

DID PETER AND PAUL PREACH DIFFERENT GOSPELS?

HOW MANY GOSPELS IN THE BIBLE?

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In I Corinthians 4:1 to 3 we learn that the servants of Christ are instructed to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. In I Corinthians 1:10 these servants are told to speak the same thing, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment; not to be divided.

The Lord's stewards are not perfectly joined together in the same mind concerning the meaning of Paul's statement in Galatians 2:7; and they certainly do not speak the same thing in explaining the meaning of this verse. On the contrary, some of the Lord's servants not only differ with other stewards of the mysteries of God concerning the meaning of Paul's statement in Galatians 2:7, but they are very ungracious in their attitude toward those who disagree with them. They permit themselves to be stirred to indignation and disgust, if not contempt and hatred, against those who do not accept their exegesis.

If any intelligent Christian should read Galatians 2:7, and some theologian should not interfere with his thinking, what would that Christian decide after reading,—“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul), as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter?” That Christian would surely decide Paul wrote to the Galatians that the Lord had committed unto him (Paul) “the gospel of the uncircumcision,” and unto Peter, “the gospel of the circumcision.” If there is any meaning to language, that Christian would decide that “the gospel of the uncircumcision” and “the gospel of the circumcision” are not one and the same gospel. In the Greek the genitive is used. The word is “of” and not “to”. The gospel “of” the uncircumcision. The gospel “of” the circumcision.

The servants of the Lord, who insist that Paul meant to say that the same gospel that the risen Christ authorized him to preach to the Gentiles He gave to Peter for the Jews, are the very same men who insist that Peter and his associates, who were Christ's apostles before Paul was converted, went all over Asia and Europe preaching to Gentiles, after Paul was converted. In Galatians 2:9 they agreed to go to the Jews. If they agreed to go to the Jews and went to the Gentiles, they did not do what they agreed to do. These Christians acknowledge that they get their ideas as to the evangelization of Gentiles by the twelve apostles from church history, and not from the Bible.

Moreover, it is a fact that the same Bible teachers, who teach that Paul and the twelve apostles preached the same gospel, (Paul to the Gentiles and the other apostles to the Jews), teach that Peter and James set forth God's program for this age when they uttered the truth of

Acts 15:14: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.” Is this God's program for this age? This program was publicly stated by Peter and James in the city of Jerusalem about the very same time these two men and Paul agreed on their different ministries, as recorded in Galatians 2:9—”And when James, Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

Now let God's people permit the Holy Spirit to lead them and to help them use a little common sense in answering this question: “If God's program, as described by Peter and James, was to visit the Gentiles and take out of them a people for His name, did Peter and James have a part in God's program when they agreed to go to the Jews?” Remember, it was Peter and James who agreed to go to the Jews at the time they declared that God's program was to visit the Gentiles and take out of them a people for His name. Peter and James, by going to Jews, could not help God to take out from the Gentiles a people for His name. Compare Acts 15:14 and Galatians 2:9. Also Acts 15:14 with Ephesians 2:15 to 18.

Now keep in mind that the very same Bible teachers, who teach that there are not two gospels in Galatians 2:7, but the same gospel to be taken by different apostles to different groups, also teach that God's program for this age was declared by Peter and James, in Acts 15:14. They also agree that the decision of Galatians 2:9 had the sanction of the Lord. Surely we must all be agreed that the Lord could not use Peter and James to visit the Gentiles, if He sent them to preach to the Jews. Did they go to the Jews, as they agreed in Galatians 2:9, or did they go to the Gentiles? In answering this question read Galatians 2:11 to 14. In these verses we learn that because of James and other Israelites Peter would not have fellowship with saved Gentiles. Do you believe that the Lord would send to the unsaved Gentiles James and Peter, when James would not permit Peter to eat with saved Gentiles?

Now strange as it may seem, the very same Bible teachers, who teach that God's program is Acts 15:14 and that Peter and Paul preached the same gospel, teach that at the time James and Peter declared that God was visiting the Gentiles to take out a people for His name, God's order was, “to the Jews first and also to the Gentiles,” in harmony with Romans 1:16. They say that this explains why Paul, before and after the declaration of Acts 15:14, went to the Jews before he went to the Gentiles. But this explanation certainly clashes with their explanation of Galatians 2:7 and 2:9. If God's program was to visit the Gentiles and Paul was to go to the Gentiles, why did Paul go to the Jews first? Why did Paul go to the Jews at all, if Galatians 2:7 means that Peter was to go to the Jews with the same gospel that Paul was to preach to the Gentiles? Why do Bible teachers, who are bitterly opposed to other servants of the Lord who insist that Paul was given a distinctive ministry and message for the Gentiles, diligently search church history to prove that Peter and his fellow-apostles went to many different countries to preach to the Gentiles when they explain Galatians 2:7 and 9 to mean that Peter was to go to the circumcision and Paul to the uncircumcision?

There is something radically wrong with such thinking if it can be called “thinking.”

QUOTATIONS FROM PETER'S AND PAUL'S EPISTLES

Now let us compare Paul's statement in I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 with Peter's statement in I Peter 3:18:

“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, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, 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.”

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

Believers are saved by the gospel set forth by Paul in I Corinthians 15:1 to 4. But in my judgment there is no more definite, true statement of the gospel, in any of Paul's messages, than we have in I Peter 3:18. This is one of my favorite verses in preaching to sinners. Then think of I Peter 2:24 and I Peter 1:18 to 20. In these verses we learn that we are redeemed by the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, because the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Then in I Peter 5:10 we learn that it is Peter who calls God, “the God of all grace.”

It is true that there seems to be quite a difference between Peter's message to the Gentiles in Acts 10:34 and 35, and Paul's message to the Gentiles, in Romans 4:4 and 5. Note the difference.

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.”

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

And yet Peter continued in his message to Gentiles to say that Christ died and was raised from the dead and whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins. (Acts 10:39 to 43)

Every Spirit-taught Christian knows that without the shedding of blood there is no remission; that Christ's blood was shed for the remission of sins and that there is no remission of sins, or redemption, for one single person apart from faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners are reconciled to God by the death of God's Son. (Romans 5:10; Matthew 26:28; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 1:20 and 21; Ephesians 1:6 and 7.)

But because we know that faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only way for the sinner to be saved, are we to say there is only one gospel in the Bible, and that the meaning of Galatians 2:7 is that Paul and Peter preached the same gospel to different groups? Those, who do say this, think they have proved their assertion by Galatians 1:9—”If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

In the verses immediately preceding this ninth verse the Holy Spirit led Paul to write that the perverted gospel, a mixture of law and grace, was not another gospel. So from these verses there are sincere faithful servants of the Lord who teach that there is no gospel in the Bible other than I Corinthians 15:1 to 4, the fact that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and raised again; all in fulfillment of prophecy. (Acts 13:29 and 30) (Luke 18:31 to 35).

These sincere brethren seem to think they must dogmatically and uncompromisingly contend for one and only one gospel in contending earnestly for the faith once-for-all delivered unto the saints.

There is such a thing as being sincerely wrong, having zeal without knowledge. If these brethren are wrong, it is because they have very much limited the word "gospel."

Let us note the "gospel" in several verses of Scripture:

"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." Matthew 24:14.

"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." Acts 20:24.

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." Colossians 1:5 and 6.

"If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." Colossians 1:23.

In these Scriptures we read of "the gospel of the kingdom" and "the gospel of the grace of God." Are these two gospels identical? The Lord Jesus, about 33 A.D., declared that the end would come when "the gospel of the kingdom" had been preached as a witness among all nations. About 25 years later Paul left Ephesus to end his course in preaching "the gospel of the grace of God." About 67 A.D. Paul declared that he had finished his course. (II Timothy 4:7.) A little later his earthly career ended. About the time Paul declared that he had ended his course he wrote that the gospel had come into all the world and was preached to every creature which is under heaven. When Christ said, in Matthew 24:14, the end would come, He was not referring to the end of Paul's earthly ministry. But the end, to which Christ referred in Matthew 24:14, did not come when Paul's gospel had been preached in all the world. Israel's tribulation is the chief subject of Matthew 21. And the end of the age, in that chapter, must be the end of an age different from this present age of grace.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Note these references to the gospel of the kingdom:

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." Matthew 4:23.

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:14 and 15.

“And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” “And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.” Luke 9:2 and 6.

“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 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; freely ye have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:6 to 8.

“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.” Luke 18:31 to 34.

“For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Matthew 23:39.

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” Luke 21:27 and 31.

“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” Matthew 25:31.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:32 and 33.

The word translated “gospel” means “good news.” When the Lord Jesus and His apostles were preaching “the gospel of the kingdom” they were healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers, giving limbs to the limbless, raising the dead. This is what Christ told His apostles to do, and what they did while He was on earth. “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; Whom they slew and hanged on a tree.” Acts 10:38 and 39. They healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (Acts 3:6). Note Acts 2:22 and Hebrews 2:4: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” “God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”

Certainly it was good news when a blind man heard that he could receive his sight in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. It was good news when a brokenhearted mother or father learned that their dead child could be brought back to life in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

And here is the record of the ministry of the twelve apostles—“they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.” Luke 9:6.

This is what Christ, in Matthew 10:6 to 8, told the Twelve to do. He did not command them to go to Gentiles and preach that they could be saved through faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ. This surely is “our gospel” in this present economy and age of grace. (II Corinthians 4:3 to 6).

We have only to compare Luke 9:6 with Luke 18:31 to 34 to learn that the twelve apostles, during the many months they were preaching “the gospel of the kingdom,” had not the slightest knowledge of the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4; that Christ died for our sins. Read very carefully Luke 18:31 to 34.

The kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, that was at hand for Israel, when Jesus of Nazareth and His twelve apostles were preaching “the gospel of the kingdom” in the land of the Jews, will be at hand again when the King shall come back. After this age of grace “the gospel of the kingdom” shall be preached as a witness among all nations.

Note what the King said, in Matthew 15:24: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

This is quite different from Romans 15:16 and Romans 11:30: “That I (Paul) should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” “For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their (Israel's) unbelief.”

Here we have grace for Gentiles, because of Israel's unbelief. Now compare these statements with Acts 15:16 and 17:

“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, Who doeth all these things.”

Here we have God's order in “the gospel of the kingdom.”

1—Christ's return to build again the tabernacle of David.

2—The Jews receive Christ.

3—The Gentiles receive Christ.

This kingdom program is prophesied very many times in Israel's Old Testament Scriptures. This means that the kingdom will be restored to Israel. (Acts 1:6). (Romans 11:25 to 29). Then because of Israel's belief and salvation, the Gentiles will come to Israel's Messiah and Lord. The Gentiles will have a place in subjection to Israel. So, in “the gospel of the kingdom,” Israel is in favor with God, and Israel's King and David's throne are in the program, and the Gentiles follow Israel into the kingdom. This is the prophesied gospel of the kingdom. Wonderful earthly blessings and physical health accompany this gospel; whereas in this present age believers are to be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel. (II Timothy 1:7 to 9). The gospel of the kingdom will be given to the nations when and because Israel believes that Jesus is their Messiah.

This present, unprophesied period began when God set His kingdom nation aside, and sent salvation to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy. (Romans 11:11; Acts 13:46; 18:5 and 6; 28:25 to 28; Romans 11:15; 11:25 and 26). When the Gentiles obtained mercy, because of Israel's unbelief, God called His salvation message for the “far-off” Gentiles “the gospel of the grace of God.” (Romans 11:30; Ephesians 2:11 to 13; 2:8 to 10). So “the gospel of the grace of God” is preached to Gentiles when Israel is in disfavor with God and when the tabernacle of David is fallen down.

THE GOSPEL FOR SAINTS

But now let us compare I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 with Romans 16:25 and 26—Ephesians 6:19 and 20 and Ephesians 3:8.

“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, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, 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.”

“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.”

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

How can any intelligent spiritual student of the Bible fail to see that there is a difference between a sinner being saved by the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4, which was in fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 13:29 and 30), and a saint being established by Paul's “my gospel,” which was according to the revelation of the mystery, not prophesied, but kept secret during those years and centuries that the prophets foretold the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? Any such student of the Bible should be ready to acknowledge that there must be a difference between the saving gospel for the sinner and the edifying gospel for the saint. Compare Acts 13:29 to 35 with Romans 16:25 and Ephesians 3:8.

Paul wrote of “my gospel” in Romans 2:16, II Timothy 2:8 and 9 and in Romans 16:25 and 26. Paul wrote concerning the dispensation which was committed unto him, (I Corinthians 9:16 and 17); the “grace” gospel which Christ revealed to him, (Galatians 1:11 and 12); “the gospel of the grace of God,” (Acts 20:24); “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” (I Timothy 1:11); “the gospel of the uncircumcision,” (Galatians 2:7); “the dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles,” (Ephesians 3:1 to 4); “the unsearchable riches of Christ for Gentiles.” (Ephesians 3:8). According to this grace, Paul was the Lord's chief masterbuilder, who laid the foundation. (I Corinthians 3:10).

As we read these Scriptures, we certainly should learn that something was committed to Paul more than the fact that Christ died for our sins; that Christ was buried and rose again. A “good news” program was committed unto the apostle Paul, a program different from any program that God had ever deposited with any of His other servants. Read Ephesians 3:8; 3:1 to 5; I Corinthians 9:16 and 17; 3:10. This is one reason why Peter wrote II Peter 3:15 and 16—”And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

Let us note carefully Ephesians 6:19 and 20, Ephesians 3:9; II Timothy 2:8 and 9; Colossians 4:3 and 4.

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

“And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”

“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel; Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.”

“Withall praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

Paul was in the Roman jail, as a criminal, because he was trying to make saints see “the dispensation of the mystery,” which he called “my gospel.” Paul was a prisoner, the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ for Gentiles, (Ephesians 3:1), for “the mystery of Christ,” for “the mystery of the gospel.” If Paul could have confirmed what he was preaching to the Gentiles, by an appeal to Israel's Scriptures, he could, doubtless, have gained his liberty. But this distinctive message and program was not made known to the sons of men in other ages. (Colossians 1:24 to 26). Therefore, Paul called it, “the unsearchable (untraceable) riches of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:8).

This gospel for saints was not prophesied. It was not a part of Paul's “confirmation” ministry. Note Ephesians 3:1 to 4: “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; How that by revelation He made know unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words; Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.” Others heard this message from Paul (II Timothy 2:2). Paul received it from Christ in heaven by revelation. Until Christ revealed it to Paul it was God's own secret. It was not foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Note in Colossians 1:24 to 26 that God's mystery concerning Christ and His Church, one flesh (Ephesians 5:31 and 32), completed the Word of God. We have heard the Church, or the Body of Christ, called, “the mystical Christ.” (I Corinthians 12:12). The Church is the filling-up of Christ. (Ephesians 1:21 to 23). The Church and Christ will be one new man. (Ephesians 2:15). Before the foundation of the world Christ was foreordained to be the spotless Lamb of God. (I Peter 1:18 to 20). The spotless Christ died for the Church that He might present the Church unto Himself as the spotless Church. (Ephesians 5:25 to 28). Thus we see that “the mystery of Christ” has to do with two spotless Christs. (I Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 5:23 to 27; 4:13; I Peter 1:15 and 20). Both of these spotless Christs were foreordained before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4 and 1:11). Christ was, and is, the perfect Man. The Church completed will be the perfect Man. (Ephesians 4:13).

The apostle Paul was not in the Roman jail for the saving gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4, but for the unprophesied mystery of the gospel, which was not according to the Scriptures, or in fulfillment of the Scriptures; but rather according to God's eternal purpose in Christ. (Ephesians 3:11). As there is a great difference between “the gospel of the kingdom” and “the gospel of the grace of God,” there is a great difference between the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 and “the mystery of the gospel,” Paul's “my gospel,” for which Paul suffered as a criminal.

WHICH GOSPEL IN MARK 16?

Note the commission of Christ to the eleven apostles, in Mark 16:14 to 18:

“Afterward He (Christ) appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

This surely is not the gospel Paul mentioned in Romans 16:25—”Now 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.”

In giving forth the gospel of grace today are we to preach “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and signs shall follow believers?” Have we Divine authority to revise and abridge this commission and preach, “he that believeth is saved and shall then be baptized as a witness to the world but no signs are to follow?”

As Christians, we do greatly err when we limit the meaning of the word “gospel,” or “good news.” There is much “good news” for saints after they are saved by the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 from the penalty of sin, by which gospel they become saints. There is “good news” for saints as they are perfected, according to Ephesians 4:10 to 14.

In asking the question, did Peter and Paul preach the same gospel, only to different groups, we should know that Christ did not commit to Peter what he committed to Paul. Peter had nothing to say about “the mystery of the gospel” and did not speak or write of the Body of Christ. Peter and the Eleven were not in jail for the mystery of Christ. (Colossians 4:3 and 4).

THE GOSPEL TO ABRAM

Note Galatians 3:8 and Galatians 2:1; 2:6 and 7:

“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.”

“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.”

“But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added

nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul), as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.”

God preached the gospel to Abram at the time Abram was an uncircumcised heathen. This was 24 years before “uncircumcised Abram” became “circumcised Abraham.” Compare Genesis 12:4 and 5 and 15:6 to 8 with Genesis 17:1 to 24. Abram believed God and Abram's belief was counted unto Abram, in uncircumcision, for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6 to 8; Galatians 3:6 to 8; Romans 4:1 to 11). It is so important that we know the truth of Romans 4:7 to 11 and Galatians 3:8 and thus know the difference between Abram and Abraham.

We read in Romans 4:20 to 25 that “Abram was strong in faith”: “And being fully persuaded that what He (God) had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. 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 Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”

In Galatians 3:14 we are told that because of the death of Christ on the cross, believing heathen receive the blessing of Abram, which is God's righteousness by faith. In Galatians 2:21 and 3:21, and II Corinthians 5:21, we have God's Word that there is no other way to receive the righteousness of God. In the Old Testament God demanded religion and circumcision with righteousness; but not under grace.

Hear this truth in Romans 9:30 to 32: “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that Stumblingstone.”

Israel stumbled. Moreover some of the religious Christian Jews did their utmost to cause the believing Gentiles to seek God's righteousness by the deeds of the law, after Paul had preached to them the gospel of the uncircumcision. They were bewitched.

In Galatians 3:16 to 19 Paul explained to the foolish, bewitched Christian Gentiles that Abram was declared righteous, without circumcision and with out religion, 430 years before God added the law and Israel's religious program at Sinai. (Hebrews 9:10; Romans 5:20; Galatians 3:19). The added law did not annul the gospel of uncircumcision which God preached to Abram.

Here let us read Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:3 to 9:

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Here we learn that physical circumcision has lost its value. Here we learn that circumcision has a new meaning. It is something spiritual and intangible. This is quite different from the covenant of circumcision to which Stephen, in Jerusalem, referred when he preached to Israel's rulers. (Acts 7:8).

It was after this covenant, and not before, that Isaac was born. Abram was justified 25 years before Isaac was born. God called Abram 24 years before He gave to Abram the covenant of circumcision. Abram was justified in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of the redeemed Gentiles, uncircumcised in the flesh, but circumcised spiritually with the circumcision of Christ. So it is still true as it was in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, that no uncircumcised person can have fellowship with the Lord and His people.

But circumcision in this dispensation of grace has an entirely different meaning: "But in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Galatians 6:15).

The apostle Paul had both circumcisions, and if there had been any profit in Israel's physical circumcision and their other religious law ceremonies, Paul would not have abandoned them. Paul had learned the truth of Galatians 3:24 and 25: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

CHRIST - ISRAEL'S SAVIOUR

In the first ten chapters of Acts Peter and the Eleven were using the keys of the kingdom of heaven. During those years covered by these chapters they were wholly ignorant of the gospel of the uncircumcision. This was revealed after Paul, in Acts 13:23 to 36, declared to Israel that God raised Christ up in incarnation to be Israel's Saviour and raised Christ up in resurrection to give Israel the sure mercies of David, and after Israel rejected both great events, Paul said, "lo we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46). Still later Paul wrote: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." (II Corinthians 5:16).

Let us note Christ after the flesh:

"For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Hebrews 2:16 and 17.

"The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham." Matthew 1:1.

"Of this man's (David's) seed hath God according to His promise raised up unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." Acts 13:23.

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." Acts 5:30.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, which ye yourselves also know." Acts 2:22.

“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.” Romans 15:8.

“But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Matthew 15:24.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as He also is a son of Abraham.” Luke 19:9.

These Scriptures should be self-explanatory.

Jesus Christ, as the Seed of Abraham, was circumcised when eight days old (Luke 2:21 to 39) . He, as Abraham's Seed, was born also as the Seed of David, to be Israel's Saviour. Jesus Christ, as Jesus of Nazareth, was sent only to Israel. He was the Minister of the circumcision. When Israel rejected Jesus Christ in resurrection, as well as in incarnation, the heathen obtained God's mercy because of Israel's unbelief. (Romans 11:30). Also the believing heathen obtained God's righteousness as did Abram, the uncircumcised heathen, before the birth of the nation Israel, 430 years before the law was added.

PAUL AND PETER IN JERUSALEM

Now note Galatians 2:1 and 2 and 6 and 7:

“Then fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”

“But of these who seemed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepted no man's person), for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.”

What a revelation and a shock it was to the apostles at Jerusalem when they received this new truth from Paul. They had not gone back beyond the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, and the covenant of circumcision. (Acts 7:8). They knew that the nations were to be blessed in Abraham's Seed; but they did not know that this Divine kingdom program would be postponed, and that while the kingdom is in abeyance and during this parenthetical period and age of grace God would accomplish His eternal purpose. (Ephesians 3:11). They knew not that Gentiles would receive righteousness and eternal life apart from the covenant of circumcision, and because of Israel's blindness and unbelief. (Romans 11:11; 11:30).

From Paul they learned the meaning of Galatians 3:8: “And the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying In Thee shall all the nations be blessed.”

In this verse “before” means 430 years before the law was added. (Galatians 3:19 and 17). But it was also 24 years before Abram was circumcised and became “Abraham.”

It is high time that Christians in 1945 A.D. should learn what the twelve apostles learned some fourteen years after Paul was saved. God preached the gospel to Abram in uncircumcision. The law was added to the gospel. (Galatians 3:19 and 3:8). What gospel? “In Thy Seed (Christ) shall all nations be blessed.” Abram believed God. (Galatians 3:6 and 7). Then and there Abram

became righteous, in uncircumcision. Then and there the Scriptures foresaw something. That uncircumcised heathen would be saved by believing the gospel of the uncircumcision. This was not what Peter and the Eleven preached in the first ten chapters of Acts; but what Paul preached after Christ in heaven revealed to him the gospel of the grace of God, the truth of Romans 11:30 and Romans 3:24:

“For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief.”

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Then of course comes this question: “After Paul's visit to Jerusalem, fourteen years later, did the twelve apostles preach the gospel of the uncircumcision to the circumcision or to the uncircumcision?”

After reading Acts 21:18 to 28, we should certainly agree that James was not preaching the gospel of the uncircumcision to Israel in Jerusalem. After reading the Epistle of James, we find nothing in this message to indicate that the gospel of the uncircumcision is in this Epistle to the twelve tribes.

In the last sixteen chapters of Acts we find no record of any of the missionary or spiritual activities of the twelve apostles except as they had dealings with Paul. We do find the agreement of the Eleven with Paul in the Jerusalem council: “Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.” (Acts 15:19 and 24).

But in the light of Acts 21:18 to 25 and Galatians 2:11 to 14, it is more than doubtful whether the Twelve went to Gentiles with the gospel of the uncircumcision.

In Acts 15:7 Peter told the delegates to the Jerusalem council that God chose his mouth to speak to the Gentiles (the household of Cornelius). The other eleven apostles condemned Peter for using his mouth to give that message seven years after Christ said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Acts 11:1 to 4). After Peter explained his authority they rejoiced that repentance unto life was granted also to the Gentiles. (Acts 11:18). But there is no statement in the last sixteen chapters of Acts that the twelve preached the gospel of the grace of God unto the Gentiles. Read Acts 22:17 to 21; Romans 15:16 and 11:13.

What was the gospel that God preached to Abram at the time that Abram was not only an uncircumcised Gentile but when he was as good as dead? (Hebrews 11:10; Romans 4:7 to 11). In thy seed (Isaac and Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. (Galatians 3:6; 3:16 and 17). In Hebrews 2:16 and 17 we read: “For verily He (Christ) took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Did Christ die for Israel only?

Note the words of Israel's high priest Caiaphas in John 11:49 to 52: “And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation: And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” More than 20

years after Christ died Paul had to explain that God was also the God of the Gentiles. (Romans 3:25 to 28).

Then this wonderful salvation message in I Timothy 2:4 to 7.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus: Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man. Hebrews 2:9. But when was the heathen's due time? When Paul received his order from the risen Christ.

If we did not have many other Scriptures in which we learn that salvation is conditional, we might conclude from the statements we have quoted that all of the human race, lost condemned and alienated in Adam, will be redeemed, justified and reconciled in Christ. Many have tried to prove this universal salvation by Romans 5:18 and Colossians 1:20: “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

But there is always the “if” of faith. (I Corinthians 15:2; John 8:24; Romans 10:9 and 10; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 2:3).

The great central truth of the Bible for the sinner to seriously and honestly consider is, first the fact that Almighty God for about thirty-three years, was a Man on earth. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. (II Corinthians 5:20). The Man Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. The Lord of glory was crucified. After several hours on the cross of Calvary, the sinless Son of God cried, “finished,” and died for the sins of the whole world. He was made sin for us. (II Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:2).

The second great fact is, that Christ, for several hours on that cross, paid the debt for all of the billions of Adam's descendants who have ever lived on this planet, or ever will. This is the one all-important truth for every human being to accept, by saving faith, or be forever doomed or damned, and this does not mean annihilation or the cessation of consciousness.

Before the Lord Jesus went to Calvary He said to His murderers: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56).

FUTURE AND PRESENT GENTILE SALVATION

Abram believed God and it was counted unto Him for righteousness.

After God has accomplished His eternal purpose in this present economy and age of grace (Ephesians 3:11) many great events are going to take place on this earth. Of these great events we mention the truth of Zechariah 8:22 and 23 and Isaiah 66:23 and Ezekiel 37:21 and 28:

“Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.”

“And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord.”

“And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.”

“And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore.”

But here is a mystery showing another program of God that is to be completed before these prophecies of Zechariah, Isaiah and Ezekiel shall be fulfilled. Read carefully Romans 11:25 and 26:

“For I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Romans 11:26 to 29).

The truth that Israel's Deliverer shall come to deliver Israel was no mystery. But the mystery was that there would be a “grace” program for Gentiles before this national deliverance would take place. This is why Christians call this present “grace” period (Ephesians 3:1 to 4) “a parenthesis” during which time God's kingdom covenants have been suspended or interrupted. Note Ephesians 2:11 to 13 and Romans 11:30:

“Wherefore, remember, that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made with hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

“For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their (Israel's) unbelief.”

The prophecies of Zechariah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, concerning Gentile salvation, will be fulfilled when and because Israel shall believe God's Word and receive Jesus as their Messiah and Saviour. But the far-off strangers of the covenants are now being saved by grace, because of Israel's unbelief. No prophet of God saw what God would do for the Gentiles during this parenthesis. But when God justified one uncircumcised heathen, about 1900 B.C., the Scriptures foresaw that during this parenthesis, when God's kingdom program and kingdom covenants are suspended or interrupted, many uncircumcised heathen would be justified without circumcision, that is, without any obligation to the covenant of circumcision. (Acts 7:8; Genesis 17:4 to 15).

These heathen, saved by believing the gospel of the uncircumcision, are members of the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6 and are in no sense in subjection to Israel. They are circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands.

All of this “grace” program and the heavenly position and possessions of members of Christ's Body are included in “the mystery” (God's Secret), revealed to the apostle Paul, after Peter and the Eleven had used the keys of the kingdom of heaven and preached the gospel of the circumcision and the gospel of the kingdom to Israel and to one Gentile household (Acts 15:7; Galatians 2:9) .

Compare Acts 3:24 to 26 (all Jewish) with Colossians 1:24 to 27 concerning Gentiles:

“Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake which is the Church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.” “The mystery among the Gentiles.”

Every servant of Christ is supposed to be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God. (I Corinthians 4:1 to 3). Every such faithful steward is to obey Ephesians 3:9, by first learning what is the dispensation of the mystery, in God's way (Ephesians 1:16 to 18), and then making others to obey Ephesians 3:9: “And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”

There is not a Christian anywhere obeying Ephesians 3:9 who does not know the difference between “the gospel of the circumcision” and “the gospel of the uncircumcision.”