

THE GOSPEL

A huge error within modern Christianity is the teaching that the Bible speaks only of one Gospel. This teaching alleges that wherever the word “Gospel” is found in Scripture it refers to the same identical message concerning salvation.

The purpose of this study will be to identify the various and different “gospels” found in the Scriptures.

Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13

Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me, in faith and love
which are in Christ Jesus.

As Paul shared the revelation God had given to him, he states the importance of having a pattern of **sound words**. As we study God’s Word, and as we share our understandings of God’s Word with others, it is crucial that we express **exactly** and **precisely** what God has said ... that we use **sound words**. If we vary from what God has said, we are in danger of teaching false things about God. We would no longer be using sound words, and we would be sharing our own message instead of God’s message.

So as we seek to understand from God’s Word what exactly the gospel is that we are to be proclaiming, let us seek to know exactly and precisely what God has said ... and not simply what the majority of men have taught ... no matter how learned, revered or respected they may be.

THE WORD “EVANGEL”

The word translated “gospel” in our modern English versions comes from the Greek “euangelion” ... transliterated “evangel” ... from which we derive the term “evangelism.” Consider the word’s structure:

EU: A prefix meaning “well” or “good”

ANGELLION: a message

The Greek “euangelion” (or evangel) simply means a good message, or good news. By itself, the word does not refer to any specific good news ... it must be qualified by the context to determine what the good news is that is being referred to.

INCONSISTENT TRANSLATIONS

The problem is that our modern English translations are grossly inconsistent, and incorporate Bible interpretation into the translation. They are really not **translations** of God’s Word at all, but **interpretations** based on the theological understandings of those creating the translations.

The Greek “evangel” in its various forms is found in the Bible some 140 times. The King James Version uses the following English words to translate “evangel.”

gospel
glad tidings
good tidings
preached
preacheth
preaching
declared

The word “gospel” is used when the translators have determined that the Bible is referring to what most within in the church call the “Gospel” with a capital “G.” When the same Greek word is used elsewhere, and when it cannot be talking about the “Gospel” as defined by the translator, another word is chosen in the translation.

So not only do we have great inconsistency in translating the word “evangel” ... but the translators have determined for us exactly what the “Gospel” with a capital “G” is.

But were the translators correct?

ONLY ONE GOSPEL?

It is generally believed and taught within most churches today that there is just one gospel, and when the word “gospel” is found in Scripture it is always referring to the same thing. Let us set aside any ideas about the word “gospel” that we have been indoctrinated with, to consider the word “evangel,” or gospel, strictly as used in Scripture.

THE GOSPEL (#1) TO ABRAHAM

Galatians 3:8 makes reference to a “gospel” to Abraham.

Now the scripture, perceiving before that God is justifying the nations by faith, brings before an **evangel** to Abraham, that In you shall all the nations be blessed.
(KJV: gospel, NIV: “the gospel in advance”)

Here we find that the gospel (good news) is the revelation to Abraham that through him all the nations shall be blessed.

Note that the gospel in this instance is spoken just to Abraham, and it makes no reference to Jesus Christ or even to salvation. This is a “gospel” ... but it is not “**The** Gospel” of our salvation. It is a different gospel.

DIFFERENT GOSPELS

Before we move forward, let us consider a few observations concerning the various “gospels” found in Scripture:

- The various gospels are not always brought by the same person
- The various gospels are not always directed to the same person or persons
- The various gospels do not always contain the same message, or good news
- The various gospels are not always concerning salvation

Our objective at this point is simply to display that the word “gospel” ... from the Greek “evangel” ... simply means good news, and the specifics as to the good news in each instance must be sought from the context.

THE GOSPEL (#2) TO ZECHARIAH

In Luke 1:19 we read:

... the messenger said to him (Zechariah), “I am Gabriel, who stands before God, and I was dispatched to speak to you and to bring you this **evangel**.”
(KJV: “glad tidings”, NIV: “good news”)

In this instance the gospel was brought by the messenger Gabriel ... was directed to Zechariah ... and was simply the good news that Zechariah’s wife was to have a son (see verses 13-14).

THE GOSPEL (#3) TO THE SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:10

And the messenger said to them (shepherds), “Fear not, for lo! I am bringing you an **evangel** of great joy which will be for the entire people, for today was brought forth to you a Saviour, Who is Christ, the Lord, in the city of David.”
(KJV: “good tidings”, NIV: “good news”)

Here the gospel is simply the good news directed to the shepherds, announcing that Christ was born.

THE GOSPEL (#4) THAT TIMOTHY BROUGHT TO PAUL

1 Thessalonians 3:6

Yet at present, because of Timothy’s coming to us from you, and bringing us the **evangel** of your faith and your love, and that you have a good remembrance of us always...
(KJV: “good tidings”, NIV: “good news”)

This is simply good news that was brought to Paul by Timothy ... good news concerning the fact that the Thessalonians were exhibiting faith and love.

SO “GOSPEL” SIMPLY MEANS GOOD NEWS

As we can see from these passages, “gospel” is simply good news. The good news is not always the same ... and it does not always have anything to do with our salvation. The word “gospel” always requires definition from its context, for us to know what the “gospel” in each instance refers to.

THE GOSPEL (#5) OF THE CIRCUMCISION

Now we turn to a most interesting passage ... Galatians 2:7 ... where Paul writes:

I have been entrusted with the **evangel** of the Uncircumcision, according as Peter of the Circumcision...

(KJV: “gospel of the uncircumcision ... gospel of the circumcision”)

(NIV: “gospel to the Gentiles ... gospel to the Jews”)

Since our modern English Bible translators use the word “gospel” in this passage, we are to believe that it is “THE Gospel” that is being referred to here ... there being only one. And since there is only one Gospel, the distinction between Peter and Paul is simply that they are commissioned to preach this single Gospel to different groups of people. Peter is to preach this Gospel to the Circumcision (the Jews), while Paul is to preach this same Gospel to the Uncircumcision (the Gentiles).

But as we have already seen from other instances, the gospel (“evangel” in the Greek) is not always referring to the same good news. Can we make the assumption that the evangel of Peter and the evangel of Paul are the same message of good news?

Let us begin by examining the good news proclaimed by Peter ... the “evangel of the Circumcision.”

Shortly after Christ’s resurrection we hear Peter proclaiming in Acts 3:19

Repent, then, and turn about for the erasure of your sins, so that seasons of refreshing should be coming from the face of the Lord, and He should dispatch the One fixed upon before for you, Christ Jesus, Whom heaven must indeed receive until the times of restoration of all...

In essence, Peter’s message calls for repentance so that Christ Jesus will return to bring restoration. Deja vu! This is exactly what the Old Testament Prophets had said to scattered Israel ... a call to return to God, and a promise of a restored kingdom.

Consider the question posed to Jesus just before his ascension into heaven (Acts 1:6)

Those, indeed, then who are coming together, asked Him, saying, “Lord, art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?” Yet He said to them, “Not yours is it to know times or eras which the Father placed in His own jurisdiction.”

Christ could not reveal **when** the kingdom would be restored to Israel.

Some today proclaim that the Church ... the Body of Christ ... is the substitute for Israel, and that the promises to Israel now become the promises to the Church. But the question posed by the Jewish followers of Christ was very specific ... “Art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus did not reply that this would not be happening ... that they had misunderstood ... and that following his resurrection the promises of God now apply to all mankind. He simply said to them that the time of this restoration could not be revealed to them.

Then, a short time later, Peter’s message seems to say the same thing. “Repent, so that Christ can return ... so that the restoration of all can take place.” Israel awaits the restoration of the kingdom, and is called upon to repent so that this restoration will take place.

There were many kingdoms in Old Testament times, but the one established by God was the kingdom of Israel. This kingdom grew in the days of David, and flourished in the days of Solomon. But following these reigns, and because of the rebellion and disobedience of the Israelites, the kingdom of Israel divided and later went into exile. God’s prophets exhorted the Israelites to repent, and promised that the kingdom would one day be restored and returned to prominence.

John the Baptist proclaimed:

Repent! For near is the kingdom of the heavens. (Matthew 3:2)

When Jesus first began his ministry, he proclaimed:

Repent! For near is the kingdom of the heavens. (Matthew 4:17)

Jesus and his called disciples went about Galilee, “heralding the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23). What was this “evangel,” or “gospel of the kingdom?” Most today will simply “spiritualize” this message, saying that it applies to all mankind and is simply referring to heaven. This results from the failure to distinguish between two different gospels ... one directed to the Jews (the circumcision gospel) and a different gospel directed to the Gentiles (the uncircumcision gospel).

Isn’t the “gospel of the kingdom” simply the further proclamation of the Jewish prophets to the Jews ... referring to the kingdom’s restoration as prophesied by the Old Testament prophets?

- The Old Testament Prophets spoke specifically to Israel
- The Prophets talked about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel
- John the Baptist was the first voice following Malachi, and with the same message
- Jesus and His disciples went only to the sheep of Israel (Matt 10:6)

- Jesus and His disciples proclaimed the same message concerning the kingdom as did the Old Testament prophets
- Even after the crucifixion and resurrection, the Twelve continued to go only to the sheep of Israel
- Peter's proclamation continued to call for repentance and awaited the restoration of the kingdom

From the time of God's promise to Abraham, that through him all nations would be blessed, God used a certain group of Abraham's descendents as His instrument to accomplish this blessing.

- Abraham (Genesis 12:3)
- Isaac (Genesis 26:5)
- Jacob (Genesis 28:14)
- Jacob is renamed Israel (Genesis 35:10)
- Israel's descendents become the Israelites (Exodus 1)

God's plan is to bless ALL nations. Israel is His instrument for doing so. But how can blessings come thru Israel if Israel is scattered and struggling, awaiting her King?

The time had come. The Messiah, David's promised and long-awaited successor upon the throne, had arrived. John the Baptist began to prepare the way. The message was clear ... "Repent, the kingdom is near." But Israel did not repent. Israel did not recognize the era of their visitation (Luke 19:44). The King was not welcomed, and was even crucified. Peter calls again for the Israelites to repent, so that the King will come and the kingdom will be restored. Then, once more, Israel will be God's instrument through which all nations will be blessed. Then this chosen race, this "holy priesthood," this "holy nation" could minister to the other nations ... that all nations will be blessed in accordance with God's plan.

This "gospel of the Circumcision" entrusted to Peter concerns Israel, and the restoration of the kingdom unto Israel. It is the "gospel of the kingdom" that had been proclaimed by the Old Testament Prophets, by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles commissioned by Jesus ... and is now carried forth by Peter and the others. This good news ... this "gospel" ... goes out only to the sheep of Israel, because the kingdom is to be restored to Israel. Other nations will be blessed, but only through God's chosen channel ... Israel.

Even "the church" ("ecclesia" in the Greek ... literally "called-out-ones") in the early part of Acts was entirely a Jewish body. The many references to the gospel going only to the sheep of Israel throughout the book of Acts are often overlooked by Bible students, but clearly the gospel during that time was directed exclusively to the Jews, and "the church" at that time was exclusively Jewish. Pentecost (in Acts 2), thought by most to be the birth of our Church, was a gathering of Israelites only. Peter and the Twelve clearly went only to the sheep of Israel.

Nowhere in the "gospel of the Circumcision" proclaimed by Peter do we see the equality of Gentiles with the sons of Israel. Nowhere do we see a promise of "heaven" ... but only a restoration of the kingdom upon this earth.

THE GOSPEL (#6) OF THE UNCIRCUMCISION

Turning again to Galatians 2:7, Paul writes:

I have been entrusted with the **evangel** of the Uncircumcision, according as Peter of the Circumcision...

We have considered the gospel of the Circumcision ... a promise of the kingdom's restoration unto Israel. But what is the Gospel of the Uncircumcision entrusted to Paul?

We recall Paul's conversion and his commission from the Lord in Acts 9:15

He is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel.

None of the Twelve were chosen or commissioned to go to the other nations, but only to the sons of Israel. Paul is commissioned to do both. The book of Acts records that everywhere Paul went, he would first go to the synagogues and proclaim Christ to the Jews. We remember that a part of his commission was to go to the "sons of Israel."

But when he was rejected by the sons of Israel, he would go to the Gentiles. Peter and the Twelve did not do so. And finally, in Acts 28 when Paul calls together the "foremost of the Jews" (v 17) he seeks to "persuade them concerning Jesus" (v 23). When many are not persuaded, Paul announces:

Let it be known to you, then, that to the nations was dispatched this salvation of God, and they will hear. (v 28)

But is the gospel to the nations the same as the gospel to Israel?

How could the nations await the restoration of the kingdom, since it was not their kingdom to begin with? How could the nations suddenly inherit all of the same promises made to Israel? Consider what Paul says in Romans 11:25

Callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering. And thus all Israel shall be saved...

If God had cast off Israel and given her promises to the Gentiles, how could Israel one day be saved? We read in Romans 11 that Israel had not been calloused permanently ... but only UNTIL the complement of the nations may be entering.

Consider Galatians 1:11

For I am making known to you, brethren, as to the evangel which is being brought by me, that it is not in accord with man. For neither did I accept it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

If Paul's gospel was the same as Peter's, why did Paul not simply receive this gospel from Peter and the others who had walked with Jesus during his earthly ministry? Paul is very clear that this was not the case.

And why does Paul refer to his message as "MY gospel?" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8). If there is only one Gospel, why does Paul use the terminology "MY gospel?"

And if Paul's gospel was the same as Peter's, why was there so much controversy surrounding his proclamation? Even late in his ministry when he went to Jerusalem, we read in Acts 21:20

... how many tens of thousands there are among the Jews who have believed, and all are inherently zealous for the law...

Those that opposed Paul were not unbelieving Jews ... but "Jews who believed." If Paul's gospel was the same as Peter's, why would this opposition occur?

And consider some of the differences between what Paul proclaimed and what Peter and the others proclaimed.

<u>Peter</u>	<u>Paul</u>
Bride of Christ	Body of Christ
Priestly nation	No barrier between Jew or Greek
Born again	New creation
Pardon (found guilty but sentence suspended)	Justification (found not guilty)
Repent ... so that restoration can come	God not reckoning offenses to man
Awaiting Christ to return to reign in kingdom on earth	Awaiting Christ to snatch us away into the heavens

PROCLAIMING THE CORRECT GOSPEL

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:20

For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, "Be conciliated to God!"

If we are to be Christ's ambassadors, we must be sure that the gospel we proclaim is the correct gospel. If this is not the case, how can God be entreating through us.

By failing to recognize that the Bible speaks of many different “gospels” ... and specifically by failing to distinguish between the “gospel of the Circumcision” and the “gospel of the Uncircumcision” ... we cause confusion and we proclaim things that are not true.

- Israel awaited her King to return, restoring the kingdom unto Israel
- We await Christ to come and snatch us away into the heavens

- The gospel of the Circumcision pertained to the nation of Israel
- The gospel of the Uncircumcision pertains to those of all nations, without distinction

We cannot mix the two gospels without confusing the message God wants us to proclaim in this present age!

If we fail to distinguish those things in God’s Word that are different, and if we mix together the various gospels we find throughout Scripture (some of which are not spoken to us or intended for us), we are actually creating a “different gospel” ... a gospel of our own creation ... thereby distorting the real gospel God has entrusted to His Church.

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, **correctly**
cutting the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

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