Governing Doctrine

All Scripture is inspired and profitable, but Paul's epistles provide the doctrinal address of the body of Christ. Romans lays the foundation: universal guilt, justification, identification with Christ, freedom from the law, life in the Spirit, Israel's dispensational position, and practical Christian service. First Corinthians corrects a local church regarding division, carnality, marriage, liberty, spiritual gifts, the Lord's supper, resurrection, and giving. Second Corinthians explains ministry through suffering, Christian generosity, reconciliation, and apostolic authority. Galatians defends grace against law. Ephesians reveals the believer's heavenly position and the one body. Philippians displays Christian experience and the mind of Christ. Colossians proclaims Christ's preeminence and the believer's completeness in Him.

The Thessalonian epistles explain the believer's hope, including the catching away of the saints and the day of the Lord. The pastoral epistles instruct local church leadership, sound doctrine, godliness, discipline, and ministry. Philemon turns the doctrine of grace into a living appeal concerning a runaway servant received as a brother. Together, Romans through Philemon form a complete governing body of Church doctrine. They explain how the sinner is saved, where the believer stands, how the Church functions, what the Christian awaits, and how grace should govern conduct. A believer who neglects these books will inevitably wander into somebody else's covenant, somebody else's baptism, somebody else's sabbath, or somebody else's Tribulation.

This does not make the rest of Scripture unimportant. Genesis explains creation, the fall, and God's foundational covenants. The law reveals God's holiness and Israel's history. The Psalms supply worship, prophecy, suffering, and royal expectation. The prophets unveil Israel's judgment and restoration. The Gospels reveal the King, His earthly ministry, rejection, sacrifice, and resurrection. Acts records the transition. Hebrews through Revelation contain indispensable truth with strong Hebrew, Tribulation, kingdom, and prophetic applications. Every book is for our learning, but Paul's epistles are addressed doctrinally to the present Church. A man may learn valuable survival lessons from Noah's ark, but that does not authorize him to begin cutting gopher wood. Wisdom learns from every passage; presumption obeys every command without checking the address.

7. Religion Rebuilds the Barricade by Mixing Israel With the Church

The Galatian churches provide the inspired example of grace being barricaded after it has been received. Paul marvelled that they were "so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." False teachers did not deny Christ outright. They added circumcision and law observance to faith in Christ. Their message sounded biblical because circumcision and Moses were biblical. That is what makes doctrinal poison effective: it arrives in a bottle carrying a Bible verse. Paul did not call their mixture a harmless difference of emphasis. He pronounced a curse upon anyone preaching another gospel and asked, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?"

Paul warned that accepting circumcision as a requirement placed a man under obligation to keep the whole law. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." Grace and legal merit cannot cooperate in salvation because each excludes the other. Romans 11:6 says, "if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." Add one human work as a requirement for justification, and the system's principle changes. A single drop of poison changes a glass of water; calling the remaining liquid "mostly water" does not make it safe. Religion likes to say faith in Christ is essential, then adds baptism, sacraments, church membership, sabbath keeping,

endurance, confession schedules, dietary laws, or final perseverance as co-requirements. It keeps Christ's name on the label while replacing grace with an installment plan.

Confusing Israel with the Church supplies religion with most of its building materials. Israel had a national covenant, earthly land, temple, altar, priesthood, sabbaths, dietary restrictions, ceremonial washings, signs, and kingdom conditions. The body of Christ has a heavenly calling, spiritual union with Christ, access through one Spirit, and justification apart from law. When those programs are mixed, the preacher becomes a priest, the church building becomes a temple, an altar reappears at the front, water becomes a saving instrument, Israel's sabbath becomes a Gentile obligation, and kingdom endurance becomes a threat against eternal security. Soon grace is standing outside while Moses collects admission beneath a Christian sign. Right division tears down that barricade by putting Israel's ordinances back in Israel's program and leaving the believer complete in Christ.

Conclusion

Paul's ministry stands as one of Scripture's greatest demonstrations of grace. God did not choose the most cooperative religious candidate; He stopped the chief persecutor. Saul carried letters authorizing imprisonment, but Christ gave him another commission. The Pharisee who trusted his own righteousness became the apostle who counted it all dung to win Christ. The man who helped guard the garments at Stephen's murder became the steward of a message proclaiming reconciliation to former enemies. Grace did not merely forgive Paul's past. It converted the weapon in religion's hand into a trumpet announcing religion's defeat.

The gospel of the grace of God rests upon Christ's finished work and excludes every human claim to merit. The sinner is justified freely through redemption in Christ, reconciled by the death of God's Son, forgiven through His blood, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and baptized by that Spirit into one body. Saved Jews and Gentiles possess the same standing in one new man, not because Gentiles were placed beneath Israel's covenant but because both were joined to Christ. The believer's position is therefore not maintained by law, ceremony, sacrament, or human endurance. Colossians 2:10 says, "ye are complete in him." Religion cannot improve completeness. It can only persuade a complete believer to live as though Christ left the work unfinished.

Romans through Philemon keep the Church doctrinally anchored in that grace. Neglect them, and religion will drag the believer backward to Sinai, sideways into Israel's kingdom, or forward into the Tribulation. Study them, and the barricades collapse. The cross has satisfied God, the blood has paid the debt, the tomb is empty, and the sinner who believes

is accepted in the Beloved. Grace does not ask Moses to cosign the transaction, Peter to add kingdom conditions, or a priest to renew the sacrifice. It points to Jesus Christ and declares the account settled. Religion keeps arriving with lumber, nails, ordinances, and threats, determined to rebuild the wall. But the gospel has already announced the verdict: **the door stands open, the price has been paid, and grace walked through carrying the keys.**

7 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: “My Gospel”—Three Words That Wreck a Thousand Pulpit Traditions

Key Passage: Romans 16:25–26 — “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

Introduction

Three little words have wrecked more pulpit traditions than a shelf full of theological dynamite: “my gospel.” Paul uses the expression in Romans 2:16, Romans 16:25, and Second Timothy 2:8. He did not write carelessly, the Holy Ghost did not inspire accidentally, and possessive pronouns are not ornamental decorations hung on verses to improve the scenery. If every gospel in the Bible were one identical message carrying the same content, conditions, audience, and hope, Paul’s expression would be unnecessary and dangerously misleading. He could have said merely “the gospel” and spared generations of commentators the embarrassment of explaining why he repeatedly attached the word “my.” Instead, God preserved the phrase because a particular gospel had been specially entrusted to a particular apostle for a particular stewardship. Religion flattens every gospel into one because a flat Bible is easier to file, but God’s Book keeps standing up and knocking over the cabinet.

Paul did not mean that he invented the gospel, owned the cross, or held private copyright over the resurrection. He calls his message “the gospel of God,” “the gospel of Christ,” “the gospel of his Son,” “the glorious gospel of Christ,” and “the gospel of the grace of God.” The gospel belonged to God in origin, centered upon Christ in content, and was Paul’s by divine stewardship. A royal ambassador may properly speak of “my commission” without claiming to be the king who issued it. Paul’s possessive expression identifies the revelation and responsibility committed to him by the risen Lord. Galatians 1 says he did not receive

his gospel from man or learn it from man, “but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Romans 16 says believers are established according to Paul’s gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. Paul did not reduce Christ to a Jewish teacher walking the roads of Galilee. He preached the crucified, risen, ascended, and glorified Christ revealed from heaven.

The doctrinal consequences reach through the whole Christian life. Paul’s gospel proclaims that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. It reveals justification without works, peace with God, redemption through Christ’s blood, reconciliation, spiritual baptism into one body, the believer’s heavenly position, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It announces that God will judge men’s secrets by Jesus Christ, that believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and that the Lord will descend to catch away His Church. Ignore Paul’s doctrinal priority, and the believer is soon scavenging through every biblical address for instructions: seeking Israel’s kingdom, fearing Tribulation judgments, depending upon baptismal remission, keeping Jewish ordinances, and trying to endure to obtain what grace already gave him freely. When Paul’s gospel is removed from the centre, the Church becomes a spiritual tourist wandering through other people’s houses and trying every key except its own.

1. God Does Not Waste Possessive Pronouns

Romans 2:16 contains Paul’s first use of the expression: “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” Paul’s gospel includes more than an invitation to escape hell; it includes the righteous judgment of God through Jesus Christ. The same Christ who saves the believer will judge the world’s hidden deeds, motives, lies, hypocrisies, and secret corruption. Men may successfully edit their public reputations, erase browsing histories, purchase respectful obituaries, and convince a congregation that religious polish equals righteousness, but the Judge has access to the unedited record. The gospel of grace does not teach that sin ceased to matter. It teaches that Christ bore the believer’s judgment and will administer perfect judgment upon those who reject God’s truth.

Romans 16:25 says God is able to establish believers “according to my gospel.” Paul’s doctrine is not an elective course for Christians especially interested in dispensational charts. It is the stabilizing truth appointed for the Church. The believer is established according to Paul’s gospel, the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, and the truth now made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. A church may possess energetic music, crowded programs, emotional testimonies, stained glass, polished sermons, and enough committees to govern a small nation, yet remain doctrinally unstable because it has never been established according to Paul’s gospel. Activity can

keep a congregation busy while ignorance keeps it childish. A rocking horse moves all afternoon but never leaves the nursery.

Second Timothy 2:8 supplies the third occurrence: “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” Paul’s gospel does not deny Christ’s Davidic identity or Israel’s promises. Jesus Christ is “of the seed of David,” the rightful King and fulfilment of the Davidic covenant. Yet Paul’s message places decisive emphasis upon His resurrection from the dead. The rejected Son of David is alive, glorified, and Head of a new creation. Paul joins prophecy and mystery without confusing them: Christ’s Davidic descent belongs to revealed prophecy, while the body joined to the risen Head belongs to the mystery. Right division does not cut Christ into pieces. It distinguishes the offices, relationships, and programs centred in the same Lord.

2. Paul Received His Gospel From Heaven, Not Jerusalem

Galatians 1 begins with Paul defending the divine source of his apostleship: “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father).” That parenthesis is a doctrinal bayonet. Paul was not elected by a congregation, ordained by the Twelve, commissioned by Peter, or examined by Jerusalem’s council. The glorified Christ appeared to him and appointed him directly. His authority therefore did not depend upon human succession. Religion loves succession because it permits an institution to stand between God and man while charging a handling fee. Paul’s authority came from the same heaven religion had ignored when it stoned Stephen.

Paul then pronounces a curse upon anyone preaching another gospel. He certifies that his gospel “is not after man,” for he neither received it from man nor was taught it by man. The source was “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” After his conversion, Paul did not immediately go to Jerusalem to obtain the apostles’ sermon notes. He went into Arabia, returned to Damascus, and only after three years visited Peter for fifteen days. He saw none of the other apostles except James. The chronology matters because the Holy Ghost anticipated the claim that Paul merely repackaged Peter’s message. Fifteen days with Peter cannot explain a ministry Paul had already exercised for three years, especially when Paul insists Christ supplied the revelation.

When Paul later went to Jerusalem, he went “by revelation” and communicated privately to the recognized leaders “that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.” Galatians 2 says they added nothing to him. Instead, they perceived that “the gospel of the uncircumcision” had been committed unto Paul, just as “the gospel of the circumcision” was unto Peter. They recognized the grace given to Paul and extended the right hands of fellowship, agreeing that Paul and Barnabas should go unto the heathen while they ministered unto the

circumcision. This was not a contest between competing Saviours. It was recognition of differing apostolic stewardships within God's unfolding program. The Twelve had walked with Christ according to His earthly ministry to Israel; Paul encountered Christ according to a heavenly revelation for the Gentiles and the body.

3. Paul's Gospel Declares a Finished Death, Burial, and Resurrection

First Corinthians 15 provides the gospel's historical and saving foundation. Paul writes, "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved." He then states what he delivered first of all: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." These are not religious suggestions, moral principles, or symbolic experiences. They are completed historical events interpreted by divine revelation. Christ died, was buried, and rose again. The saving gospel rests upon what He did, not upon what the sinner promises to do.

The words "for our sins" distinguish gospel preaching from a bare historical recital. Roman soldiers knew Jesus died. The chief priests knew He was buried. The guards learned that the tomb was empty. Those facts alone did not save them because they rejected God's explanation of the facts. Christ did not die merely as a martyr, political victim, moral example, or tragic reformer. He "died for our sins." First Peter says He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Second Corinthians 5 says God made Him "to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Galatians 1 says He "gave himself for our sins." The cross was substitution: the sinless One taking the guilty sinner's place and satisfying the judgment sin deserved.

The burial establishes the reality of His death, and the resurrection declares His victory. Romans 4:25 says Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." First Corinthians 15 warns that if Christ is not risen, preaching is vain, faith is vain, the apostles are false witnesses, and believers remain in their sins. Christianity does not rest upon the continued influence of a deceased teacher. It rests upon an empty tomb and a living Head. Religion can operate quite comfortably around a dead founder because a dead founder cannot interrupt the service. The risen Christ is more troublesome. He speaks from heaven, calls His own apostle, rearranges the dispensational furniture, and refuses to submit His gospel to a committee vote.

4. Paul's Gospel Gives the Believer a Complete Standing in Christ

Romans explains what the gospel accomplishes for the sinner who believes. After proving universal guilt, Paul announces "the righteousness of God without the law." The sinner is "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." God set Christ forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood so that He might be just and the justifier of

the believer. Justification is a legal declaration in God's court. It does not mean the sinner gradually becomes innocent by improving his conduct. It means God imputes righteousness upon the basis of Christ's finished work. The believer's record is no longer judged according to Adam's guilt or personal performance but according to Christ's righteousness.

Romans 5 describes the results: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace with God is not the same as an uninterrupted feeling of calm. A believer may experience grief, fear, pressure, conflict, and physical weakness while remaining perfectly reconciled to God. Peace with God is an established relationship grounded in justification. The believer also receives access into grace, rejoices in hope of God's glory, is justified by Christ's blood, reconciled by His death, and saved by His life. Religion makes peace depend upon emotional weather; the gospel anchors it to a cross that does not move.

Paul continues from justification into identification. Romans 6 says the believer is baptized into Jesus Christ, baptized into His death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life. Colossians 2 calls this "the circumcision made without hands" and says believers are "complete in him." Ephesians 1 says they are accepted in the Beloved, redeemed through Christ's blood, forgiven according to the riches of grace, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. The believer is not placed on spiritual probation while heaven waits to see whether he earns permanent status. He is joined to Christ, sealed by the Spirit, and made complete in the Son. Religion keeps selling completion kits to people God says are complete.

5. "My Gospel" Includes the Mystery of Christ's Body

Romans 16:25 joins Paul's gospel with "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." Prophecy concerns truths spoken by God's holy prophets since the world began; mystery concerns truth kept secret until God chose to reveal it. These two categories meet in Christ but must not be confused. Christ's birth in Bethlehem, descent from David, suffering, resurrection, and future kingdom were matters of prophecy. The formation of one spiritual body composed of believing Jews and Gentiles with an equal heavenly standing was a mystery revealed particularly through Paul.

Ephesians 3 identifies the mystery: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Gentile blessing itself was never secret. God told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him. The prophets foretold nations coming to Israel's light and worshipping Israel's King. What had been hidden was the creation of one new man in which saved Jews and Gentiles would be

reconciled to God in one body during Israel's national blindness. The Gentile was not required to become a Jew, enter Israel's covenant, or approach God through Israel's priesthood. Both Jew and Gentile entered a new spiritual organism through Christ's cross.

First Corinthians 12:13 explains the operation: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." Christ is the Head, and believers are His members. Ephesians 5 says, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Colossians 1 calls the Church "his body" and identifies Paul's ministry with fulfilling the word of God through the revelation of the mystery. This union exceeds membership in an earthly organization. A membership roll can contain unbelievers, hypocrites, lost officers, and unsaved preachers. The body of Christ contains those whom the Holy Spirit has joined to Christ. A denomination can remove a name from its ledger; it cannot amputate a member from the risen Head.

6. Paul's Gospel Governs Judgment, Conduct, and the Believer's Hope

Paul's gospel does not end after explaining how to escape condemnation. Romans 2:16 says God will judge "the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." The gospel reveals both salvation and accountability. The lost will face judgment for rejecting truth, while believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 says every believer must appear there "that every one may receive the things done in his body." First Corinthians 3 describes the testing of Christian service by fire. Wood, hay, and stubble will burn; gold, silver, and precious stones will endure. Salvation rests upon Christ's foundation, but reward concerns what the believer builds upon it. Grace removes condemnation without abolishing accountability.

Paul's epistles therefore move naturally from doctrine to duty. Romans spends eleven chapters establishing salvation and dispensational truth before saying, "I beseech you therefore, brethren." The Christian presents his body as a living sacrifice because of God's mercies, not to purchase those mercies. Ephesians first describes the believer seated in heavenly places, then commands him to walk worthy of his vocation. Colossians first declares completeness in Christ, then instructs believers to mortify sinful practices and put on charity. Titus says the grace that brings salvation teaches believers to deny ungodliness and live soberly, righteously, and godly. Grace does not excuse sin; it gives holiness the correct foundation. Law threatens a dead man. Grace gives him life and then teaches him how living men should walk.

Paul's gospel also carries a distinctive hope. First Thessalonians 4 reveals that the Lord will descend from heaven, the dead in Christ will rise first, and living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. First Corinthians 15 calls this transformation

a mystery: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Philippians 3 says Christ will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Titus 2 calls this “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The Church is not waiting for Antichrist’s mark, Israel’s flight from Judaea, or the armies gathering at Armageddon. It is waiting for its Head. The bride’s hope is not to survive the execution chamber; it is to hear the Bridegroom’s call.

7. Rejecting Paul’s Priority Sends the Church Into Other People’s Mail

When Paul’s doctrinal position is rejected, believers begin wandering through Matthew for their salvation conditions. They find the gospel of the kingdom, the command to endure unto the end, the warning about forgiveness being conditioned upon forgiving others, and the order to sell possessions. Instead of recognizing Israel’s kingdom setting, they place the Church beneath those instructions. Eternal security gives way to probation, grace gives way to performance, and the Sermon on the Mount becomes a ladder men attempt to climb into heaven. The ladder is holy, but it was never given as the sinner’s route into Christ. A perfect standard in the hands of an imperfect man becomes a gallows.

Next they wander into early Acts and seize Peter’s Pentecost command to Israel. Water baptism becomes necessary for remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost becomes a later experience, tongues become proof of spirituality, and apostolic signs become advertised attractions. The fact that Acts changes its patterns from Jews to Samaritans to Gentiles is ignored. Paul’s declaration that Christ sent him “not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” is pushed aside. Instead of interpreting Acts through the doctrinal light of the epistles, religion forces the epistles beneath a transitional event. It builds permanent housing in the middle of the bridge and calls every passing vehicle a contradiction.

Finally, the Church wanders into Hebrews, James, and Revelation, confiscating warnings addressed within Hebrew and Tribulation settings. Believers are told they may fall away beyond restoration, lose salvation through dead faith, have their names blotted from the book of life, fail to endure unto the end, or receive the mark of the beast. Israel’s covenant program, the Tribulation saint’s endurance, and the Church’s completed standing are poured into one doctrinal vat. The resulting mixture is sold as “the whole counsel of God,” although it contradicts every clear Pauline statement concerning justification, sealing, spiritual union, and eternal life. The whole Bible belongs in the Christian’s study, but not every command belongs in the Christian’s pocket. Right division does not discard the mail; it reads the address before opening it.

Conclusion

Paul called the message “my gospel” because the risen Christ had placed it in his trust. The expression does not exalt Paul above Christ; it exalts Christ’s choice of Paul as the apostle through whom the present stewardship would be explained. Paul’s gospel belongs to God, centres upon Christ, and was received by revelation. It proclaims the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the completed foundation of salvation. It unveils justification without law, reconciliation through blood, spiritual union with Christ, the mystery of one body, the believer’s heavenly standing, coming judgment, and blessed hope. Three words carry an entire dispensational address.

This gospel harmonizes perfectly with God’s eternal purpose while preserving the distinction between prophecy and mystery. The Christ Paul preached is the Seed of Abraham, Son of David, Lamb of God, risen Lord, Head of the body, and coming King. His cross fulfils Scripture, while the one body formed through that cross was hidden until its appointed revelation. His resurrection confirms prophetic promise and creates the basis of the believer’s new life. His future appearing gathers the Church before He returns to fulfil Israel’s kingdom hope. Right division does not produce several competing Christs. It reveals the many glories, offices, and relationships belonging to the one Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church becomes stable only when established according to Paul’s gospel. Remove that foundation, and religion immediately begins adding water, law, sacraments, endurance, signs, covenants, and fear to Christ’s finished work. Leave it in place, and the believer discovers that he is justified, reconciled, accepted, sealed, complete, and seated in heavenly places in Christ. The cross paid the debt, the resurrection secured the verdict, and the Spirit joined the believer to the living Head. Religion may object that such grace is too free, too complete, and too dangerous to entrust to ordinary sinners. Paul’s answer remains unchanged: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Those three words—“**my gospel**”—still wreck a thousand pulpit traditions because one clear word from God can outlive a warehouse full of religious furniture.

8 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: An Angel in Midheaven With a Gospel No Soul-Winner Preaches Today

Key Passage: Revelation 14:6–7 — “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

Introduction

Revelation 14 presents a preacher no mission board appointed, flying through a pulpit no church constructed, addressing a congregation no auditorium could hold. An angel flies “in the midst of heaven” with “the everlasting gospel” for every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. His sermon contains no collection of amusing stories, no invitation to discover hidden potential, and no promise that God will improve the world through positive community involvement. With a loud voice he commands the inhabitants of the earth to fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator because “the hour of his judgment is come.” This is not the soft religious suggestion that judgment may someday arrive if humanity fails to organize another peace conference. The hour has come. Heaven’s clock has struck, the Beast’s counterfeit kingdom stands beneath sentence, and an angelic herald announces that the Creator is about to reclaim His creation by judgment.

The passage is deadly to the notion that every appearance of the word “gospel” must mean Paul’s gospel word for word. First Corinthians 15 defines the present saving gospel through Christ’s death for our sins, burial, and resurrection. The angel in Revelation 14 does not mention those events. He does not explain justification by faith, redemption through Christ’s blood, reconciliation, spiritual baptism into one body, or the believer’s heavenly position. His message is good news because the rightful Creator is about to destroy the Beast’s tyranny, vindicate His name, overthrow idolatry, and establish righteous dominion. Yet the same announcement spells terror for those who worship the Beast. Good news for an occupied country includes bad news for the occupying army. When the rightful King approaches, the oppressed lift their heads while traitors search for a cellar.

The setting is future, prophetic, and judicial. The body of Christ has completed its earthly course and been caught up before the outpouring of divine wrath. Israel’s prophetic program has returned to the foreground. The Beast demands worship, the false prophet enforces his mark, Babylon intoxicates the nations, and the world chooses the creature’s counterfeit kingdom over its Creator. Into that setting flies an angel with an everlasting proclamation rooted in God’s unchanging right to rule what He made. The message belongs exactly where the Holy Ghost placed it. Dragging it backward into the present dispensation does not strengthen Paul’s gospel; it replaces the cross with an angelic judgment warning. Right division leaves both messages untouched and lets each thunder in its appointed hour.

1. Revelation 14 Stands Inside the Beast’s Prophetic World

Revelation 13 immediately prepares the setting. A Beast rises from the sea possessing satanic authority, political power, blasphemous titles, and dominion over “all kindreds, and

tongues, and nations.” The dragon gives him his power, seat, and great authority. One of the Beast’s heads appears wounded to death, yet the deadly wound is healed, causing all the world to wonder after him. Men worship the dragon and the Beast, saying, “Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” The counterfeit kingdom possesses a counterfeit resurrection, counterfeit worship, and counterfeit universal dominion. Satan has always wanted God’s throne, and in Revelation he finally receives worldwide applause from a civilisation too enlightened to worship its Creator but eager to kneel before a monster.

A second Beast rises from the earth and functions as the false prophet. He exercises the first Beast’s power, performs great wonders, makes fire come down from heaven, and deceives the earth by miracles. He commands the inhabitants of the earth to make an image to the Beast and gives life to that image so that it speaks and causes dissenters to be killed. He then enforces a mark in the right hand or forehead without which no man may buy or sell. Worship, economics, government, supernatural deception, and execution merge into one global religious machine. The Beast’s system does not merely ask citizens to obey civil law. It claims the worship belonging to God and turns commerce into a sacrament of allegiance.

Revelation 14 answers that satanic system from heaven. The chapter begins with the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion and 144,000 bearing His Father’s name in their foreheads—the divine answer to the Beast’s mark. It proceeds to three angelic proclamations: the everlasting gospel, the fall of Babylon, and the eternal doom of Beast worshippers. The chapter concludes with the earth reaped and its grapes cast into “the great winepress of the wrath of God.” The angel’s gospel therefore does not appear during a peaceful period of ordinary missionary work. It appears between the Beast’s enforced worship and God’s approaching harvest of judgment. A sermon must be read against its sky, and the sky over Revelation 14 is black with wrath.

2. Heaven Uses an Angel When Earth’s Platforms Belong to the Beast

The messenger is an angel flying in the midst of heaven. During the present dispensation, God has committed the word of reconciliation to saved men who serve as ambassadors for Christ. Believers carry the gospel in earthen vessels. Paul says, “we preach Christ crucified,” and commands Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. Revelation 14 presents a different administration. An angel carries the everlasting gospel openly across the heavens so that the inhabitants of the earth cannot claim the warning was hidden in a remote village, censored by a government, or removed from an electronic platform. The Beast may control buying, selling, broadcasting, and public speech below, but he does not own the sky.

The phrase “midst of heaven” suggests a visible and commanding position from which the proclamation reaches the earth. Revelation repeatedly uses this region for announcements affecting the whole world. In Revelation 8:13 an angel flies through the midst of heaven crying, “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth.” Revelation 19:17 shows another angel standing in the sun and calling the fowls to the supper of the great God. These are not quiet impressions in private hearts. They are public heavenly proclamations accompanying open supernatural judgment. God who once sent angels to announce Christ’s birth will send angels to announce the downfall of the Beast’s world. Bethlehem heard “peace”; the Beast’s empire will hear that judgment has arrived.

The worldwide audience matches the Beast’s worldwide reach. The angel preaches “unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Revelation often uses “them that dwell on the earth” for earthbound rebels whose loyalties belong to the satanic world system. They rejoice over the deaths of the two witnesses, wonder after the Beast, and face the judgments of God. The angelic sermon crosses every national, ethnic, and linguistic boundary. No tribe is overlooked, no empire exempted, and no language left without witness. The Beast may divide men by borders while uniting them in rebellion; God answers with one proclamation to the entire occupied world.

3. “Fear God” Is the First Command of the Angelic Gospel

The angel begins, “Fear God.” That command is not psychological advice about managing anxiety. The fear of God is the creature’s proper response to the Creator’s holiness, authority, power, and judgment. Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Ecclesiastes concludes, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Psalm 33 commands all the earth to fear the Lord because “he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” The world of Revelation has discarded that fear and redirected it toward the Beast. Men fear losing permission to buy, sell, work, eat, and live, so they accept his mark and worship his image. The angel commands them to fear the One who can judge both body and soul.

Christ warned in Matthew 10:28, “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” That distinction becomes brutally practical under the Beast. The false prophet can kill those refusing the image, but God can cast Beast worshippers into the lake of fire. The choice is not between safety and danger; it is between temporary execution by the Beast and eternal judgment from God. Revelation 14:10–11 warns that anyone worshipping the Beast and receiving his mark will drink the wine of God’s wrath and be tormented with fire and brimstone. The Beast threatens the body for a few remaining days. God announces consequences whose smoke ascends “for ever and ever.” Only a fool chooses the shorter fear and inherits the longer fire.

Modern religion has nearly removed the fear of God from its vocabulary because it interferes with marketing. Its deity exists to affirm, accommodate, excuse, and applaud. He may express mild disappointment, but He never breaks seals, sounds trumpets, pours vials, destroys Babylon, or treads a winepress. Revelation's God did not attend that public-relations seminar. He is longsuffering, but His longsuffering has an appointed end. He offered mercy, sent prophets, gave His Son, raised Christ from the dead, and sent the gospel into the world. When men finally unite beneath Satan's Christ and brand themselves with his number, heaven's patience gives way to public wrath. The fear of God is not primitive superstition. It is sanity in the presence of approaching judgment.

4. "Give Glory to Him" Confronts the Beast's Stolen Worship

The second command is, "give glory to him." Glory belongs to God because His nature, works, holiness, wisdom, and power exceed every creature. Psalm 29 says, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name." Isaiah 42:8 declares, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another." Yet the dragon's entire program seeks to transfer divine glory to himself and his chosen king. Revelation 13 shows the world worshipping the dragon because he gives power to the Beast. The image of the Beast becomes a centre of compulsory adoration, and supernatural signs persuade the nations that this counterfeit deserves worship. Satan does not merely want disobedient men; he wants kneeling men.

The angel's command exposes the central sin beneath the Beast system. Romans 1 says fallen men knew God but "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images of corruptible creatures and "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." Revelation 13 is Romans 1 reaching political and religious maturity. Humanity's long exchange of Creator for creature ends with worship of a satanically energized ruler and his living image. The civilisation that laughed at bowing before carved idols finally bows before an electronic one with authority to kill. Man did not outgrow idolatry; he merely gave the idol a network connection.

Giving glory to God in this setting requires rejecting the Beast's claim, refusing his mark, and confessing the Creator's exclusive right to worship. This allegiance carries mortal danger, but Revelation repeatedly honours those who overcome. Revelation 12:11 says they overcome the dragon "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 15 shows those who gained victory over the Beast standing upon the sea of glass and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. They ask, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The Beast can kill their bodies, but he cannot retain them. God receives the glory, and the martyrs receive a kingdom the Beast cannot enter.

5. The Everlasting Gospel Commands Worship of the Creator

The angel specifically identifies the One to be worshipped: “him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” This is creation language reaching back to Genesis 1 and Exodus 20. God’s right to rule rests first upon His identity as Maker. Heaven belongs to Him because He made it. Earth belongs to Him because He formed it. The sea obeys His boundaries, and the fountains of waters exist by His command. The Beast did not create one grain of sand, one drop of water, one living cell, or one breath in the lungs of those who worship him. He is a parasite boasting inside a house he did not build.

Creation also becomes the battlefield of judgment. Revelation’s judgments strike the earth, sea, rivers, fountains, sun, atmosphere, and living creatures. The angel names areas already or soon to be affected by divine wrath. Revelation 8 shows a third part of the sea becoming blood and a great star falling upon rivers and fountains. Revelation 16 pours a vial upon the sea so that it becomes as the blood of a dead man, and another upon the rivers and fountains so that they become blood. The angel of the waters declares God righteous because persecutors shed the blood of saints and prophets, so God gives them blood to drink. The Creator possesses authority to turn creation against rebels who used His gifts to deny Him.

The command to worship the Creator cuts across the entire Beast philosophy. Satan’s system teaches men to honour power detached from righteousness, technology detached from truth, and creation detached from its Maker. Once God is removed as Creator, worship does not disappear; it descends. Men worship nature, humanity, government, machinery, wealth, sexuality, intelligence, and finally the Beast. Revelation brings the contest into full view: worship the Creator or worship the creature. There is no neutral ground between the Lamb’s name and the Beast’s mark. Neutrality is simply rebellion wearing a grey suit.

6. “The Hour of His Judgment Is Come” Fixes the Message in Time

The angel does not say judgment exists as a distant theological possibility. He says, “the hour of his judgment is come.” The present tense fixes the announcement within a specific prophetic crisis. During the current dispensation, Paul warns of judgment to come while offering reconciliation through Christ. In Revelation 14, the appointed hour has arrived. Babylon is about to fall, Beast worshippers are about to drink unmixed wrath, and the earth is ready for harvest. The angel’s message belongs to the moment when patience yields to execution.

The chapter’s later images confirm that timing. One like the Son of man appears upon a white cloud with a golden crown and sharp sickle. An angel cries, “Thrust in thy sickle, and

reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Another angel gathers the vine of the earth and casts it into the great winepress of God’s wrath. The winepress is trodden without the city, and blood proceeds from it. This is not a metaphor for gradual moral improvement. The King is coming to destroy the world order that murdered His witnesses, worshipped the Beast, and defied His throne.

The gospel is “everlasting” because its foundation is God’s eternal identity and sovereign right as Creator. God has always deserved fear, glory, and worship, and He will deserve them for ever. His judgment upon evil vindicates an everlasting moral order. The message also anticipates the everlasting kingdom that will follow the Beast’s brief rule. Satan’s man receives forty-two months of authority; Christ receives an everlasting dominion. The Beast’s empire appears universal but expires on schedule. God’s kingdom outlives every grave, throne, market, army, and idol. Evil shouts loudly because its lease is short.

7. The Everlasting Gospel Is Not Paul’s Present Saving Gospel

Paul’s gospel is stated in First Corinthians 15: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Romans explains justification freely by grace through redemption in Christ. Ephesians declares salvation by grace through faith, “not of works.” The everlasting gospel in Revelation 14 commands men to fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator because judgment has arrived. The angel does not preach the believer’s identification with Christ, membership in one body, sealing by the Spirit, or heavenly position. Its content, messenger, audience, and time differ from Paul’s gospel. Calling both “gospel” means both announce good news; it does not mean the announcements are interchangeable.

This distinction does not produce contradictory ways of salvation devised by competing gods. The same God speaks in both settings, the same Christ stands at the centre of God’s purpose, and the blood of the Lamb remains the ultimate basis of victory and forgiveness. What differs is the revelation administered, the historical situation, and the response demanded. Today God sends human ambassadors to preach reconciliation through Christ’s completed work. During the Beast’s reign, an angel publicly commands an idolatrous world to abandon creature worship as the Creator’s judgment descends. God’s truth does not contradict itself when the Commander gives different orders on different battlefields.

No faithful soul-winner today travels from door to door preaching only, “Fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator because the hour of His judgment is come.” That message would omit the present gospel’s saving content. A sinner today needs to hear that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again. He must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The

everlasting gospel belongs to the coming hour when the Church's course is finished, the Beast openly rules, and divine judgment is no longer merely approaching. To replace Paul's gospel with Revelation 14 today would be as foolish as Noah preaching, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," while the rain begins to fall. Both statements may be biblical, but only one belongs to the hour.

Conclusion

The angel of Revelation 14 stands as an inspired witness against the theory that every gospel in Scripture contains identical words and conditions. His message is explicitly called "the everlasting gospel," yet it does not present First Corinthians 15. It commands universal fear, glory, and worship toward the Creator because judgment has arrived. Its messenger is angelic, its pulpit is the midst of heaven, its audience is the Beast's worldwide population, and its setting is the closing crisis of Daniel's seventieth week. Every feature distinguishes it from Paul's present ministry of reconciliation.

The announcement is good news because the Beast will not rule for ever. Babylon will fall, the image will become powerless, the mark will become a brand of doom, and the persecuted saints will be vindicated. The Creator will reclaim His earth from those who worshipped the creature. Yet the same news is terrible for the rebellious. The approaching King brings deliverance to His own and destruction to His enemies. Scripture never teaches that good news must sound pleasant to everyone hearing it. The announcement that the prison has been liberated comforts the captives and terrifies the jailer.

Today the Church must preach the gospel entrusted to Paul: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The sinner is justified freely by faith in Christ's finished work, not by anticipating Revelation's angel or attempting to live under the Beast's crisis. The everlasting gospel will sound at its appointed hour, and when it does, no government will censor it, no false prophet will drown it out, and no nation will escape its reach. Religion may flatten the Bible until every message looks alike, but heaven preserves the distinctions. Paul preaches a cross completed; the angel announces a judgment arrived. One calls sinners into the body of Christ before wrath; the other warns the Beast's world as wrath stands at the door. **The gospel for today points to an empty tomb. The gospel in Revelation 14 points to a full winepress.**

Key Passage: Matthew 24:14 — “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

Introduction

Matthew 24 does not say that Paul’s gospel of the grace of God will be preached to every nation and then the Rapture will occur. It says, “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” The sermon concerns Israel, Judaea, the temple, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, flight on the sabbath day, false Christs, unprecedented tribulation, the sign of the Son of man, and the visible gathering of elect survivors when Christ appears in glory. Those details are not decorations that can be removed while preserving the passage’s meaning. They locate the discourse inside Daniel’s seventieth week and Israel’s prophetic program. The Church has been so thoroughly trained to read its own name into every envelope that it can find “Judaea” in the address, “sabbath” on the stamp, “Daniel” in the letter, and “Israel” in the contents, yet still insist the mail was delivered to a Gentile believer in Ohio.

After the body of Christ completes its appointed course and is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, God will resume His direct prophetic dealings with Israel. Daniel’s final week will run, the man of sin will rise, a covenant will be confirmed and broken, the temple will become the stage for the abomination of desolation, and the Beast will demand universal worship. During that crisis, the kingdom message will return to the foreground because the King’s visible return and earthly reign will again be at hand. God will seal 144,000 servants from the tribes of Israel, empower two witnesses in Jerusalem, send angelic proclamations across heaven, and preserve a testimony in the face of satanic world government. The devil will finally obtain the united political and religious order men have been begging for, and it will last just long enough to prove that humanity’s dream government becomes a slaughterhouse when the Lamb is excluded.

The Tribulation message will not be delivered under the comfortable circumstances of the present age. Allegiance to Christ will cost employment, food, family, liberty, and often physical life. The Beast’s mark will govern buying and selling; his image will demand worship; and refusal will invite execution. Scripture therefore emphasizes endurance, obedience, refusal of the mark, the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Those requirements belong to that coming prophetic emergency. Dragging them backward and laying them upon a sealed member of Christ’s body produces a salvation built from grace, fear, law, works, water, and survival. Right division removes the mixture. The present Church awaits Christ in the air; Tribulation saints await Him through fire. The bride listens for a trumpet; Israel watches for the sign of the Son of man. Both expectations centre upon Christ, but they do not belong to the same people under the same conditions.

1. The Church Completes Its Course Before Daniel's Final Week

The Rapture of the body of Christ is revealed as a mystery through Paul. First Corinthians 15:51–52 says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” The transformation occurs “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” The dead are raised incorruptible, and living believers are changed. First Thessalonians 4 supplies the meeting place: “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout,” the dead in Christ rise first, and living believers are “caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Paul concludes, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This is not Christ standing upon the Mount of Olives to judge nations. It is Christ catching His body upward to Himself.

The Church's hope is described as comfort, deliverance, and expectation of Christ—not preparation to identify the Beast's mark. First Thessalonians 1:10 speaks of waiting for God's Son from heaven, “which delivered us from the wrath to come.” First Thessalonians 5:9 says, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” Titus 2 calls the event “that blessed hope.” Philippians 3 says, “our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour.” Paul never tells a local church to flee Judaea when an image enters the temple, pray that the escape will not occur on the sabbath, or calculate 1,260 days. The Church's lookout is pointed toward Christ, not Antichrist.

Daniel's seventieth week belongs to Daniel's people and holy city. Gabriel told Daniel, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” Daniel's people were Israel, and the holy city was Jerusalem. Sixty-nine weeks led to Messiah being cut off, after which Jerusalem and the sanctuary would be destroyed. One week remained for the prince who shall come to confirm a covenant and then cause sacrifice and oblation to cease in the midst of the week. The Church, a mystery not revealed in Daniel, occupies the present interval after Messiah's rejection. When that mystery body is removed, the prophetic clock concerning Israel resumes. God did not throw away the final week; He paused its public calendar while calling out a heavenly people.

2. Israel Returns to the Foreground of God's Prophetic Dealings

Revelation's Tribulation chapters are saturated with Israelite and Old Testament features. There is a temple, an altar, the ark of the testament, Jerusalem, twelve tribes, 144,000 sealed Israelites, two olive trees, two candlesticks, plagues resembling Egypt, and a woman clothed with the sun who brings forth the ruler of nations. The Beast persecutes the woman's seed, and the nations trample the holy city for forty-two months. These are not accidental Jewish leftovers decorating a Gentile Church narrative. They show Israel

occupying the prophetic foreground after the Church's departure. The Book that began moving away from Jerusalem in Acts moves back to Jerusalem in Revelation because God finishes the program He began.

Romans 11 makes Israel's future restoration certain. Paul asks, "Hath God cast away his people?" and answers, "God forbid." Israel is presently blinded "in part" until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in. Then "all Israel shall be saved," according to the covenant promises. Israel remains beloved for the fathers' sakes because "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." God does not permanently cancel Abrahamic and Davidic covenants because a Gentile theologian found spiritual language convenient. Israel's present fall brought salvation to the Gentiles; Israel's future restoration will bring kingdom blessing to the world. The same God who disciplined the nation will fulfil every word He swore to her fathers.

This return to Israel explains why Matthew 24 suddenly becomes direct operational instruction. Those in Judaea must flee into the mountains. A man on the housetop must not descend to retrieve possessions. Prayer is made concerning winter and the sabbath day. The abomination appears in "the holy place." False Christs perform signs, and the elect must resist deception until the true Son of man appears visibly "as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west." These conditions do not describe normal Church history, the destruction of Jerusalem alone, or an invisible spiritual coming. They describe Israel during the future crisis preceding the King's public return.

3. The 144,000 Are Sealed Servants From Israel's Tribes

Revelation 7 identifies 144,000 servants of God sealed in their foreheads before destructive winds are released upon the earth. The Holy Ghost does not call them spiritual Israelites, symbolic church members, or representatives of a religious society founded centuries later. He names twelve thousand from each of twelve tribes: Juda, Reuben, Gad, Aser, Nepthalim, Manasses, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zabulon, Joseph, and Benjamin. When God takes the trouble to list tribal names and exact numbers, a commentator should resist the urge to replace them with Gentiles who have never seen a genealogy. A literal list does not become symbolic merely because literal Israel interferes with a system.

The seal distinguishes and protects these servants amid divine judgment. Revelation 9 commands the locusts from the bottomless pit to hurt only those men "which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." The contrast with the Beast's mark is deliberate. God marks His servants before Satan marks his worshippers. One seal declares divine ownership and protection; the other declares satanic allegiance and doom. Revelation 14 again presents the 144,000 with the Lamb, having the Father's name written in their foreheads. They are

described as undefiled, truthful, following the Lamb, and “the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Their loyalty stands in direct opposition to the worldwide apostasy surrounding them.

Revelation does not record a separate sermon from each of the 144,000, but it calls them “the servants of our God” within the very period when the gospel of the kingdom reaches all nations. Their sealing, dispersion among Israel’s tribes, loyalty to the Lamb, and firstfruits character identify them as a divinely preserved witnessing company. Alongside the two witnesses, angelic proclamations, and testimony of persecuted saints, they stand at the heart of the kingdom witness. The Beast’s empire possesses global communications, commercial control, military authority, and lying wonders. God answers with sealed Jewish servants whom hell cannot erase before their work is done. God does not need the Beast’s platform to publish the King’s arrival.

4. The Gospel of the Kingdom Returns Before the End

The phrase “this gospel of the kingdom” reaches back to the message preached by John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the Twelve. John announced, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Christ preached “the gospel of the kingdom” throughout Israel. The Twelve were sent to proclaim, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” while displaying kingdom credentials. That proclamation concerned Israel’s promised King and earthly kingdom. It was not identical to Paul’s later gospel of justification through Christ’s finished death, burial, and resurrection, although both messages centre in the same Lord.

During Daniel’s seventieth week, the kingdom will again be genuinely at hand because the King’s return is only years—and eventually days—away. Daniel’s prophecies will be unfolding visibly. The Beast’s allotted forty-two months will be running. The two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days. Israel will flee into the wilderness for “a time, and times, and half a time.” The gospel of the kingdom will therefore announce that the counterfeit kingdom is doomed and that Jesus Christ is about to return, judge the nations, rescue the remnant, and establish the throne promised to David. This is good news for those groaning beneath the Beast and a death warrant for the world system supporting him.

Matthew 24:14 says the message will be preached “in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” It does not promise every individual will be converted or that the nations will gradually become Christian. The preaching serves as a witness. The world will be warned before judgment. God has never lacked testimony before acting. Noah preached before the Flood, Moses confronted Pharaoh before Egypt fell, prophets warned Jerusalem before Babylon arrived, and the apostles confronted Israel before national judgment. The final world empire will likewise hear the truth before the King

destroys it. Judgment may move quickly, but it never arrives without a witness left standing in its path.

5. The Beast's Mark Turns Worship Into a Test of Endurance

Revelation 13 joins worship of the Beast with reception of his mark. The false prophet causes all, “both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,” to receive a mark in the right hand or forehead. No man may buy or sell without the mark, name, or number of the Beast. The system reaches across class, wealth, and legal status. A poor man cannot escape because he owns nothing, and a rich man cannot purchase an exemption. Commerce becomes the enforcement arm of worship. The Beast does not ask merely for taxes or political obedience; he claims the place of God and demands a visible covenant of allegiance.

Refusing the mark therefore carries immediate practical consequences. Without it, a person cannot participate in the official economy. Food, shelter, employment, medicine, transportation, and ordinary trade fall under the Beast's control. Revelation 13 also says those refusing to worship the image may be killed. Tribulation faith will not operate inside a comfortable religious hobby conducted one morning each week. Loyalty to the Lamb will become economically ruinous and physically dangerous. Every purchase will test worship, and every refusal will become testimony. Under those conditions, endurance is not an embroidered word hung above a sofa. It is remaining faithful while the world's system closes around the throat.

Revelation 14 gives the eternal consequence of accepting the mark: Beast worshippers drink “the wine of the wrath of God” and are tormented with fire and brimstone. “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,” and they have no rest day nor night. The mark is not a harmless commercial convenience accidentally received without spiritual meaning. Scripture ties it explicitly to worship and conscious allegiance. The person receiving it chooses the Beast against God. Modern speculators may identify every new machine, barcode, card, injection, or account number as the mark, but Revelation's mark will not require a detective with a magnifying glass. It will arrive inside open Beast worship, and heaven will plainly announce the consequences.

6. Tribulation Saints Must Endure Under Conditions Not Given to the Church

Matthew 24:13 says, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” The verse stands amid hatred, betrayal, false prophets, abounding iniquity, worldwide kingdom preaching, and the approach of the abomination of desolation. “The end” is the prophetic end identified by the chapter, not the end of an ordinary Christian's natural life during the present dispensation. Those surviving faithfully through the Beast's persecution await

physical deliverance when Christ appears. Removing the verse from that setting and using it to deny the present believer's security changes both its time and purpose.

Revelation repeatedly describes the conduct of Tribulation saints. Revelation 12:17 speaks of those "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 14:12 says, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 22:14 pronounces blessing upon "they that do his commandments," connecting obedience with access to the tree of life. These expressions belong to a period in which faith is tested through refusal of the mark, obedience under persecution, and endurance toward the kingdom. The man who accepts the Beast's mark cannot appeal to an earlier profession while openly worshipping Antichrist.

Paul's language concerning the body of Christ differs. The present believer is justified freely, sealed with the Holy Spirit "unto the day of redemption," accepted in the Beloved, complete in Christ, and seated in heavenly places. Romans 8 declares that nothing can separate believers from the love of God in Christ. Second Timothy 2:13 says, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." The body member's security rests upon union with Christ, not successful navigation through the Beast's economic system. Importing Matthew 24 and Revelation 14 into Pauline salvation does not make Christians more serious. It makes Christ's body less secure than Paul says it is.

7. The Kingdom Witness Ends With the Visible Return of the King

Matthew 24 concludes the Tribulation with unmistakable celestial and visible events. The sun is darkened, the moon withholds her light, stars fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens are shaken. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven," and the tribes of the earth mourn as they see Him "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This is not a secret spiritual influence, the spread of Christian principles, or a gradual improvement of civilisation. The same world that followed the Beast will see the rightful King arrive. Lightning does not require a theologian to explain that it has appeared.

Revelation 19 presents the same return. Heaven opens, and Christ appears upon a white horse, called Faithful and True. His eyes are as a flame of fire, many crowns rest upon His head, and His vesture bears the name "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." The armies of heaven follow Him, while the Beast and kings of the earth gather to make war. The Beast and false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire, and the remaining armies are slain by the sword proceeding from Christ's mouth. The kingdom message ends in the King's personal intervention. The nations do not vote Him into office; He arrives holding the deed.

Afterward Satan is bound, the saints reign with Christ, and the promised kingdom occupies the earth. Israel's covenants move toward literal fulfilment. The throne of David has its rightful Heir, Jerusalem becomes the governmental centre, and the nations learn righteousness under the rod of iron. The gospel of the kingdom announced exactly what occurs: the King comes and the kingdom follows. Paul's present gospel prepares a heavenly body to meet Christ in the air; the Tribulation kingdom gospel prepares a remnant to receive Christ upon the earth. One Lord accomplishes both purposes without confusing either company.

Conclusion

After the Church is gone, the kingdom preachers return because Israel's prophetic clock begins moving again. Daniel's seventieth week concerns Daniel's people and holy city. The temple, covenant, sacrifices, abomination, tribes, sealed Israelites, Jerusalem, and sabbath setting all testify that God has resumed His direct dealings with Israel. The 144,000 stand sealed as servants of God, the two witnesses prophesy in Jerusalem, angels proclaim heaven's warnings, and saints resist the Beast unto death. The prophetic world that seemed suspended during Paul's ministry returns with every gear engaged.

The gospel of the kingdom will announce the approaching reign of Jesus Christ while Antichrist's counterfeit kingdom reaches its brief summit. Its hearers must fear God rather than the Beast, refuse the mark, reject the image, keep God's commandments, maintain the faith of Jesus, and endure through persecution. Those demands fit a world in which worship governs commerce and allegiance determines whether a person may live. They do not constitute Paul's gospel to the body of Christ. A Church-age sinner is saved by believing that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again. He is sealed by the Spirit and joined to Christ before the Tribulation begins.

Right division leaves the Church secure in Paul's gospel while allowing Matthew 24 and Revelation to speak with their full future force. It does not weaken the Tribulation warnings or turn Israel's kingdom into allegory. It simply refuses to place the bride inside Israel's furnace. The Church waits for Christ to descend into the air; Tribulation survivors wait for Him to break through the heavens in judgment. After grace completes its present gathering, the kingdom trumpet sounds again, Jewish servants carry the witness, and the world hears that its borrowed throne is about to be repossessed. **The Beast may mark his followers, but the King has already marked the day—and when that day comes, every counterfeit crown will melt beneath the gaze of Jesus Christ.**

10 of 10 — The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: One Bible, Several Announcements, and the Religious Blender

Key Passage: Second Timothy 2:15 — “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Introduction

The King James Bible contains one God, one Lord Jesus Christ, one divine plan moving toward one final triumph, and several announcements properly called “gospel.” That last fact causes no difficulty until a man decides that unity requires uniformity. He finds “gospel” preached to Abraham, “gospel of the kingdom” proclaimed to Israel, “gospel” preached by the Twelve before they understand the cross, Peter’s appeal to Israel after Calvary, Paul’s “gospel of the grace of God,” an angel’s “everlasting gospel” in Revelation, and the future worldwide preaching of the kingdom before the end. Instead of examining what each passage says, he throws every message into one religious blender, holds down the lid with a denominational confession, and calls the resulting mixture “the gospel in every age.” When the concoction contains contradictory instructions, he blames the Bible for the indigestion.

The word “gospel” means good news, but good news must be identified by its content. The announcement that Abraham’s seed would bless all nations was good news. The announcement that Israel’s promised kingdom had drawn near was good news. The proclamation that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again was good news. The warning that the Creator’s hour of judgment has come will be good news to those groaning beneath the Beast’s tyranny. Yet those messages do not say the same thing to the same people under the same circumstances. A physician may announce good news that a cure has been promised, that the doctor has arrived, that the operation has been completed, or that the disease is about to be eradicated. Every announcement concerns the same great purpose, but only a fool takes instructions intended for the waiting room and applies them halfway through surgery.

Right division is not an attempt to escape difficult verses, manufacture contradictions, or divide the Bible into portions that may be ignored. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to divide “the word of truth.” Every part is true, and that is why it must be placed correctly. Noah was truly commanded to build an ark. Abraham was truly commanded to circumcise his household. Israel was truly commanded to keep the sabbath. The Twelve were truly forbidden to enter Gentile cities. Peter truly commanded his Pentecost hearers to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Paul truly declared justification to him “that worketh not, but believeth.” An angel will truly command the Beast’s world to worship

the Creator because judgment has arrived. The Bible contains no error in any of those statements. Error begins when the reader changes the recipient, timing, or purpose.

1. The Word “Gospel” Is a Category, Not a Complete Definition

A gospel is an announcement of good news, but the word alone does not disclose every doctrinal ingredient. Scripture uses broad words whose precise content depends upon the surrounding passage. “Salvation” may describe deliverance from sin, physical death, military enemies, national destruction, sickness, or Tribulation judgment. “Baptism” may involve water, the Holy Ghost, fire, suffering, Moses, or spiritual placement into Christ’s body. “Kingdom” may refer to God’s universal rule, Israel’s promised earthly reign, spiritual entrance, Satan’s dominion, or the kingdoms of this world. A student who treats every occurrence as identical does not simplify the Bible; he removes the definitions God placed around the words.

The same rule governs “gospel.” Galatians 3:8 tells us exactly what was preached to Abraham: “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Matthew 4 identifies the gospel Christ preached as “the gospel of the kingdom.” Luke 9 says the Twelve were sent to preach the kingdom and then describes them “preaching the gospel.” First Corinthians 15 identifies Paul’s saving gospel through Christ’s death for our sins, burial, and resurrection. Revelation 14 identifies the everlasting gospel through the command to fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator because the hour of judgment has arrived. These passages define their announcements. The reader’s responsibility is to believe the definitions, not erase them because one familiar label appears above each.

This principle protects Scripture from false contradiction. If Acts 2:38 and First Corinthians 1:17 are identical instructions under one unchanging administration, then Peter makes baptism part of remission while Paul says Christ sent him not to baptize but to preach the gospel. If Matthew 24:13 and Ephesians 1:13–14 govern the same people in the same sense, then one passage makes salvation depend upon endurance to the end while the other says believers are sealed with the Spirit until redemption. If Matthew 10 and Paul’s Gentile commission are identical, Christ both forbids and commands going to Gentiles. Right division does not create these differences. It explains why they are not contradictions. The religious blender creates contradiction by first removing every divider God installed.

2. Abraham Heard the Promise of Blessing Through His Seed

The gospel preached before unto Abraham concerned God’s promise that blessing would reach all nations through him. Genesis 12 says God would make Abram a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless those blessing him, curse those cursing him, and

bring blessing to all families of the earth through him. Galatians 3:8 cites that announcement as gospel. The promise was glorious, gracious, and worldwide in reach, but it was not a detailed proclamation of Christ's completed death, burial, and resurrection. Abraham heard of a promised seed and believed the God who made the promise.

Genesis 15 records the precise setting in which righteousness was counted to Abraham. He remained childless, and God promised that an heir would come from his own bowels. The Lord brought him outside, pointed toward the stars, and said, "So shall thy seed be." Then Scripture says, "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Abraham believed God concerning the promised son and seed. Romans 4 later uses him to demonstrate imputed righteousness apart from works, but Paul does not pretend Abraham knew every fact later revealed at Calvary. The principle of taking God at His word remains; the words revealed for belief advance with God's program.

Christ was always the ultimate Seed through whom worldwide spiritual blessing would come. Galatians 3:16 says, "thy seed, which is Christ." God knew the cross before the foundation of the world, but God's foreknowledge did not make Abraham a preacher of First Corinthians 15. An eternal purpose in God's mind is not necessarily revealed content in man's mouth. Abraham could typify Calvary in offering Isaac, rejoice to see Christ's day, and trust in resurrection power without possessing Paul's completed gospel. The promise contained the appointed oak, but Abraham received it as an acorn. Later revelation displayed branches he had never been asked to count.

3. Israel Heard That Her Promised Kingdom Had Drawn Near

John the Baptist appeared in Judaea announcing, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His message arose from Israel's covenants and prophets. God had promised Abraham a land and nation, Judah a sceptre, David an everlasting throne, and Israel a righteous King. Isaiah described Jerusalem exalted, nations flowing to the Lord's house, swords beaten into plowshares, and creation transformed beneath Messiah's reign. Jeremiah foretold a righteous Branch executing judgment and justice in the earth. Daniel saw the Son of man receiving dominion over peoples, nations, and languages. John did not invent a new religious slogan; he announced the approach of Israel's long-promised kingdom.

Jesus Christ continued that proclamation. Matthew 4 says He preached, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and went throughout Galilee "preaching the gospel of the kingdom." He came as "the son of David, the son of Abraham," born King of the Jews and made under the law. Romans 15:8 identifies Him as "a minister of the circumcision" confirming the promises made unto the fathers. His miracles supplied Messianic and

kingdom credentials. Blind eyes opened, deaf ears heard, lepers were cleansed, devils were expelled, storms obeyed, bread multiplied, and the dead rose. The King did not merely claim authority; creation testified that its rightful Ruler had entered the realm.

The Twelve received the same message and credentials. They were commanded to preach, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” while healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and casting out devils. Their audience was restricted: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles” but “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” That commission cannot be Paul’s gospel to all nations unless words no longer possess meaning. The Twelve preached good news about Israel’s approaching kingdom before understanding that Christ must die and rise. The crown was genuinely offered before the cross was comprehended. God later revealed more, but later revelation does not crawl backward through history and place Pauline doctrine inside sermons that Scripture itself defines differently.

4. Peter Confronted Israel Through the Kingdom Door in Acts

Pentecost occurred in Jerusalem during an Israelite feast among Jews and proselytes gathered from many nations. The miraculous tongues were recognizable languages and served as a sign to Israel. Peter addressed “Ye men of Judaea,” “ye men of Israel,” and finally “all the house of Israel.” He quoted Joel’s prophecy concerning Israel’s last days and David’s prophecy concerning Messiah’s resurrection. His sermon was not delivered to an undifferentiated Gentile audience. Every feature—from the feast to the prophets to the repeated pronouns—kept the message tied to Israel’s national crisis.

Peter charged Israel with killing her Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth had been approved among them by miracles, wonders, and signs, but they had taken Him and by wicked hands crucified and slain Him. God raised Him from the dead and made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ. When the convicted hearers asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter answered, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” The response addressed Israelites facing the national guilt of rejecting their King. It involved apostolic authority, kingdom expectation, and public identification with the Messiah the nation had murdered.

Acts 3 makes the kingdom connection unmistakable. Peter again addressed “Ye men of Israel,” invoked the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and repeated the murder charge. He then called the nation to repent so that sins might be blotted out, “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ.” Heaven would receive Christ until the restitution of all things spoken by the prophets. Peter’s appeal looked toward Israel’s restoration and the return of her King. The rulers rejected the witness, climaxing in Stephen’s murder, and Acts turned toward Paul. Peter

had held a genuine kingdom door open to Israel; Israel's leadership responded by throwing stones through it.

5. Paul Proclaimed the Gospel of Grace to Jew and Gentile

The risen Christ stopped Saul of Tarsus and commissioned him directly from heaven. Paul's apostleship was "not of men, neither by man," and his gospel was not received or taught by man. Galatians 1 says it came "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul did not inherit the Twelve's limited commission to Israel. Christ sent him far hence unto the Gentiles and made him "the apostle of the Gentiles." Through Paul, God explained the cross in full doctrinal clarity and revealed a dispensation centred upon grace rather than Israel's national kingdom offer.

First Corinthians 15 defines Paul's gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Romans explains its saving effect. All have sinned, the law can justify no flesh, and righteousness is manifested without the law. The believing sinner is "justified freely" through redemption in Christ and receives peace with God. Romans 4 excludes works: "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," faith is counted for righteousness. Salvation does not rest upon national repentance, Mosaic observance, water baptism for remission, miraculous credentials, or endurance through the Beast's reign. It rests upon Christ's completed work.

Paul's gospel also unveils the one body and the believer's heavenly position. Saved Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God "in one body by the cross." By one Spirit they are baptized into that body, accepted in the Beloved, sealed until the day of redemption, and seated in heavenly places in Christ. This "one new man" is not Israel renamed or Gentiles converted into covenant Jews. It is a mystery body whose full doctrinal character was specially revealed through Paul. Romans through Philemon therefore provide the present Church's governing doctrine. Remove Paul from his God-appointed position, and the believer will soon be wearing Israel's garments, carrying Peter's keys, fearing the Beast's mark, and wondering why grace no longer feels finished.

6. Revelation Announces Judgment and the Kingdom's Return

Revelation 14 presents an angel flying in the midst of heaven with "the everlasting gospel." His audience includes every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. His message is stated plainly: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come," and worship the One who made heaven, earth, sea, and fountains of waters. The angel does not preach justification by faith, membership in Christ's body, or salvation through believing the death, burial, and resurrection. His announcement belongs to the Beast's world at the arrival of divine judgment.

The message is good news because the Creator is about to destroy the creature-worshipping system of Antichrist. The Beast claims worldwide dominion, the false prophet enforces worship, the mark controls commerce, and Babylon corrupts the nations. The everlasting gospel declares that the rightful Owner is coming to reclaim His creation. It commands men to abandon the creature and worship the Creator while time remains. The same announcement is good news to persecuted saints and a sentence of doom to Beast worshippers. Liberation always sounds threatening to the occupying army.

During Daniel's seventieth week, the gospel of the kingdom likewise returns to worldwide prominence. Matthew 24 says, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The 144,000 are sealed from Israel's tribes, two witnesses prophesy in Jerusalem, saints refuse the mark, and the King's visible return draws near. Endurance, obedience, and refusal of Beast worship become matters of life, death, and final allegiance. These commands belong to that prophetic furnace. Putting the Church inside it does not make Paul's gospel more complete. It makes a sealed member of Christ's body depend upon surviving instructions written for another company after the body is gone.

7. Right Division Reveals One Purpose Without Producing One Stew

God's announcements differ, but His purpose is not divided against itself. The blessing promised through Abraham leads ultimately to Christ. Israel's kingdom proclamation presents Christ as David's King. Peter announces that the rejected Christ has risen and can return to restore the nation. Paul explains Christ's cross as the complete basis of justification and reveals His headship over one body. The everlasting gospel announces Christ's Creator rights and approaching judgment. The future kingdom witness prepares the nations for Christ's visible reign. Every road moves toward the same Lord, but the traffic signs do not give identical instructions at every mile.

The doctrinal map becomes clear when five questions are asked. Who is speaking? To whom is he speaking? What message is being announced? What response is required? Where does the passage stand in God's unfolding program? Abraham heard a promise concerning blessing through his seed. Israel heard that the kingdom had drawn near. Pentecost hearers faced a national murder charge and apostolic baptismal command. Present sinners hear that Christ died for their sins, was buried, and rose again. The Beast's world will hear that judgment has arrived and the kingdom is near. Those questions do not weaken faith. They keep faith attached to what God actually said.

Refusing the distinctions produces doctrinal chaos with practical consequences. Abraham's promise becomes a substitute for Paul's gospel. Israel's kingdom signs become

Church expectations. Peter's baptism becomes part of justification. Tribulation endurance becomes a threat against eternal security. The Beast's mark becomes an object of present Christian panic. Israel's covenants become Church property, and the Church's heavenly calling disappears beneath earthly promises. Religion then spends centuries writing systematic explanations for contradictions it created in five minutes with a blender. God is not the author of confusion. Man supplies the blender, pulls the switch, and complains about the noise.

Conclusion

The gospel before Paul, the gospel during Israel's kingdom presentation, Paul's gospel of grace, the everlasting gospel, and the future kingdom proclamation all belong in the same perfect Bible. None should be erased, softened, or rewritten to sound like the others.

Abraham's good news concerned promised blessing. John, Christ, and the Twelve announced Israel's approaching kingdom. Peter confronted the nation with its risen Messiah and kept the kingdom door open through a call to repentance. Paul proclaimed justification through Christ's completed death, burial, and resurrection and unveiled the mystery of one body. Revelation's angel announces Creator worship as judgment arrives, while future kingdom witnesses prepare the earth for the King's return.

The unity lies in Jesus Christ, not in pretending every instruction is identical. He is Abraham's promised Seed, David's royal Son, Israel's rejected Messiah, the Lamb who died for our sins, the risen Head of the Church, the Judge of the Beast's world, and the King who will rule the nations. The same Christ can occupy several offices and relationships without Scripture becoming confused. A man may be a son, husband, father, employer, and citizen without those relationships becoming interchangeable. Christ's many revealed offices display His fullness. Right division allows each glory to remain where God placed it.

The present sinner must therefore receive the present gospel. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The man who believes is justified freely, reconciled to God, sealed by the Spirit, placed into Christ's body, and made complete in Him. He is not required to build Abraham's altar, seek Israel's kingdom signs, answer Peter's national indictment, survive Daniel's seventieth week, or wait for an angel in midheaven. The Bible is one, Christ is one, and God's purpose is one—but the announcements must be rightly divided. **Read the address, believe the message, and leave the blender unplugged.**

The Gospel Before, During, and After Paul: Good News Rightly Divided

Series Conclusion

Key Passage: First Corinthians 14:33 — “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

We have reached the end of this study with one conclusion standing like a fence post driven into concrete: the King James Bible contains several announcements properly called “gospel,” but those announcements are not identical messages delivered to identical people under identical circumstances with identical instructions. Abraham heard good news concerning blessing through his promised seed. Israel heard good news that her covenanted kingdom had drawn near. The Twelve preached that kingdom before they understood the cross. Peter confronted Israel after Calvary with the murder of her Messiah and held open a prophetic door to national restoration. Paul received from the risen Christ the gospel of grace and the mystery of one body. Revelation presents an angel with the everlasting gospel when the Creator’s judgment has arrived. After the Church is gone, the gospel of the kingdom will again sound across the earth before the King returns. Every message is true, every passage is inspired, every announcement serves God’s purpose, and not one of them needs to be poured into the religious blender to make the Bible whole.

The Bible never asked men to create unity by erasing its distinctions. God created the distinctions Himself. He separated light from darkness, waters above from waters below, Israel from the nations, clean from unclean, priest from people, law from grace, prophecy from mystery, and the earthly kingdom from the heavenly body. The same God who divides also joins according to His purpose, but He never asks a theologian to achieve harmony by dissolving the borders He drew. A map without borders may look peaceful on a classroom wall, but it is worthless to a traveller. Likewise, a Bible without dispensational divisions may appear simpler from the pulpit, but it leaves the hearer lost between Sinai, Pentecost, the body of Christ, and the Beast’s kingdom.

The command of Second Timothy 2:15 remains the only honest approach: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God.” Study is required because the Bible is not a children’s placemat printed with one sentence in large letters. It is a Book containing history, law, poetry, prophecy, covenants, kingdoms, mysteries, transitions, judgments, and promises. The approved workman must rightly divide “the word of truth.” He does not divide truth from error as though some biblical passages were unreliable. He divides one true administration from another, one audience from another, and one set of instructions from another. The ashamed workman collects every command, removes the address, puts his own name at the top, and then wonders why he has been ordered both to enter Gentile cities and avoid them.

The first essay established that Abraham heard genuine good news without preaching First Corinthians 15. Galatians 3:8 identified the announcement: "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Genesis 15 identified the promise Abraham believed: God would give him an heir from his own body and multiply his seed as the stars. Abraham believed the Lord, and righteousness was counted to him. That truth supplies a magnificent example of faith and imputation, but it does not turn Abraham into a Church-age evangelist carrying a message not yet revealed. God knew Calvary from eternity; Abraham did not therefore possess Romans through Philemon under his tent. Faith does not mean predicting unrevealed doctrine. Faith means believing what God has spoken.

We then followed the gospel of the kingdom as it entered Israel through John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" was not an announcement that the body of Christ had arrived. It was a national summons rooted in promises made to Abraham, Judah, David, and Israel. The kingdom had a King, throne, capital, territory, laws, subjects, and prophetic expectation. Christ's miracles were credentials of that kingdom. The blind saw, the deaf heard, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, devils were cast out, and the dead were raised. Isaiah had described those signs, and Jesus performed them in Israel's streets. The kingdom was not a religious mood floating through the air; its powers had arrived in the hands of the King.

Romans 15:8 then located Christ's earthly ministry with inspired precision: "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." He was made under the law, sent to the lost sheep of Israel, and presented as the Son of David. He instructed cleansed lepers to offer what Moses commanded, told hearers to respect those occupying Moses' seat, and sent the Twelve away from Gentile cities. Every red-letter word remains true, holy, and profitable, but every red-letter command is not a direct doctrinal order to the body of Christ. The risen Christ did not lose authority when printers changed the ink from red to black. Paul's epistles are as much the words of Christ as anything spoken beside Galilee, for the same Lord revealed them from heaven.

The testimony of the Twelve drove the distinction beyond honest dispute. Luke 9 says they preached the gospel and identifies their message as the kingdom of God. Later, Christ told them He would be delivered, mocked, scourged, killed, and raised again. Luke 18 declares that they understood none of those things, the saying was hidden from them, and they did not know what He meant. Peter had already preached the gospel, yet rebuked Christ for announcing His death. The Twelve could not have been preaching the cross as saving content while opposing and failing to understand it. The crown had been announced before

the cross was understood. That fact does not insult the apostles; it exposes the tradition that puts words in their mouths.

After the resurrection, Christ opened the disciples' understanding, and Peter confronted Israel at Pentecost. He addressed Jews gathered in Jerusalem, cited Israel's prophets, charged Israel with crucifying Jesus, and concluded, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly." When the convicted hearers asked what they should do, Peter commanded repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The answer is not to rewrite Acts 2:38 until it sounds like Romans 4:5. The answer is to leave Peter's command inside Peter's audience, apostolic authority, and transitional setting. Acts is a bridge, and bridges contain movement. Only religion erects a house in the middle of one chapter and announces that nothing afterward is allowed to change.

Acts 3 made Peter's kingdom expectation unmistakable. He called Israel to repent and be converted so that her sins might be blotted out when the times of refreshing came from the Lord's presence and God sent Jesus Christ from heaven. Peter pointed toward "the times of restitution of all things" spoken by the prophets. He did not reveal the catching away of the body of Christ or the heavenly position of one new man. He offered Israel the return of her King and the fulfilment of prophetic restoration. Israel's rulers rejected that witness, resisted the Holy Ghost, murdered Stephen, and demonstrated once more that religious men will throw stones at truth when they cannot answer Scripture.

Grace then walked through the door religion had barricaded and met Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road. The Lord chose the chief persecutor to become the apostle of the Gentiles. Paul's commission did not descend through Peter, Jerusalem, human ordination, or religious succession. It came directly from the risen Christ. Galatians 1 says Paul's gospel was not after man, received from man, or taught by man; it came "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The man who had trusted in circumcision, Hebrew ancestry, Pharisaical discipline, and legal righteousness learned to count the entire religious account as dung. God did not renovate the Pharisee. He buried the old account beneath the righteousness of Christ.

Paul's gospel blazed with a clarity religion has spent two thousand years trying to dim. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Romans declares all men guilty, shuts every mouth, and removes the deeds of the law from justification. The believer is justified freely by grace through redemption in Christ Jesus. Romans 4 says righteousness is counted "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." The gospel does not ask the sinner to assist Christ with the payment. It announces that the debt was settled before the sinner reached the cashier.

Through that finished work, the believer receives more than religious improvement. He is justified, redeemed, reconciled, forgiven, accepted in the Beloved, sealed by the Holy Spirit, spiritually circumcised without hands, baptized by one Spirit into one body, and made complete in Christ. Peace with God is not a fragile emotion maintained by flawless behaviour. It is an established relationship grounded in Christ's blood. The believer may lose joy, fellowship, reward, testimony, and usefulness through sin, but he does not fall out of the body every time the old nature stumbles. Christ's body is not assembled with denominational glue. The Spirit joins the believer to the risen Head and seals him unto the day of redemption.

Paul called this message "my gospel" because Christ had entrusted it to him as a distinct stewardship. Those words do not make Paul the author of salvation; they identify him as the appointed apostle through whom Christ revealed the doctrine governing the Church. Romans 16:25 says God establishes believers according to Paul's gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. That mystery included saved Jews and Gentiles made fellowheirs and members of the same body. Gentile blessing under Israel had been prophesied, but a new spiritual body possessing an equal heavenly standing had been hidden until its appointed revelation. Paul did not replace Jesus Christ. Paul delivered what Jesus Christ said after returning to heaven.

Romans through Philemon therefore supply the Church's governing doctrine. All Scripture remains inspired and profitable, but every book does not carry the same doctrinal address. Genesis reveals beginnings, the law governs Israel's covenant life, the prophets declare Israel's judgment and restoration, the Gospels present Israel's King and His sacrifice, Acts records the transition, and Revelation unveils the consummation. Paul's epistles explain the present believer's salvation, standing, walk, local church order, spiritual conflict, judgment, and hope. A man can learn from every room in the house without sleeping in the furnace. Wisdom explores the whole building; presumption moves the bed into the first room containing a favourite verse.

The everlasting gospel in Revelation supplied another decisive witness against the religious blender. An angel flies in the midst of heaven and commands the Beast's world to fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator because the hour of judgment has come. That message is explicitly called gospel, yet it does not mention Christ dying for our sins, being buried, or rising again. Its setting is the final satanic empire, its messenger is angelic, its audience is worldwide, and its emphasis is Creator worship under approaching wrath. The gospel is everlasting because God's right as Creator and Judge never expires. It is good news because Antichrist's counterfeit kingdom is about to be crushed beneath the returning King.

After the Church's course is completed, the gospel of the kingdom will again move to the prophetic foreground. Matthew 24 places it beside Judaea, the temple, the sabbath, Daniel's abomination, unprecedented tribulation, and the visible coming of the Son of man. The 144,000 are sealed from the tribes of Israel, two witnesses prophesy in Jerusalem, and an angel warns the world from heaven. Beast worship controls commerce, and accepting the mark carries eternal consequences. Tribulation saints must refuse the image, keep God's commandments, maintain the faith of Jesus, and endure through a world determined to kill them. Those conditions are not Paul's doctrine for the body of Christ. They belong to Israel's resumed prophetic program after the body is gone.

When Tribulation instructions are stolen and forced upon a Christian today, assurance disappears almost instantly. Matthew 24:13 becomes a warning that salvation depends upon endurance. Revelation's mark becomes an object of present fear. Hebrew warnings become threats that a member of Christ's body can be severed from the Head. Peter's baptism becomes part of justification. Israel's sabbath becomes a Gentile obligation. Kingdom forgiveness becomes a denial of Pauline forgiveness, and the believer who is sealed until redemption is told he must preserve himself through a prophetic period from which God promised deliverance. The religious blender can turn a finished salvation into an unfinished obstacle course before the blades complete one revolution.

The consequences do not end with personal confusion. When Israel and the Church are blended, Israel's covenants are stolen, her future restoration is denied, and her earthly kingdom is spiritualized into a Gentile religious institution. David's throne becomes a metaphor, Jerusalem loses its prophetic place, and Romans 9–11 is treated like an embarrassing interruption. Yet Paul says Israel's blindness is partial and temporary, that "all Israel shall be saved," and that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God has not forgotten Abraham, David, or Israel. The same faithfulness securing the Church's heavenly hope guarantees Israel's earthly restoration. A God who could revoke Israel's unconditional covenants would provide little comfort to a Church resting upon His promises.

Right division therefore protects the glory of God's faithfulness. It lets God keep every promise to the people He named. Abraham retains his seed and covenants. Israel retains her prophetic kingdom. The Twelve retain their apostolic relationship to the twelve tribes. Peter retains his kingdom keys. Paul retains his stewardship of grace. The body of Christ retains its heavenly calling. Tribulation saints retain their appointed warnings. The 144,000 remain literal servants from Israel's tribes. The angel retains his everlasting gospel, and Christ retains every crown. Nothing is discarded; everything is placed.

This placement reveals a magnificent unity no religious blender can reproduce. Jesus Christ is the Seed promised through Abraham, the Son of David presented to Israel, the suffering Lamb rejected at the First Advent, the risen Lord who called Paul, the Head of the body, the Judge announced by the angel, and the King proclaimed before the end. Prophecy and mystery meet in Him without becoming identical. The cross accomplishes redemption, the resurrection guarantees victory, the Rapture gathers His body, the Second Advent rescues Israel and judges the nations, and the kingdom places the crown upon the head men once covered with thorns. The Bible's distinctions do not divide Christ. They display the full range of His glory.

A symphony is not unified because every instrument plays the same note. Its unity comes from every instrument playing the correct part under one composer. Abraham sounded the promise. John announced the King. The Twelve proclaimed the kingdom. Peter confronted Israel with the risen Messiah. Paul declared the finished cross and revealed the mystery. The angel will announce judgment. Kingdom witnesses will herald the King's return. Each note belongs to the same divine composition, but forcing every instrument to play Paul's measure at every point would destroy the music. God wrote the score; the workman's task is to stop rearranging it.

The great practical question is not whether a man can correctly name every dispensation on a chart. The question is whether he believes the message God addresses to him now. A sinner today is not commanded to wait for Isaac, prepare for Israel's kingdom, offer a Mosaic sacrifice, answer Peter's national murder charge, resist the Beast's mark, or listen for an angel in midheaven. He is commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. That is the gospel by which Paul says believers are saved. God is not asking the sinner to help finish Calvary. He is asking whether the sinner will believe it was finished.

Religion hates that simplicity because grace leaves no place for its tollbooths. If salvation is entirely complete in Jesus Christ, the priest cannot sell access, the sacrament cannot supply merit, the denomination cannot own the doorway, and the law cannot send an invoice. The sinner arrives empty and receives everything in Christ. His boasting is excluded, his works are denied a vote, and his religion is counted loss. The cross does not need decoration; it needs proclamation. The tomb does not need improvement; it needs witnesses. Grace does not need an assistant; it needs a believer.

The saved believer must then build doctrine upon the right foundation. Romans through Philemon establish his identity, security, responsibility, service, and hope. He should study the whole Bible, preach the whole Bible, defend the whole Bible, and learn from the whole Bible. But he must not allow anyone to drag him beneath another people's covenant or

another age's conditions. The law may instruct him, the prophets may warn him, the Gospels may reveal his Saviour, Acts may show the transition, Hebrews may display Christ's superiority, and Revelation may unveil the end—but Paul's epistles tell him where he presently stands in Christ.

The Church is not Israel, the Rapture is not the Second Advent, the body of Christ is not the kingdom of heaven, water baptism is not spiritual baptism into Christ, the gospel of the kingdom is not Paul's gospel, and the everlasting gospel is not First Corinthians 15. Those distinctions are not optional decorations for advanced students. They are load-bearing walls. Remove them, and the doctrinal ceiling collapses upon salvation, security, prophecy, ecclesiology, and Christian living. A man may survive beneath the rubble, but he should not advertise the pile as a cathedral.

This series has not produced several Bibles, several gods, or several competing Christs. It has allowed one perfect Bible to speak according to its own divisions. God is not the author of confusion. He does not command one people to build an ark while commanding another to remain in the city and then expect both to obey simultaneously. He does not forbid Gentile ministry in Matthew 10 and commission Gentile ministry through Paul without providing a dispensational explanation. He does not seal the believer unto redemption and then place him beneath the Beast's mark as though the Spirit's seal carried an expiration date. Confusion begins where context ends.

The answer is not complicated, although religion has built an industry around making it appear so. Read the passage. Identify the speaker. Mark the audience. Observe the historical setting. Determine the revealed message. Note the required response. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Give Paul his appointed place as the apostle of the Gentiles. Leave Israel's promises with Israel. Leave Tribulation warnings in the Tribulation. Leave the kingdom gospel with the kingdom, and proclaim the gospel of grace during the dispensation of grace. A man does not need a committee to read an address. He needs enough honesty to stop opening somebody else's mail.

The final word of this series must therefore return to the cross and empty tomb. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried. He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The sinner who believes is justified freely, reconciled completely, sealed securely, and placed permanently into Christ. The King who died will return, Israel will be restored, the Beast will be destroyed, the kingdom will be established, and every promise will reach its appointed fulfilment. Until then, the Church has one clear commission and one saving message to proclaim.

One Bible contains several announcements because one sovereign God has spoken at different times to different people as His purpose unfolded. Every announcement belongs in the Book, every distinction honours the Author, and every line ultimately bends toward Jesus Christ. The religious blender may keep spinning in seminaries, pulpits, councils, and denominations, but its noise cannot alter one preserved word. **Believe the Book as God divided it, preach the gospel as Paul received it, and let no man pour unfinished religion into the finished work of Jesus Christ.**

THE GOSPEL BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER PAUL

GOOD NEWS RIGHTLY DIVIDED

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 • GALATIANS 3:8 • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4 • MATTHEW 24:14 • REVELATION 14:6-7

CENTRAL TRUTH

Every gospel contains good news, but the word "gospel" does not erase audience, timing, content, or required response. Right division preserves each announcement and establishes the Church in Paul's gospel.

"rightly dividing the word of truth." — 2 Timothy 2:15

1 ABRAHAM HEARD PROMISED BLESSING

- "In thee shall all nations be blessed." — Galatians 3:8
- Promise: seed, nation, land, worldwide blessing. — Genesis 12:1-3
- Abraham believed God concerning the promised seed. — Genesis 15:5-6
- He did not preach Christ's completed death, burial, and resurrection.

2 THE KINGDOM DREW NIGH TO ISRAEL

- John: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." — Matthew 3:2
- Jesus preached "the gospel of the kingdom." — Matthew 4:23
- The promised King, Davidic throne, and earthly reign stood in view.
- Kingdom signs authenticated the King: healing, cleansing, deliverance.

3 CHRIST MINISTERED TO THE CIRCUMCISION

- "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision." — Romans 15:8
- He was "made under the law." — Galatians 4:4
- His primary mission: "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." — Matthew 15:24
- He confirmed promises made unto Israel's fathers.

4 THE TWELVE PREACHED BEFORE UNDERSTANDING THE CROSS

- Sent "to preach the kingdom of God." — Luke 9:2
- They were "preaching the gospel." — Luke 9:6
- Christ foretold His death and resurrection. — Luke 18:31-33
- "They understood none of these things." — Luke 18:34
- Peter rebuked the Lord for speaking of His death. — Matthew 16:21-23

5 PETER CONFRONTED ISRAEL AT PENTECOST

- Audience: "all the house of Israel." — Acts 2:14
- Charge: "Whom ye have crucified." — Acts 2:36
- Command: repent and be baptized for remission. — Acts 2:38
- Promise: times of refreshing and Christ sent again. — Acts 3:19-21
- This was a national, apostolic, kingdom appeal.

6 PAUL PROCLAIMED THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

- Ministry received from the risen Lord. — Acts 20:24
- "Christ died for our sins." — 1 Corinthians 15:3
- "He was buried... he rose again the third day." — 1 Corinthians 15:4
- Justified freely through redemption in Christ. — Romans 3:24
- Saved by grace through faith, "not of works." — Ephesians 2:8-9

7 MY GOSPEL AND THE REVEALED MYSTERY

- "According to my gospel." — Romans 2:16, 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8
- Received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." — Galatians 1:11-12
- Jew and Gentile reconciled in one body. — Ephesians 2:14-16
- Believers baptized by one Spirit into one body. — 1 Corinthians 12:13
- The Church's governing doctrine: Romans through Philemon.

8 AN ANGEL PREACHES THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

- Messenger: an angel flying in midheaven. — Revelation 14:6
- Audience: every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.
- "Fear God, and give glory to him." — Revelation 14:7
- Worship the Creator: "the hour of his judgment is come."
- This is not Paul's present justification message.

9 AFTER THE CHURCH, THE KINGDOM WITNESS RETURNS

- "This gospel of the kingdom" reaches all nations. — Matthew 24:14
- Setting: Daniel's seventieth week, Israel, temple, Tribulation.
- 144,000 servants sealed from Israel's tribes. — Revelation 7:3-8
- Saints refuse the Beast's mark and eat. — Revelation 14:9-12
- The visible King returns in power and glory. — Matthew 24:29-31

10 THE RELIGIOUS BLENDER CREATES CONFUSION

- Since word "gospel" does not guarantee identical content.
- Ask: WHO speaks? TO WHOM? WHAT message? WHAT response? WHEN?
- All Scripture is for our learning. — Romans 15:4
- Paul's epistles directly govern the Body of Christ.
- Never prescribe another dispensation's medicine by reading only the label.

FROM PROMISE TO KINGDOM — THE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN ORDER

ABRAHAM — PROMISED BLESSING	JOHN & CHRIST — KINGDOM AT HAND	CROSS & EMPTY TOMB — WORK FINISHED	PETER — APPEAL TO ISRAEL	PAUL — GRACE AND ONE BODY	CHURCH CAUGHT UP — 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-17	TRIBULATION — KINGDOM WITNESS	SECOND ADVENT — THE KING RETURNS
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The Person is one; the revealed messages and administrations must remain in their appointed places.

THREE ANNOUNCEMENTS — DO NOT MIX THE ADDRESSES

	A. GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM	B. PAUL'S GOSPEL OF GRACE — FOR TODAY	C. THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL
Messenger	John, Christ, the Twelve	Paul, apostle of the Gentiles	Angel in midheaven
Audience	Israel; future nations	Jew and Gentile without distinction	Beast's worldwide population
Content	The King and kingdom draw nigh	Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again	Fear God, give glory, worship the Creator
Response	Repent; kingdom obedience and endurance in its setting	Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ	The hour of judgment is come
Hope	Earthly reign and Second Advent	Justified, sealed, placed into one body The blessed hope and Rapture	Revelation 14, approaching wrath

BELIEVE

BELIEVE:
Receive Paul's gospel of Christ's finished work. — 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

REJECT

REJECT:
Refuse water, law, signs, or endurance added to present justification.

REMEMBER

REMEMBER:
Every verse is true, but every command is not addressed to the Church.

TEACH

TEACH:
Preserve Israel, the Church, prophecy, mystery, Rapture, and Second Advent in their places.

CONCLUSION — HOLD THE LINE OF RIGHT DIVISION

God's word is settled in heaven; our responsibility is faithfulness here.

Right division honors God's order and protects every calling.

All things work together for good to them that love God. — Romans 8:28

Be ready: the Bride for the Rapture, the world for the King! — 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

KEY VERSE

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. — 2 Timothy 2:15

ONE SAVIOUR. ONE PERFECT BIBLE. SEVERAL GOOD-NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS IN THEIR APPOINTED PLACES.

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