

# MESSAGE IN THE GOSPELS, ACTS, EPISTLES

*A Central Message Seen Running Throughout  
But, WHAT Message?*

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God [‘All Scripture is *theopneustos*’ (from *Theos*, ‘God,’ *pneuma*, ‘breath’); *i.e.*, ‘All Scripture is God-Breathed’], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Tim. 3:14-17).

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:9-14).

The central message in the four gospels is plain and simple enough to understand and deal with, and the same is true concerning the epistles (Pauline, Hebrews, and the general epistles). But the Book of Acts, forming somewhat of a bridge between the gospels and the epistles, is where matters can become complex, though that need not be the case.

And the approach that so many Christians seem to take — seeing the message of salvation by grace through faith, with eternal verities, as the central message throughout — certainly hasn't helped matters. In fact, this type approach to the New Testament, beginning with the gospels, usually centering on John's gospel as the one gospel written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved, *has caused insurmountable problems in correct Biblical interpretation.*

Following this type approach will, for all practical purposes, close the door to any overall, correct interpretation throughout the New Testament, which reflects back upon and negatively impacts correctly understanding the Old Testament in the same manner.

*One simply CAN'T approach Scripture from a wrong standpoint and, in the end, come out right. "Error" does not work that way. It never has, and it never will.*

As well, it matters little what man may think about something — what is or is not important, what this or that means, etc. When it comes to Biblical interpretation, *expressions such as, "I think..." "I believe..." should be stricken from one's vocabulary.*

*That which a person thinks or believes, when it comes to Biblical interpretation, is OF NO MOMENT WHATSOEVER!*

*THE ONLY THING OF ANY MOMENT is what God has to say about the matter, expressing His thoughts and/or ways on the subject, recorded in His Word, which are invariably quite different than man's thoughts and/or ways:*

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).*

When a person seeks understanding concerning things in Scripture, *understanding MUST ALWAYS be derived from ONE SOURCE*

*ALONE! And it MUST ALWAYS be derived ONE WAY ALONE!*

Scripture has been designed to explain itself. That is the way God, through His Spirit, structured His Word. *Scripture MUST be compared with Scripture to derive and understand God's thoughts and/or ways, NEVER through any method involving man's thoughts and/or ways.*

With the preceding in mind, what does Scripture itself have to say about the central subject seen throughout the New Testament, which can only have its base in and be an outworking of that previously seen in the Old Testament?

And that can be shown by simply taking the God-Breathed Word — which contains things quite different than have been “seen,” “heard,” or “have entered into the heart of man” — and allowing the Spirit to reveal “the deep things of God” through “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Cor. 2:9-13).

The only alternate to the preceding is seen in the next verse (v. 14), *through “natural” means*. And this verse, kept within context, could only refer to a saved individual resorting to the natural rather than to the spiritual in Biblical interpretation.

## Part I The Gospels

*ONE CENTRAL MESSAGE, with its base in and carried over from the Old Testament, pervades the gospels.* This message has to do with “salvation,” which can be traced back to a beginning point in the opening verses of Genesis.

*Salvation, deliverance, is the central message pervading ALL Scripture.*

*But, WHAT salvation is being dealt with? WHAT deliverance is in view?* Salvation, deliverance, has more than one aspect in Scripture, though the ultimate goal is always seen to be *the same*.

Note in this respect the basic, overall type beginning in Ex. 12.

The Israelites under Moses, through the death of paschal lambs, were delivered from the death of the firstborn while still in Egypt. They were subsequently delivered at the Red Sea crossing through God opening the waters for them to cross and then closing the waters upon Pharaoh and his armed forces. And they

could have been delivered from the nations inhabiting the land at Kadesh-Barnea had they not disbelieved God and rebelled against His chosen leader, Moses.

In this same respect, when reading and dealing with things in the gospels, why do so many Christians fix their attention on *a singular subject with respect to salvation, deliverance?*

Invariably, individuals doing this see salvation by grace through faith as the central message throughout Scripture, attempting to align practically everything in the gospels with this message, which is the message seen in that dealt with in the death of the paschal lambs in the preceding overall type.

Why do individuals do this, particularly since this is not at all the plainly revealed central subject matter seen throughout the gospels, much less all Scripture?

And it is also quite clear that John's gospel is no different than the other three in this respect, dealing with the same subject matter. It is simply *NOT possible* to read and study through the gospels, seeing three of the gospels dealing with and centering around one subject and John's gospel dealing with and centering around another.

*The central message throughout all four gospels is plainly seen to be THE SAME, though from different perspectives. All four can clearly be seen to deal with different facets of EXACTLY the same central message, and salvation by grace through faith is NOT that message.*

In fact, there is no such thing as any book in Scripture — Old Testament or New Testament — dealing centrally with salvation by grace. Though this message can be seen throughout Scripture, beginning in the opening verses of Genesis, *salvation by grace is simply NOT the central subject matter at hand anywhere in Scripture. Rather, salvation by grace is ALWAYS seen as the beginning point of the central subject, the central message (e.g., Ex. 12ff; Eph. 2:8-10).*

Jude sought to write an epistle dealing with salvation by grace, but the Spirit stopped him and moved Jude to write on another subject, on apostasy (vv. 3ff).

And, as previously noted, any of the other epistles is the same, as is Acts, as are the four gospels, as are all Old Testament books.

And the preceding is not to minimize the importance of the message surrounding salvation by grace through faith, *for this is*

where one *MUST* begin. But a person is *NOT* to remain there. He is *TO GO ON*. And that is exactly what *ALL* Scripture does.

The Israelites under Moses *DIDN'T* remain in Egypt, continuing to deal with death and shed blood in relation to the death of the firstborn. *NO*, they left Egypt under Moses, enroute to a land set before them, to which they had been called.

Nor are Christians under Christ to continue dealing with death and shed blood in relation to the death of the firstborn. *NO*, they are *TO MOVE ON* to things pertaining to a land set before them, to which they have been called.

And that is the way Scripture is structured. Scripture *BEGINS* with death and shed blood in relation to the death of the firstborn. But Scripture *DOESN'T* stay there. Scripture *MOVES ON* toward a goal, which the beginning makes possible, a goal in another land to which the one having appropriated the blood of a dead paschal lamb in the type, the blood of the slain Paschal Lamb in the antitype, has been called.

## Central Message

Salvation by grace through faith is *NOT* seen as the central message throughout any one of the four gospels, the epistles or anyplace elsewhere in Scripture, *for a revealed reason*. And that is quite easy to show, if done the Biblical way — simply allow Scripture to address the issue.

Man, in the beginning, was created for *regal purposes* (Gen. 1:26-28), his fall had to do with *these purposes* (Gen. 3:1ff), and *God's purpose* for restoring fallen man — revealed at the beginning in Genesis and dealt with throughout the Old Testament — was *regal*. This purpose was to ultimately undo all things surrounding the fall and place man back in the regal position seen at the time of his creation (Gen. 3:15, 21; Rom. 11:29).

To work out His plans and purposes, God, 2,000 years beyond man's creation and fall, called one man out of the human race — Abraham. And *ALL THINGS* involved in Abraham's calling (Gen. 12:1-3), a separate and distinct creation formed in his grandson, Jacob (Isa. 43:1), and the bringing into existence of the nation of

Israel from the loins of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob — a nation through which God would work out His plans and purposes — *had to do with God ultimately placing man in the position for which he was created in the beginning.*

Jesus, having been sent through the nation emanating from the loins of Abraham, was born “King” (Matt. 2:2). He appeared on this earth and presented Himself to the Jewish people in this respect (Matt. 4:12ff; 21:1-5; John 1:11; *cf.* Zech. 9:9), and salvation, deliverance for Israel in connection with His message, had to do with *His kingship and kingdom* (Matt. 21:6-9).

As seen throughout the gospels — begun by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1ff), continued by Jesus (Matt. 4:12ff), the Twelve (Matt. 10:1ff), and the Seventy (Luke 10:1ff) — *the message was directed to Israel pertaining to deliverance with respect to the kingdom.*

The message throughout was *for Israel alone*, and it had *NOTHING* to do with the message of salvation by grace through faith. Rather, it had to do with an offer of *the kingdom of the heavens* (an expression used thirty-two times in Matthew’s gospel), *based on national repentance* (e.g., as seen in Daniel’s repentant prayer on behalf of himself and the nation in Dan. 9:3-19).

The offer of the kingdom to Israel, beginning with John, had to do with *the heavenly aspect of the kingdom* (the realm from whence Satan and his angels then ruled and continue to rule today), not the earthly, the kingdom covenanted to David, centered in Jerusalem on earth.

This heavenly aspect of the kingdom was introduced in Genesis in connection with Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) and is seen referenced and/or dealt with numerous times throughout both Testaments (*cf.* Gen. 22:15-18; 26:3, 4; 28:3, 4, 12-15; Dan. 7:18-27; Heb. 11:8-12). Thus, this facet of the kingdom was far from something new, proclaimed and offered to Israel on the basis of national repentance.

There is *NOTHING* in this central message pervading the gospels that is even remotely connected with salvation by grace.

From the type in Exodus, alluded to earlier, salvation by grace is seen in things having to do with the death of the paschal lambs while still in Egypt. That being proclaimed throughout the gospel

accounts *has to do with things beyond the death of the paschal lambs* (foreshadowing Christ's death at Calvary, as the Paschal Lamb), *with a deliverance relating to the land of their inheritance, though seen as heavenly, not earthly.*

And *THIS ALONE* would tell a person something about those in Israel to whom this message was being proclaimed and the offer extended. Those being dealt with throughout the gospels — dealt with relative to that which lay beyond the death of the paschal lambs — *COULD ONLY have been a saved people, not unsaved in need of applying the blood of the paschal lambs back in Egypt.*

And all of this should be easy enough for anyone to see and understand, for the Jewish people to whom Christ came were still sacrificing the paschal lambs year by year. And, on that basis, they could only have been just as saved as the generation which left Egypt under Moses, with God seeing efficacy in death and shed blood both times, along with all of the times between where death and shed blood were seen.

It would be *impossible* to see efficacy during Moses' day but not see the same thing 1,500 years later, with the same people and the same set of circumstances.

As well, had Christ come to an unsaved nation 2,000 years ago, it would have been *equally impossible* to see John, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy dealing with a message concerning the land set before them — which is what they were doing, a heavenly land in this case — without first dealing with a message concerning the application of the blood of dead paschal lambs, or the shed blood of the Paschal Lamb about to die.

Had the nation been comprised of unsaved Jews at this time, and had John, Jesus, the Twelve, and later the Seventy not begun with a message concerning the death and shed blood of paschal lambs, they would have been ignoring that foreshadowed by things seen on day one in Gen. 1 and beginning with that foreshadowed by things seen in days two through six.

Scripture simply is not structured in such a manner, not at the beginning or anyplace beyond that.

And, if a person wants to see a basis for God recognizing efficacy in the shed blood of paschal lambs either during Moses'

day or 1,500 years later when Christ was upon earth the first time, note the statement in Rev. 13:8:

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*”

(Also note something about that seen in the preceding several paragraphs in connection with the importance of Biblical typology, one of the many different ways that God has structured His Word [Heb. 1:1, 2].

The saved status of the nation when Christ came the first time *CAN EASILY BE SEEN FROM THE TYPES*, as previously outlined. And, in that respect, a main reason why a high percentage of Christians make the mistake of trying to see a message of salvation by grace throughout the gospels, with the message directed to individuals comprising an unsaved nation, can only be the neglect of and often disdain for the types.

And because of this, they, in reality, are neglecting/ rejecting a large portion of the revealed Word. And this part of the Word is something which, as previously seen, would open other parts of the Word to their understanding, preventing them from making mistakes of this nature in Biblical interpretation.

And this particular mistake is far from something minor in Biblical interpretation. *This is something MAJOR, VERY MAJOR.*

As an added note to illustrate *the importance of types*, numerous Christians, attempting to show the importance of the study of prophecy, often say that between twenty-five and thirty percent of the Old Testament is prophetic in nature.

But, saying this, they have ignored something about Scripture, for *the percentage is MUCH, MUCH higher. They have ignored God's built-in typical aspect of Scripture.*

Including the types would probably *more than double the percentage figures that many present* [e.g., referencing the types, try to find something in the Pentateuch alone that, from a typical standpoint, was not prophetic 3,500 years ago or remains prophetic today. Most of Genesis remains prophetic today, all of Exodus does...)]

## John's Gospel

And if anyone wants to see the Gospel of John as somehow different than the other three gospels in the preceding respect, note *the eight signs* around which the gospel is built and what is not only dealt with in the signs but that which signs have to do with.

That dealt with in these eight signs has to do with *Israel*, with these signs carrying matters out into *the future, into a future kingdom, showing the nation, at that time, what they could have if they would but heed the proclaimed message and repent. And this gospel today shows what they one day will have when repentance is forthcoming.*

*Signs* in Scripture, as illustrated in the preceding paragraph, have to do with two inseparable things — *Israel* and *the kingdom*. If both are not present, *signs, in the true Biblical sense, CANNOT EXIST.*

*Signs have NOTHING to do with the Church or with the gospel of grace. Instead, as previously stated, they have to do with ISRAEL, and they have to do with this nation in relation to THE KINGDOM.*

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author's article, "[Signs, Wonders, Miracles.](#)" Also, refer to the author's book, [Signs in John's Gospel.](#)

"Signs" are seen throughout all four gospels and the Book of Acts. They are seen throughout both the offer [in the gospels] and the re-offer [in Acts] of the kingdom to Israel. Beyond that, they ceased being manifested, as stated in I Cor. 13:8-10 [*ref.* previously mentioned article].

And the eight signs around which John's gospel is built all have to do with and point to exactly the same thing [*Israel, the kingdom, and conditions during a seventh 1,000-year period when the kingdom will be realized*]. And this is exactly what is seen in not only the other three gospels but the Book of Acts as well [*ref.* next section in this article].

Thus, attempts to single John's gospel out as being different than the other three in this respect, as being the one gospel written to relate the message of salvation by grace, can easily be shown to not only be false but very misleading as well [casting a completely wrong light upon the purpose for John's gospel] by simply allowing Scripture to speak for and interpret itself.)

The Gospel of John, written sometime between about 40 to 60 AD (a window in time accepted by many who study these things), records eight signs performed by Christ during His earthly ministry (the eighth sign has to do with events surrounding Calvary).

“Signs” were directed to Israel during the offer of the kingdom (by Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy) and redirected to Israel during the re-offer of the kingdom (starting with the one hundred twenty in Acts 2 (v. 43), later through the signs in John’s gospel [which shows that this gospel had to be written before the close of the re-offer, before about 62 AD, else the stated purpose for this gospel, incorporating these signs, could not be realized]).

And the stated purpose for these signs being manifested in the offer (during time seen in the four gospels), with eight of these original signs singled out in John’s gospel (written during the Acts period) is given toward the end of John’s gospel:

“And many other signs [having to do with Israel in relation to the proffered kingdom] truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written [‘these have been recorded’], that ye [a plural pronoun, the entire Jewish nation] might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life [‘life’ in relation to that being offered, ‘life’ in the Messianic kingdom] through his name” (John 20:30, 31).

And attempts by well-meaning Christians to take these two verses and associate them with the gospel of grace, showing a completely wrong purpose for John’s gospel, has probably done more to pervert or destroy any correct understanding of the message seen throughout the gospels than possibly any other one thing.

(For related information on this subject, refer to the author’s article, [“Misuse of John 20:30, 31.”](#))

### **Rejection of the Offer, Crucifixion of Israel’s King**

To further illustrate the nature of the message seen throughout the gospels and carry matters into Acts, then the epistles, note that which Israel’s religious leaders brought to pass through their

opposition to the Messenger and His message.

Israel's religious leaders — particularly the Pharisees, who, by their very numbers, governed and controlled the religious life of the people — *followed Christ about the country, seeking, at every opportunity, to cast reproach upon Christ, His disciples, and their ministry to Israel.*

Through this means, the Pharisees, along with the Scribes (the teachers and keepers of the Law, the fundamental legalists in Israel), were the ones primarily responsible (the Sadducees to a lesser extent) for a national rejection of the Messenger and His message, leading to and ending with the events surrounding Calvary.

In days immediately preceding the Cross, because of what the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees had caused, Christ cursed a fig tree which He came across enroute to Jerusalem:

“Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever [*lit.*, ‘henceforward with respect to the age’]. And presently the fig tree withered away” (Matt. 21:18, 19).

“The fig tree” is used in Scripture to symbolize *Israel* (Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:6-12). And Christ used this particular fig tree to not only make a statement concerning the nation's barren condition but also where this condition was about to take the nation.

*There was NO FRUIT on the tree, nothing but leaves.* And because of this, because of what had happened over the course of the past three to three and one-half years — *Christ seeking fruit from the nation, but finding ONLY a barren tree* — cursed the fruitless fig tree, cursed fruitless Israel, saying, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward with respect to the age.”

*The reference to fruitlessness had to do with THE KINGDOM which had been offered, and the time in view relative to fruitlessness would be THE COMING AGE, THE MESSIANIC ERA.*

*Fruit will appear on the tree during the coming age. This is quite clear from the Prophets. But, NO FRUIT will appear on the tree relative to the heavenly sphere of the kingdom. That, as well, is quite clear.*

And exactly why this would be the case, aside from the nation having borne no fruit, is seen further down in the chapter, follow-

ing the parable of the Householder and His vineyard (vv. 33-39).

Note Christ's question to the chief priests and Pharisees concerning this parable (v. 40), their response (v. 41), Christ's response in return (vv. 42-44), and the chief priests and Pharisees' thoughts expressed among themselves (v. 45):

“When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them” (Matt. 21:40-45).

Note verse forty-three. Because of that which had been done, resulting in rejection on the fruitless nation's part, Christ announced in the presence of those primarily responsible (Israel's religious leaders) that “the kingdom of God” (that facet of the kingdom which had been offered to and rejected by Israel, the kingdom of the heavens, the heavenly sphere of the kingdom) would be taken from Israel and “given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

On the day of Pentecost, about two months later, this “nation,” a completely new entity, was brought into existence — *the one new man* “in Christ” (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:11-16; I Peter 2:9-11). And God used this new entity, which was about to come into possession of and be allowed to bring forth fruit for this sphere of the kingdom, to re-offer this kingdom to Israel.

This began in Acts chapter two and is seen being continued for almost the next three decades throughout the Book of Acts, ending with Paul being rejected by the Jewish religious leaders in Rome. And for the third and final time, Paul announced to these

Jewish religious leaders in Rome that this message would now be carried to the Gentiles (Acts 28:16-31; *cf.* Acts 13:14-46; 18:1-6).

And that is where Acts ends and the epistles pick up, with *Israel completely set aside for the remainder of the dispensation and the Church ALONE seen as the ONE NOT ONLY NOW in possession of the heavenly aspect of the kingdom but the ONLY ONE NOW in a position to bring forth fruit for this part of the kingdom.*

The preceding will be dealt with as seen in the Book of Acts first, then in the epistles.

## Part II The Book of Acts

The original offer of the kingdom to Israel in the gospel accounts is a relatively simple matter to understand, though few seem to do so. As previously stated, many individuals seem to want to see the central message proclaimed throughout the gospels, particularly John's gospel, as a message pertaining to salvation by grace.

And if a person does this, they can forget about everything when they come to Acts and begin reading about the re-offer of the kingdom, for they have not understood the base, the original offer.

Then, beyond Acts, any correct understanding of the epistles will be skewed as well, attempting to understand them within the same erroneous framework as previously seen in the gospels and in Acts, *for the same subject matter is continued in the epistles.*

If an individual comes out of the gospels in a correct manner, understanding what has happened in the gospels, Acts is not really that difficult, for it is simply a continuation of that previously seen in the gospels. Acts, in one sense of the word, forms a fifth gospel.

But, if an individual comes out of the gospels in a wrong manner, not understanding what has happened in the gospels, it will not be possible to have any type proper understanding of Acts, or the epistles beyond. Acts, continuing from the gospels, and the epistles, continuing from Acts, can only be dealt with after the same erroneous manner that the gospels had been dealt with.

This is why, for example, that Peter's message to the Jews in

Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14-40 is often treated as a gospel message, directed to unsaved Jews, with individuals trying to fit and explain what is stated in the message, particularly in verse thirty-eight, into this erroneous type thinking.

### Continuing from the Gospels

Note the continuation of the subject matter from the gospels in Acts chapter one. Christ, following His resurrection, *spent forty days with the disciples teaching them things pertaining to “the kingdom of God”* (v. 3), the subject previously seen throughout the gospels.

Then, immediately prior to His ascension, He commanded His disciples to “not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.” They, through this promise being realized, were to “receive power” after the Spirit had come upon them (vv. 4, 8). And this had to do with His commission to the disciples (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark. 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8), which was to be carried out in its fulness by a repentant and restored Jewish nation, with the stage being set through events on the day of Pentecost in chapter two, allowing this, over time, to subsequently occur.

(All these things are dealt with in the author’s book, [\*O Sleeper! Arise. Call!\*](#) (chs. IX-XI), also to some extent in the author’s article, [\*“Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria . . .”\*](#) referencing these chapters in the book.

It is all about laying correct foundations, then properly building on these foundations. This is the manner in which Scripture begins in Genesis and continues throughout.)

Beginning in chapter two, there is *an immersion in the Spirit* (which would have to do with bringing *the one new man* “in Christ,” the Church, into existence [v. 2]), followed by *a filling of the Spirit* (which would have to do with *Joel’s prophecy and Israel* [v. 4]).

This is then followed by the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel by *the one hundred twenty who had been immersed in the Spirit (forming the inception of the Church) and then subsequently filled with the Spirit (providing power to fulfill Christ’s previous commission).*

From that point throughout Acts, you have those comprising *the one new man* “in Christ” (along with other saved Jews) later

proclaiming the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. And this is where people tend to get things completely mixed up.

Relative to the offer of the kingdom to Israel and the bringing into existence of the Church, the four gospels and the Book of Acts are structured somewhat the same way. In both, the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, this message was *the ONLY message seen UNTIL a climactic rejection point occurred* (rejection of the proclaimed message [rejection by Israel's religious leaders, leading to rejection by the people — Matt. 12, 13 in the gospels, and chapters 7, 8 in Acts]). Beyond this time, the kingdom remained in the offing in both the gospels and Acts, but the Church began to come into view (along with the Cross, as well, in the gospels).

(The first three appearances of the word “Church” [Gk., *ekklesia*] in Acts are 2:47; 5:11; 7:38. The validity of the appearance of the word in 2:47 is questionable. The word *ekklesia* appears in some Greek manuscripts, not in others, which accounts for its appearance in some English translations, not in others.

Generally, among textual critics [those studying these things], the word is looked upon as spurious in 2:47. But that is really immaterial. If *ekklesia* does appear in 2:47, it would have to be understood the same way that it can only be understood in 5:11, seen in 7:38 [and undoubtedly a number of places beyond that in the book as well].

The word *ekklesia* means “assembly,” as it is used of *Israel* in Acts 7:38, or of *Christians* many places in the N.T. [forming an assembly, referred to as “the Church” in English translations of *ekklesia*].

As well, the name “Christian,” Gentiles referring to *followers of Christ* in Acts 11:26 [cf. Acts 26:28], could have been used of either saved Jews or those forming *the one new man* “in Christ” during the Acts period.)

## The Message at Pentecost and Following

The message, proclaimed in different languages by one hundred twenty empowered Jews on the day of Pentecost, by Peter alone as he stood up among those proclaiming the message, and proclaimed by these individuals and others throughout time covered by the first seven chapters of Acts, was *a message having to do with Israel and the kingdom, NOT with the Church.*

Bear something in mind when moving from the gospels into the Book of Acts. Before the 3,000 had believed the proclaimed message on the day of Pentecost (2:41), along with those believing in subsequent days (vv. 42-47), there were already *numerous believing Jews (undoubtedly thousands) in and around Jerusalem (e.g., Matt. 3:1-6; 4:23-25; 8:1ff; 21:1-11)*. And the 3,000, plus others referred to toward the end of the chapter, were additional believing Jews, added to the former, *NOT added to the newly formed, existing Church proclaiming the message to Israel.*

And exactly the same thing is seen concerning the 5,000 added in 4:4, or those seen in Peter's dealings with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1ff, or *the multitudes* added in 5:14 and 6:7. These were *believing Jews*, a believing part of the nation, believing with a view to that which occurred on the day of Pentecost being worked out and completed, *something which began back in the gospels and could be brought to pass ONLY through the national repentance and conversion of the entire nation.*

As stated in Acts 2:40, those who had believed the message on the day of Pentecost had been saved "from this untoward ['crooked,' 'perverse'] generation." And the same thing could only be seen as the message continued to be proclaimed, particularly throughout the first seven chapters of Acts.

Then, note that *supernatural signs are seen accompanying the message throughout this time (2:43; 3:1-16; 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12-16; 6:8), with signs having to do with Israel and the kingdom throughout both the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom.*

Then, beyond the preceding, note that *the Jewish people, during the first few years of the re-offer of the kingdom, as seen in the first seven chapters of Acts, were brought to climactic points relative to the proclaimed kingdom at least FOUR TIMES (2:36-40; 3:17-26; 5:29-41; 7:51-60).*

And, as well, an individual will find the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel continuing through the remaining chapters of Acts.

Attempting to read any type building up of the Church via Jews being saved throughout the time of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (from 33 AD to about 62 AD) can only be completely out of place. *This is simply NOT what the Book of Acts is about.*

### **Status of Believing Jews**

If the Jews being saved (saved from the perverse, unbelieving nation) during the Acts period were being added to the Church,

this would run completely counter to the message being proclaimed, defeating the purpose for the kingdom being re-offered to the nation. Jews being saved in this manner would become *new creations* “in Christ,” no longer a part of the Jewish nation in a spiritual respect, but part of *the new man* brought into existence on the day of Pentecost (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:27-29).

Conditions among believing Jews in the re-offer of the kingdom in Acts could only be seen as *THE SAME among believing Jews in the previous offer of the kingdom in the gospels*, otherwise two separate and distinct creations would exist in Israel relative to the proffered kingdom. The re-offer of the kingdom, in all respects, can only be a continuation of that previously seen in the gospels, with believing Jews in Acts being added to the numbers already existing from the gospels.

Properly understanding this will address and help clarify certain passages in Acts.

Note, for example, Apollos in Acts 18, in Ephesus, already a believer, from before Calvary, but knowing nothing about events on the day of Pentecost, etc. Then note other similar believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff), receiving the Holy Spirit through a laying on of hands, with signs following (v. 6). And, particularly with signs following, this could only have been a filling of the Spirit, as seen in Acts 2:4, something connected with Joel’s prophecy (vv. 16ff).

Things like the preceding fit easily into Jews being saved during this time, forming a believing part of the nation (exactly as Apollos and others in Ephesus). But, trying to somehow fit them into things pertaining to the Church, comprised of *new creations* “in Christ,” can only present insurmountable problems.

(Again, refer to the author’s book, *O Sleeper! Arise, Call!*, Chs. IX-XI, where two different Greek words for “fill” [*pleroo* and *pimpleni*] are dealt with from Acts 2:2, 4 and other parts of the book, helping to explain things in Acts, such as later seen in 19:1-6.)

The time covering Acts (almost three decades) is not necessarily an easy period to understand (e.g., Acts 15). Things become more complicated than the period before (*Jews and the gospels*) or after (*Christians and the epistles*). In Acts, you have God dealing with both at the

same time, with God using the Church, brought into existence on the day of Pentecost, *in a maximum effort to bring about Israel's repentance.*

Then, to further complicate matters, some of the epistles were written during the Acts period, with believing Gentiles forming Churches (*e.g.*, the Church in Ephesus in Acts 20, or the Church in Corinth in Acts 18 (note Paul's action in v. 6), in which "signs" were later being performed, which could only have occurred in an effort to provoke Israel to jealousy [Deut. 32:21; Rom. 11:11], for "signs" have to do with *Israel and the kingdom, NOT with the Church.*)

Then, things could be complicated even further, though they need not be, for Scripture does not deal with some matters surrounding the different things seen occurring throughout Acts.

For example, the believing Jews during the Acts period, saved from a perverse, unbelieving nation, were not part of the Church but were a believing part of the Jewish nation. What, if anything, changed concerning the status of those still living following the close of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts 28:28?

And the same question could be asked about any believing Jews living on both sides of calvary who would have still been alive at the time of the events in Acts 28.

Then another question could be raised about positions in the kingdom which these individuals will one day hold — *heavenly positions* with the Church, or *earthly positions* with Israel (note that the message which they accepted had to do with *the heavenly aspect of the kingdom, not the earthly*)?

Scripture simply does not address some issues, such as the preceding. Thus, we need not spend time trying to figure out answers either, which would be of no value if we did come up with supposed answers, for no Scriptural base exists.

### Part III The Epistles

Though God brought into existence and dealt with the Church in Acts, *Israel remained (continuing from the gospels) His main focus of attention throughout the book.*

God used *the one new man* “in Christ” throughout Acts to carry a continued message from the gospels to the nation of Israel. But once God had completed His work with Israel in this respect, He then turned completely to *the one new man* (a new creation, “in Christ,” separate from both Jew and Gentile [II Cor. 5:17]), *the one now in SOLE POSSESSION of a kingdom which had been offered to Israel in the gospels, re-offered to Israel in Acts, and now completely taken from Israel.*

And that is *the centerpoint of the message in the epistles— Pauline, Hebrews, and general epistles. EVERYTHING in these epistles, after some fashion, centers around and relates to this message.*

And since the Pauline epistles occupy almost three times as much space in the New Testament as Hebrews and the general epistles combined, most of the material in this part of the article will be taken from and reference places in the Pauline epistles. But it would matter little if this were reversed, for exactly the same thing can be seen in Hebrews and the general epistles, though from different perspectives.

(Relative to the authorship of Hebrews, which many assign to Paul, it is a simple matter to show that Paul didn’t write the book, though it is impossible to show who did write the book.

Different things about the book— Greek text, the subject matter and way that it is laid out — would *suggest* that someone other than Paul wrote the book. But note Heb. 2:3. *The author of Hebrews was evidently not among those who had personally seen and heard the Lord. Paul though had spent a considerable length of time with the Lord, possibly as long as three years, taught by Him personally [cf. I Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:15-19; Eph. 3:1-3].)*

## **The Gospel Message**

The word “gospel,” as it is used in the New Testament, means *good news, glad tidings*. And the type good news, glad tidings in view *MUST ALWAYS be determined from the context.*

Then, “salvation,” as seen throughout Scripture, both Testaments, always refers to *deliverance*. And the type deliverance in view, as when reference is made to “the gospel,” *MUST ALWAYS be determined from the context as well.*

But, a major problem in relation to *the gospel* and *salvation* exists throughout Christendom today. Bible students, far more often than not, when they see the words “gospel” and/or “salvation,” think of only one thing, regardless of the context — the simple gospel message having to do with Christ’s death and shed blood, and salvation from eternal damnation.

However “salvation” in Scripture, having to do with “the gospel,” with “good news,” has *past*, *present*, and *future* aspects — *I have been saved* (Acts 16:30, 31; Eph. 2:8, 9), *I am being saved* (I Cor. 1:18; James 1:21), and *I am about to be saved* (Heb. 1:14; I Peter 1:9). And the context *MUST ALWAYS* be referenced to ascertain which of these three aspects of salvation, which of these three aspects of the overall gospel message, is being dealt with in the passage.

And when one does this, he will find, *FAR, FAR MORE OFTEN THAN NOT*, that *present and future aspects of the gospel, of salvation*, are being referenced, not the past aspect.

Thus, one can immediately see that *something MAJOR* is wrong in Biblical interpretation when only the past aspect of “the gospel” and “salvation” seemingly come to mind when the words appear in Scripture. A large part of Scripture is being erroneously dealt with (actually, above eighty percent of the times “salvation” or “the gospel” are referenced), resulting in erroneous interpretation on the one hand and the door being closed to correct interpretation on the other.

### **The Mystery, Paul’s Gospel**

“Paul’s gospel” is inseparably related to *the mystery revealed to him*. And Paul’s gospel, along with the mystery revealed to him, are part and parcel with the way that the gospel and its salvation message are seen *throughout ALL of the epistles*.

And the preceding is what this part of the article is about, showing how the epistles deal with the whole of the matter.

To begin, note the following verses and sections of Scripture relative to *the gospel* and *the gospel’s salvation message*, with *ALL of these verses and sections pertaining to present and future aspects of this gospel and its message, as will become evident in this part of the article*:

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:16).

“Now to him that is of power to establish 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” (Rom. 16:25).

“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 known to me the mystery (as I wrote aforetime in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Which in other ages [‘other generations’] was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Whereof I was made a minister...” (Eph. 3:1-7a).

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit; and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (I Thess. 1:5, 6).

“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions [the handing down of information] which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (II Thess. 2:14, 15).

The epistles (Pauline, Hebrews, and general epistles) were written by at least five — probably six — different men (as previously seen, the author of Hebrews is unknown), and certain individual, distinguishing qualities and characteristics of the writers can be seen in their writings.

In Paul’s case, his extensive use of the word “gospel” — how and why he used the word — forms a major trait which makes his writings different from those of any other writer of a New Testament book. Paul, for evident reasons, appeared almost *obsessed*

with this word, using it *FAR MORE EXTENSIVELY* than any of the other writers. And he used the word both alone and through qualifying it various ways (e.g., “gospel,” “gospel of God,” “gospel of Christ,” etc.), usually referring to the same facet of the gospel, though possibly with different emphases.

Paul’s writings comprise slightly less than one-third of the New Testament, but of the one hundred thirty-two times that the word “gospel” appears throughout the New Testament — in both its noun and verb forms (*euaggelion* and *euaggelizo* respectively) — almost two-thirds of these occurrences are found in the Pauline epistles.

The word appears twenty-three times in the synoptic gospels, seventeen times in the Book of Acts, six times in the general epistles, and three times in the Book of Revelation. But Paul used the word *eighty-three times* throughout his epistles.

Why did Paul use this word so extensively? The writer of Hebrews only used the word twice; James didn’t use the word at all; Peter only used the word four times; John didn’t use the word in either his gospel or his epistles, though he used it three times in the Book of Revelation; and Jude didn’t use the word in his epistle.

And beyond that, what was Paul referring to when he used this word?

As previously seen, the word “gospel” simply means *good news*. What was *the good news* to which Paul referred?

Invariably, people want to associate the word “gospel” with only one thing — *the good news pertaining to Christ’s finished work at Calvary*. They see the word “gospel” in Scripture, and this is what invariably comes to mind. And, looking at the word after this fashion, they seek to understand any portion of Scripture where this word appears solely in the light of the gospel of the grace of God.

And, interpreting Scripture after this fashion, they usually end up with a perversion, for the word “gospel” is used *far more often than not* — particularly in the Pauline epistles — referring to good news *other than Christ’s finished work at Calvary*.

And erroneously understanding the word “gospel” to refer to Christ’s finished work at Calvary, in a text where it doesn’t, will not only *do away with* that which the text does deal with but it will also often result in a *perversion* of the message pertaining to

the simple gospel of the grace of God.

An example of the preceding would be the manner in which I Cor. 15:1-4 is usually understood. The word “gospel” appears in the first verse, and all four verses are usually looked upon as referring to the same thing — the gospel of the grace of God. But both the text and the context reveal that such an interpretation is not correct at all.

Paul used the word “gospel” in connection with that which is stated in verses one, two, and four; but it is evident that this has no reference to the gospel of the grace of God. Salvation in these verses is spoken of as *an ongoing process in the lives of those to whom he was writing*, and it is also spoken of as something which *could be lost*. Neither would be true relative to the gospel of the grace of God which Paul had proclaimed to them “*first*,” referred to in verse three (referred to apart from the use of the word “gospel”).

And when individuals combine these four verses and attempt to make everything pertain to the gospel of the grace of God, the truths referred to in verses one, two, and four *are always done away with*; and the gospel of grace, referred to in verse three, *is often corrupted* (through bringing elements [from vv. 1, 2, 4] over into this message, where they do not belong).

And the manner in which this passage is normally handled would be true numerous places in the Pauline epistles when the context is ignored and the word “gospel” is made to refer to something which the text doesn’t refer to at all.

(I Corinthians 15:1-4 is dealt with in a more extensive manner later in this part of the article, following some preliminary material, allowing the passage to be better understood from a contextual respect.)

Paul’s extensive use of the word “gospel,” particularly his extensive use of this word to refer to something other than the gospel of the grace of God, goes back to his experiences at the outset of his ministry.

Before Paul ever launched out on the ministry to which he had been called — *to carry the good news rejected by Israel to the Gentiles* — the Lord took him aside and taught him all the various things

about the message which he was to proclaim. And after this, as Paul went about fulfilling his calling, it was only natural for him to use the word “gospel,” meaning *good news*, to refer to the good news (which the Lord had personally taught him) which he had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world.

This “good news” had to do with *the mystery* revealed to Paul by the Lord (evidently after he had been taken to Arabia, then into heaven [II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-17]). It had to do with believing Jews and Gentiles being placed together in “the same body” as “fellowheirs [‘joint-heirs’]” (Eph. 3:1-11); and these Jewish and Gentile believers (Christians), together, possessed a “hope” relative to one day occupying positions of honor and glory with Christ in “his heavenly kingdom” (cf. Col. 1:25-28; II Tim. 4:17, 18; Titus 1:2; 2:11-13; 3:7).

And Paul referred to *the good news* pertaining to this message as “my gospel” (Rom. 16:25), “our gospel” (II Cor. 4:3), “the glorious gospel of Christ [*lit.*, ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’]” (II Cor. 4:4), “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1; II Cor. 11:7), “the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:7), etc. Then, numerous times Paul simply used the word “gospel” alone to refer to this good news (Rom. 1:15; Gal. 1:6).

The fact that the mystery had been revealed to Paul, with Paul called to carry this message to Christians throughout the Gentile world, is the reason why he used the word “gospel” so often in his epistles. It was only *natural* for him to refer to the message which he had been called to proclaim through the use of a word which meant “good news,” for *the message was good news*.

*For the unsaved*, Christ’s finished work on the Cross was “good news.” As *unsaved individuals*, this was *THE BEST NEWS that they could ever hear*.

But once *they had been saved*, then they were to hear the “good news” about *why* they had been saved. And, as *saved individuals*, this was, as well, *THE BEST NEWS that they could ever hear*.

And Paul’s ministry centered around *the latter*, not the former.

Paul's ministry centered around proclaiming that which the Lord had revealed to him following his conversion. And the message contained therein dealt with the reason an individual had been saved (*cf.* Deut. 6:23); and this gospel, Paul's gospel, was *THE BEST NEWS redeemed man could ever hear*, which was why Paul let *nothing* stand in the way of his proclaiming this message.

This "good news" had to do with *the greatest thing God could offer redeemed man — occupying positions as co-heirs with His Son, from a heavenly realm, in the coming kingdom*. To reference words which the writer of Hebrews used, it was "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3).

And Paul's repeated reference to the message pertaining to this offer as "good news" is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his writings.

### 1) *The Mystery*

"The mystery" revealed to Paul, "hid in God" *from the beginning* (the beginning of the ages), of necessity, forms an integral part of the Old Testament Scriptures. There is nothing in the New Testament that does not have its roots in one or more places in the Old Testament. The New is simply an opening up and unveiling of that drawn from foundational material previously set forth in the Old, *drawn mainly from the types* (*cf.* Luke 24:25-27, 44; I Cor. 10:6, 11; Eph. 3:9-11; Col. 1:16-18, 25-27).

And, aside from the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the New Testament has to do mainly with *one major facet of Old Testament revelation*:

The New Testament, in this respect, has to do mainly with *numerous things pertaining to the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom — first, as these things pertained to Israel [offered to Israel in the gospels, re-offered in Acts]; and then, as these things presently pertain to the one new man "in Christ" [to whom the kingdom is presently being offered, after having been rejected by and taken from Israel]*.

"The mystery" was revealed to Moses first, though remaining *a mystery, remaining veiled*.

Then, some fifteen centuries later, God took Paul aside (evidently to Arabia [the same country to which he had previously taken Moses to reveal things pertaining to the theocracy], then into heaven [II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-17]); and, in the person of His Son, God *opened up and unveiled* various things which He had previously revealed to Moses and other Old Testament prophets (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

(A “mystery [Gk., *musterion*, meaning, ‘a hidden thing,’ ‘a secret’]” in the New Testament can be defined as *something previously hidden in Old Testament revelation but now revealed* [cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:4, 5].

Contrariwise, a mystery CAN NEVER be thought of as a reference to something not found at all in previous revelation, for, again, there is NOTHING in the New Testament that does not have its roots in one or more places in the Old Testament.

Thus, a “mystery,” pertains to *something dealt with in previous revelation [seen mainly in the types] but not opened up [or fully opened up] to one’s understanding until a later point in time [seen mainly in the antitypes]*.

[Note that the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 2, 14) before a single word of the N.T. had been penned would have been *incomplete* had something later appeared in the N.T. that had not previously appeared in some form in the O.T.].

And the opening up and unveiling of a mystery [such as the mystery revealed to Paul following his conversion] could occur only through Divine intervention. *Only the same Person* Who had previously established the mystery [via revelation, through one or more of the Old Testament prophets] could open up and make known the mystery [via revelation, to one or more of the New Testament writers].

And, in Paul’s case, this can be seen through that which he himself testified concerning how he came into possession of a knowledge of the message which he had been called to proclaim among the Gentiles.

The Lord Himself took Paul aside, then moved Paul into His presence, and personally taught him — *One-on-one* — the message which he, in days ahead, was to proclaim to individuals [Christians] and groups of individuals [Churches] out among the Gentile nations.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself *personally* opened up and explained things to Paul which had previously been revealed through Moses and the Prophets [Gal. 1:11-18; Eph. 3:1-11; Col. 1:20-28; cf. Luke 24:25-27];

and Paul had been called to take these truths and proclaim them to *the one new man* “in Christ” out in the Gentile world, in both verbal and written form.)

Progressive revelation of this nature can be seen in Peter’s reference to angels desiring “to look into” things pertaining to *the salvation of the soul*, things which the Spirit moved him to write about, and things intimately associated with the mystery revealed to Paul (I Peter 1:3-11).

These angels could only have previously seen, *in the Old Testament Scriptures*, that which was being opened up and unveiled to Peter (and others). These were things which they desired to know more about; but, *apart from later revelation, which opened up and provided additional light on these things*, the saving of the soul in connection with sufferings and glory could be little understood.

Thus, “the mystery” revealed to Paul was simply *an opening up and an unveiling of things which had lain in the bosom of an existing revelation — a revelation wherein the roots of all Biblical doctrine lie*.

And, as previously stated, it lay centrally in the types, which God had established in the beginning. Then, the various types which deal with the bride of Christ, and thus “the mystery,” do so in different ways.

For example, Genesis chapter two deals with the bride being removed from the body; Genesis chapter twenty-four deals with the bride being taken from the family; Genesis chapter forty-one, Exodus chapter two, and Ruth chapters three and four deal with the bride being taken from among the Gentiles. And there are numerous other types as well, which, together, deal with *all the various facets of the matter*.

Further, “the mystery” has to do with revealed truth surrounding believing Jews and believing Gentiles — forming *one new man* “in Christ” (where there is neither Jew nor Gentile) — being *heirs together*, “of the same body.” It has to do with “Christ in you [*lit.*, ‘Christ being proclaimed among you’], the hope of glory” (*cf.* Eph. 2:12-15; 3:1-11; Col. 1:24-28).

Note again how “the mystery” is explained in so many words in the Book of Ephesians — a book centering around Christians

one day realizing an “inheritance” in heavenly places (ch. 1), a sphere presently occupied by the incumbent rulers, Satan and his angels (ch. 6):

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...

That the Gentiles [believing Gentiles] should be fellowheirs [with believing Jews], and of the same body [forming *the one new man* ‘in Christ’], and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel [which, contextually, could only be *the gospel of the glory of Christ*, NOT *the gospel of the grace of God*]” (Eph. 3:3a, 6; cf. Eph. 2:11-15).

And a type which, among other things, would have to do with Jews and Gentiles together in one body would be the account of Caleb and Joshua’s experiences, beginning in Numbers chapter thirteen and extending through the Book of Joshua. The name “Caleb” means *dog*, and the name “Joshua” means *salvation*.

It was the “Gentiles” who were looked upon by the Jews as *dogs*, for whom *salvation was provided through the Jews* (John 4:22). And Gentile believers, with Jewish believers, are destined to realize *an inheritance together in a heavenly land*, just as Caleb and Joshua realized *an inheritance together in an earthly land* (cf. I Cor. 9:23-10:11).

And though God, in the beginning, designed various Old Testament types to reveal these things, once He had called *the one new man* “in Christ” into existence and Israel had rejected the re-offer of the kingdom, these things had to be *opened up and further revealed* to those comprising this new creation. Apart from such an opening up and unveiling, God’s purpose for the present dispensation and the place which the Gentiles would occupy in this purpose could not be properly understood (cf. Acts 10:45-48; 11:15-18; 15:12-18).

This is the reason that the Lord took Paul aside shortly after his conversion and provided extensive instruction concerning this whole overall matter, for these things comprised *the heart of the message* which he was to carry to individuals out in the Gentile world.

And this is the reason that Paul’s ministry dealt mainly, not with the gospel of the grace of God, but with the gospel of the glory of Christ. And, correspondingly, this is also the reason that

the emphasis *in all of his epistles* is, likewise, on the gospel of the glory of Christ rather than the gospel of the grace of God.

## 2) Paul's Gospel

As stated at the outset, the manner in which Paul used the word, "gospel," meaning *good news*, **MUST ALWAYS be understood contextually**. Paul did not use this word as it is used, almost without exception, in theological circles today — as a reference only to the gospel of the grace of God. Rather, Paul used the word, time after time, as a reference to *the good news* which had been delivered to him by "the revelation of Jesus Christ," following his conversion (Gal. 1:11, 12).

And, as previously stated, as well, Paul used the word, **FAR MORE OFTEN THAN NOT**, as a reference to the main crux of his ministry — *the good news pertaining to that encompassed within the mystery*, which had been delivered to him, which he, in turn, had been called to proclaim to Christians throughout the Gentile world (Eph. 3:1-11; Col. 1:25-29). And the Christians to whom Paul ministered *would have easily understood his use of the word "gospel" from the context of that which he had either said or written* (for an example of the preceding, refer to the author's article, "[Antichrist Cannot Appear, Until...](#)").

This central thrust of Paul's ministry becomes *self-evident* as one reads through the Book of Acts and the Pauline epistles.

Paul proclaimed both the gospel of the grace of God and the gospel of the glory of Christ, but he proclaimed the good news pertaining to *the grace of God* with a view to his then being able to proclaim the good news pertaining to *the glory of Christ*. Paul explained to individuals *HOW they could be saved*, with a view to subsequently being able to explain to them *WHY they had been saved*.

For example, note how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul's final message to the Christians in Ephesus, through their elders (Acts 20:24-32). Or, for that matter, note also how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul's epistle to the Christians in Ephesus (1:7ff; 2:1ff; 3:1ff). And a similar structure can be seen in other epistles, not only in the Pauline epistles but in the general epistles as well.

But, because of an existing confusion in the dual nature of I Cor. 15:1-4 in this respect, attention will again be called to this

passage in order to illustrate the point. As previously noted, this passage is invariably used erroneously by Christians, not in a dual respect, but in a singular sense — as a reference *only* to the gospel of the grace of God.

This passage though begins with *the gospel of the glory of Christ* (vv. 1, 2), then briefly moves back to *the gospel of the grace of God* (v. 3), and then comes back to where it began, to *the gospel of the glory of Christ* (v. 4) — *providing the complete gospel message, covering past, present, and future aspects of salvation.*

Paul, in this passage, *began* with the central message which he had been called to proclaim; *then he briefly moved back* to the message of the gospel of the grace of God, which, of necessity, must be proclaimed first to the unsaved; *then he came back* to the message which is to be proclaimed to individuals once they have heard the gospel of the grace of God — *the central message which he had been called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world.*

“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” (I Cor. 15:1-4).

The problem emerges when a person attempts to not only make Paul’s reference to “the gospel” in verses one and two a reference to the gospel of the grace of God but make that stated in these verses pertain to his entire statement pertaining to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in verses three and four.

It is the “death” of Christ *ALONE* which pertains to *the gospel of the grace of God*. The “burial” and “resurrection” of Christ *move beyond this* and have to do with things pertaining to *the continuing good news, the gospel of the glory of Christ*.

Note the type beginning in Exodus chapter twelve. “Death” *alone* is seen in this chapter. “Death” had been decreed upon the

firstborn, but God provided a way for this death to be carried out in *a vicarious manner*.

And it is exactly the same today. “Death” has been decreed upon the firstborn, but God has provided a way for this death to be carried out in *a vicarious manner* (I Cor. 15:3).

In the type, this was done through the death of paschal lambs and the proper application of the blood from these slain lambs.

In the antitype, this is done exactly the same way. The Paschal Lamb has died in the stead of the firstborn, but the blood must be applied (through believing [Acts 16:30, 31; Eph. 2:8, 9]).

“Burial” and “resurrection” though move beyond this in the type (the Red Sea passage and emergence from the Sea on the eastern banks [*cf.* I Cor. 10:2; Col. 2:12; 3:1ff]).

And it is exactly the same in the antitype (I Cor. 15:4).

#### a) I Corinthians 15:1, 2

Verses one and two refer to the good news (the gospel) which Paul had previously proclaimed to those in Corinth, which they had accepted and upon which they presently stood. This good news had to do with *present and future* aspects of salvation (not past, as seen in the gospel of the grace of God), it had to do with *holding fast* to that which had been proclaimed (with the possibility that there could be *loss*), and it had to do with Christians in Corinth either *believing* or *not believing* the message with reference to *a purpose* (or *cause*) in view.

*The present and future aspects of salvation* in this gospel are shown by the words, “By which also ye are saved [*lit.*, ‘...ye are being saved’]”; *holding fast* to the message proclaimed is shown by the words, “if ye keep in memory [*lit.*, ‘if ye hold (are holding) fast’] what I preached unto you”; and *believing* or *not believing* the message with reference to *a purpose* in view is shown by the words, “unless ye have believed in vain [*lit.*, ‘...believed apart from a purpose’ (or, ‘...believed without a cause in view’)].”

*The present and future aspects of salvation* have to do with *the salvation of the soul* (*cf.* James 1:21; I Peter 1:4-9).

The eternal salvation which we presently possess — *the salvation of the spirit*, wherein man passes “from death unto life” (*cf.* John 5:24; Eph. 2:1, 5) — places man in a position where he can

realize *the salvation of his soul*.

And these two aspects of salvation *MUST ALWAYS be kept completely separate, one from the other*.

The thought of Christians *holding fast* to those things in the message being proclaimed can be seen in the second and fourth warnings in the Book of Hebrews. The same word appearing in the Greek text of I Cor. 15:2 appears twice in the second warning (3:6, 14) and once in the fourth warning (10:23). *Holding fast* in the second warning is with reference to “the heavenly calling” and “the hope” set before Christians (vv. 1, 6); and *holding fast* in the fourth warning is with reference to this same hope — “the profession of our faith [*lit.*, ‘the confession of the hope’]” (vv. 23-25).

Then, the thought of Christians *believing without a purpose (or cause)* is a reference to the fact that a person has been saved *for a revealed purpose* — a purpose seen, in its entirety, in the gospel of the glory of Christ. And that purpose is the same as the purpose pertaining to man’s creation in the beginning — “...let them have dominion” (Gen. 1:26, 28).

Man has been saved with a view to his one day occupying *a position of power and authority with Christ in His kingdom*, which has to do with realizing the present aspect of salvation at a future date — *the salvation of one’s soul*.

*Believing without a purpose (or cause)* in verse two leads a person *nowhere*. An individual has been saved for a purpose, which can be seen and understood *only through believing the gospel which Paul referred to in the previous verse*; and this is a purpose which can one day be realized *only through presently governing one’s life accordingly, set forth in verse two*.

#### b) I Corinthians 15:3, 4

Note the way verse three begins. Paul’s statement in verse three is *NOT AT ALL* a continuation of his subject matter from the first two verses. And this is really *self-explanatory*; Paul states this in so many words.

Verse three begins, “For I delivered unto you *FIRST OF ALL* that which *I ALSO received*...” That which he is about to reference is something which he had delivered unto them *FIRST* (prior to

delivering the good news which he had previously referenced, in vv. 1, 2), and this is something which *he had ALSO received* (that is to say, *he had received this IN ADDITION to the good news referred to in vv. 1, 2*).

The message which Paul delivered unto those in Corinth *FIRST* can be seen by going back to I Cor. 2:1, 2:

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Paul, when he *first* went to Corinth, couldn't begin with a message pertaining to the gospel of the glory of Christ, referred to in I Cor. 15:1, 2 (and also in I Cor. 2:1, preceded, as in I Cor. 15:1, 2, by a proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God [2:2; 15:3]).

When Paul *first* went to Corinth, after being rejected by the Jews and then going to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6), he found a city filled with unsaved Gentiles. And he *had to first* minister to those in Corinth on this basis. He *had to first* proclaim the simple message pertaining to the gospel of the grace of God unto them. He *had to begin* with “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He *couldn't begin* elsewhere.

But, once individuals had believed, once individuals had passed “from death unto life,” *then Paul could move beyond this message*.

And this is exactly what he did. *Paul spent one and one-half years in Corinth “teaching the word of God among them [among those who had been saved under the preaching of the simple message pertaining to the gospel of the grace of God]”* (Acts 18:11; cf. I Cor. 2:3ff).

And this is why Paul, in I Cor. 15:1, 2, could allude to these things through simply calling their attention to “*the gospel [‘the good news’] which I preached unto you...*” They would *know exactly* what he meant, for he had previously spent *an extensive period of time* teaching them things pertaining to this gospel. And they would *also understand* the distinction when he moved back in time and referred to the gospel of the grace of God which he, of necessity, had proclaimed to them *at the very beginning* (v. 3).

And, though moving back in this manner, Paul was then able to easily come back to the place where he had begun — *referencing*

*things pertaining to the central message which he had been called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world (v. 4).*

And this is the reason that Paul's ministry dealt mainly, not with the gospel of the grace of God, but with the gospel of the glory of Christ. And, correspondingly, this is also the reason that the emphasis *in all of his epistles* is, likewise, on the gospel of the glory of Christ rather than the gospel of the grace of God.

### **Hebrews and the General Epistles**

And exactly the same thing as seen in the Pauline epistles can be seen in Hebrews and the general epistles. The emphasis in any of these epistles, as in the Pauline epistles, is not on the gospel of the grace of God (corresponding to that foreshadowed by God's restorative work on day one in Gen. 1) but on a continuing aspect of salvation (that foreshadowed by God's continued restorative work on days two through six in Gen. 1).

And, whether Pauline, Hebrews, or the general epistles, this is all with a view to God's complete work in man's salvation, with a time of rest following (that foreshadowed by God resting in Gen. 2:1-3 following six days of restorative work).

It was all laid out at the beginning, in the opening thirty-four verses of Scripture.

Understand matters correctly at the beginning, and things in subsequent Scripture, in a natural respect, will fall into place.

But misunderstand or ignore the way God laid it all out at the beginning, and you are left without a base for all which follows, providing a main reason, if not the main reason, for much of the error which exists today.

(Over the years, the author has written extensively on parts of Hebrews and the general epistles, which can be found on his web site.

Referencing names of different books, articles, or pamphlets would be of little value, for this type material, to some extent, can be found scattered throughout most of what is on the site — in the forty books, numerous articles, and numerous pamphlets. About the only exception would be a number of late books, articles, and pamphlets dealing almost exclusively with Israel and the Middle East.)