

WHAT MESSAGE HAS GOD GIVEN TO HIS AMBASSADORS?

If we are Christ’s ambassadors, as if God is entreating through us, we must be sure we are communicating the correct message. To do so we must be sure that we correctly understand what God has revealed to us in His Word, and what precisely He is wanting to be proclaimed in this present day.

To properly understand what God is revealing to us in His Word, we must understand how all parts of the Bible fit together. More disagreements and divisions take place within the church because of differences of opinion as to how all parts of the Bible fit together, and how God is operating in the world today.

We cannot simply assume that all parts of the Bible are spoken directly to us in this present day. God is most certainly the same, but He may choose to operate in different ways in different ages, and we must pay close attention as we study His Word to us if we are to properly understand what He is saying to us. As we study we must always ask:

- Who was this portion of Scripture directed to?
- Is this directed to me in this present day, or was it to a specific people in a specific age?

As we seek to understand what God is revealing to His church today, let us begin by remembering a bit of history as recorded in the book of Acts.

First ... who did Paul address in his ministry?

“... he is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel ...” (Acts 9:15)

So Paul was to go to two different groups ...

- To the nations and kings (the Gentiles), and
- To the sons of Israel (the Jews)

This is a different commission from Peter and the Twelve who were sent only to the sheep of Israel (the Jews).

As Paul would enter a city, his modus operandi was to go first to the sons of Israel. He would speak in the synagogues, and only after being rejected would he speak to those of the nations.

“Yet since, in fact, you are thrusting it away, and are judging yourselves not worthy of eonian life, lo! We are turning to the nations. For thus the Lord has directed us: I have appointed Thee for a light of the nations; for Thee to be for salvation as far as the limits of the earth.”
(Acts 13:46-47)

Still, as Paul proceeded to other places, he would continue to go first to the synagogues ... to the sons of Israel. But after a time, as recorded near the end of Acts, Paul pronounced what appears to be a final closing of the door on Israel.

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

We must remember this sequence of events as we differentiate Paul’s writings from the other writers ... and even as we study within Paul’s letters. We must always ask, “Who is Paul addressing here?” This is a part of “rightly dividing” or “correctly cutting” the word of God as we are instructed to do.

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

We cannot simply read indiscriminately and assume the writer of a portion of Scripture is talking to the same group of people with the same message, pertinent in all eras.

This is important because God’s “agenda” is not the same in all eras or with all groups of people. When Paul went into the synagogues proclaiming that Jesus is the son of God, what was the expectation of Israel? Remember that the prophets had been proclaiming to Israel a restoration of the kingdom that once flourished under the reign of David. Even after the resurrection those closest to Jesus asked,

“‘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.’” (Acts 1:6-7)

The expectation of the sons of Israel was a restoration of the physical kingdom on the earth. The kingdom would be re-established, Christ would reign, and those of other nations would be blessed thru Israel. And Jesus did nothing to alter this expectation. He simply said it was not for them to know the time the expectation would be fulfilled.

And when we consider Peter’s message in the days that followed, we see that Israel’s expectation as Peter saw it had not changed.

“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 which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon.” (Acts 3:19-21)

If Israel would repent, Christ Jesus Who is in heaven would come. This is a conditional message. Christ would come, but it would require repentance on the part of Israel. This is very similar to John the Baptist’s message ... “Repent ... the Kingdom is near!”

But somewhere along the way, God’s agenda changed. Consider Paul’s message in 2 Corinthians:

“Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ’s sake, ‘Be conciliated to God!’”
(2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Here there is no mention of the restored kingdom at all. Is God looking for man to repent and seek Him before He will respond ... or is He conciliated to the world; not reckoning their offenses to them? Is God still working thru Israel as His instrument to bless all nations as Israel awaits the kingdom to come upon the earth, or is He now working directly with those of the nations who are a part of His called-out-ones (ecclesia in the Greek, and commonly translated “church” in most Bible translations today)?

Matthew through Acts

To understand how God is operating in this present age, let us step back for a moment to Matthew. John the Baptist proclaimed the kingdom is near, as had been prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus entered the scene and proclaimed the same message. It appeared that the time had come for the restoration of the kingdom unto Israel.

Throughout the four Gospels there is no mention of such things as “The Body of Christ” or the “snatching away” of the Body that we see in Paul’s writings (1 Thessalonians 4:13). When Jesus spoke about the end times (Matthew 24) he prophesied his own rejection and crucifixion (as was foretold in Daniel 9), and he prophesied his return (as Daniel also foretold as a part of the final “seven”). But there is no mention of a “pause” between his crucifixion and the signs that would signal his return (Matthew 24).

Throughout the four Gospels what is being proclaimed is the “Kingdom of heaven” to come upon the earth when Christ returns. This will be the return of the kingdom that had flourished in David’s day, but

which was now under Roman rule. And with the kingdom restored, Israel could once again serve as God's instrument thru which all peoples of the earth would be blessed.

Nothing in the Old Testament or the four "Gospels" even makes mention of the resurrected dead going to "heaven." The expectation was always for a resurrection so as to live upon the earth, with Christ reigning. We only "see" heaven in the Gospels because we have confused what Jesus talked about -- with the things Paul talked about. We have "spiritualized" the words of Jesus, when in fact He talked of things to take place upon the earth.

As the book of Acts opens, the message is the same as in the four Gospel accounts: "Repent, the Kingdom is near." The hearers are admonished to repent so that Jesus can return, and the restoration of all things can be accomplished (Acts 3:19). No "pause" is seen.

But as Acts closes, the Jewish leaders assembled by Paul reject the kingdom message one last time, and Paul announces that salvation will now be sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28:25ff).

Different "Evangel" (Gospels)

The word "evangel" (gospel) is used many times in Scripture, and it does not always mean the same thing. Our efforts to force a single gospel in all ages throughout all of Scripture cause us to confuse and cloud God's revelation to us. The Greek "evangel" simply means "good news," and this news can be different in each case. Context must be studied to know what "evangel" means each time the word is used.

Throughout the four "Gospels" and Acts it is the "kingdom evangel" that is proclaimed: "Repent, the Kingdom is near." It goes strictly to the Jews, not the Gentiles, as has been the case throughout the Old Testament. Like it or not, Jesus spoke directly to the Jews.

But look at the "evangel" proclaimed by Paul in his writings. Gentiles and Jews alike are "joint heirs" with no priority given to the Jew. The "Body of Christ" is introduced by Paul. An expectation in the "celestials" (or "heavenlies") is introduced for the first time (Ephesians 2:6). It is the "snatching away" that will transport the Body of Christ there (1 Thessalonians 4).

Paul's evangel does not go to the Jews, but it pertains to Jew and Gentile alike. His message is not, "Repent, the Kingdom is near" ... but is instead, "God conciliates us to Himself through Christ ... not reckoning offenses" (2 Corinthians 5:18ff). As God's Ambassadors in these current times we are not to proclaim, "Repent, the Kingdom is near." That was a message for the Jewish nation, and its proclamation stopped at the end of Acts when it was rejected one last time. The message we are told to proclaim now is, "Be conciliated to God, for the One not knowing sin He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes..." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Paul was given new revelation to proclaim

Here is something that is overlooked by most in the church today, as they indiscriminately mix together all parts of the Scriptures.

Paul points out that the evangel he proclaimed was not taught to him by a man, but it came through a **revelation** of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11). **By revelation** “the **secret**” was made known to him, a secret that had not been made known in the past, but that was now being revealed (Ephesians 3:3-5). Paul goes so far as to say that it had been granted to him to “**complete**” the word of God (Colossians 1:25).

Clearly Paul was given new things to share, things not previously revealed. God has “paused” the course of events leading to the return of Christ. This is a pause between Daniel’s 69 “sevens” and the final “seven” (See Daniel 9:24ff). It is a pause not foreseen by any Old Testament prophet, and it was not revealed during Jesus’ days upon the earth. The purpose of the “pause” is revealed by Paul:

Callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering... (Romans 11:25ff).

And during this “pause” **new things** revealed for the first time to Paul are given to us in his writings. Believers, Jew and Gentile alike, become a part of the Body of Christ (different from “The Bride” which was Israel). Believers are an entirely “new creation” (different from being “born again” as was Israel’s expectation). Jewish and Gentile Believers are joint heirs (different from life in the Kingdom of heaven to come upon the earth where the Jew has priority, as described in the final chapters of Revelation). When the kingdom is finally restored, Israel will once again become God’s channel to bless all peoples. Our expectation in the upcoming eon (age) is in the celestials (heavenlies), not within the Kingdom of heaven upon the earth.

It will be given to Christ to be head over all things

- Both that in the heavens (with the Body of Christ as His instrument)
- And that on the earth (with the Bride of Christ ... Israel ... as His instrument), as is revealed in Ephesians 1:10.

Paul’s Gospel

Remembering that the word “evangel” (gospel) simply means “good news,” when Paul tells us about the “evangel of God” we must pay close attention to how he describes this evangel that he is proclaiming. If we are careful in our study, we will see a very clear difference between Paul’s evangel, and the evangel that was proclaimed by Jesus when He walked upon the earth:

Paul

“Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us.

We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated to God!'" (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Jesus

"Repent, for near is the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt 4:17)

We cannot simply give preference to the words of Jesus, often in red ink, because He ... as the son of God ... is superior to Paul. Each was operating under a separate commission from God. Jesus was speaking only to the lost sheep of Israel, as He said many times as recorded in Matthew and the other accounts. He was proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom upon the earth ... a return of the kingdom that had existed in David's day, the return of which was proclaimed by the prophets.

Peter also proclaimed this message, specifically to the Israelites, after the resurrection of Christ.

"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 ..." (Acts 3:19-21)

Clearly there are differences between the evangel (good news) proclaimed by Jesus and Peter, and the evangel being proclaimed by Paul. Much confusion has resulted from Bible studies that try to combine the different "evangels" proclaimed to different groups of people in different times. A study of the various evangels proclaimed in Scripture is a venture in itself. I merely want to display the fact that when the word "evangel" is used in Scripture, we must pay close attention to the details to understand:

- What is the evangel (message) being proclaimed?
- To whom is the evangel being proclaimed?
- Do I have the right to assume the evangel pertains to me, or is the message intended for a different group of people, and perhaps for a different era?

Theologies & Systems of Bible Interpretation

Let us think for a moment about how different Believers associated with different churches interpret Scripture. I was always taught that God's "offer" of salvation is available to all, if only we will use our free will to have faith and believe ... at which point we are "saved" from the wrath that would have been our lot in the next life. This is the Arminian (Free Will) "hypothesis" for interpreting Scripture. In Arminian churches, such as the various Methodist denominations, this hypothesis is taught as fact, using select Bible passages as proof ... as if there are no other alternative interpretations of Scripture to be considered. Ordained ministers within the Arminian denominations are "indoctrinated" with this hypothesis ... taught as fact ... and these ministers then indoctrinate those within their churches with this hypothesis ... taught as fact. When the Bible is subsequently studied, it is interpreted thru this lens.

But there is another segment of Christianity that has been indoctrinated into a different system of interpretation. While Arminians believe that men have free will to make choices resulting in being "lost" or "saved," Calvinists believe that men are not capable of mustering belief on their own, due to their

depravity. Their hypothesis sees God as choosing some (the elect) but not others. Some men are destined from the day they are born to be the elect. Others are destined from the day they are born to be lost, ultimately to be tormented forever and ever by God's choice. In Calvinist denominations, its ministers are indoctrinated with this hypothesis ... taught as fact, using select Bible passages as proof ... and these ministers then indoctrinate those within their churches with this hypothesis ... taught as fact. When the Bible is studied, it is interpreted thru the Calvinist lens.

But who is right, and who is wrong? The same Bible is used to defend each position. And any of us must admit that passages can be found in the Bible that seem to support each position.

The real problem is that believers cannot study the Bible without looking thru the lens they have been indoctrinated with. And there are many other lenses beyond the simple Arminian and Calvinist models I have described. Some systems of theology teach that Scripture supports speaking in tongues in this present age, while other teach that this gift has passed. There is the "name it and claim it" system of theology ... water baptism versus no baptism ... sometimes a single point of interpretation can divide believers, and each subset of believers is indoctrinated into a particular theology for interpreting Scripture.

And the worst part is that Bible interpretation is not taught as a hypothesis to be tested ... it is taught as unwavering fact. Any who might find fault within the system of teaching are silenced. Some are asked to move on ... others leave on their own and gravitate toward Believers of like mind ... and others disassociate themselves from any church assembly.

It is important to remember that no man has all of the answers. We must all admit this at the onset. And a hypothesis in Bible interpretation must be treated as such ... a hypothesis, and not immutable fact.

My son Chad shared with me an excellent analogy. In the scientific community, great strides are made when scientists "stand on the shoulders" of the giants that preceded them. Scientists from hundreds of years ago have been found to be wrong in many cases, but their studies have enabled those in subsequent times to learn from their discoveries ... including their mistakes ... and move further along toward a correct understanding of science. But in the Christian community we do not move forward. When it comes to Bible interpretation we do not stand on the shoulders of those giants from former times. Instead we put these giants on a pedestal and do not allow anyone to challenge their hypotheses. We should be able to take the works of Wesley, or Luther, or Calvin, or countless others ... and examine their "theories," recognizing that they may have been entirely wrong.

Once the stamp of "orthodoxy" was made in the 5th century, some hypotheses became unchallengeable. But these interpretations, too, are truly hypotheses, and not unchallengeable fact. The theory of the Trinity, of endless torment, and countless others points were designated "fact" by the 5th century church, despite what subsequent Bible interpretation might find. The fact that we have so many disagreements within the realm of Bible interpretation (free will, speaking in tongues, baptism, etc) should cause us to question any man's complete system of theology. The Christian community should be such that there is unity ... for we are one Body and one church ... and we should agree to study God's Word in a fresh way, casting off our biases and indoctrinations, helping one another to come to an understanding as to what God is revealing.

What is important is not what each individual denomination or church believes ... what is important is what God has revealed. Our goal within the Body of Christ should be to work together in our study of the Bible, earnestly seeking to understand exactly what God has revealed to us ... and what our message as Ambassadors should be.

Maybe Wesley was totally wrong. Maybe Calvin was wrong. Maybe Luther was wrong. How will we know unless we are willing to concede that the “hero” of our particular part of the church might have been wrong.

It is my belief that Arminianism was a rebellion against the atrocities against God found in Calvinism. Calvinists point to the Bible to prove that God creates some men strictly for the purpose of tormenting them forever. Why would a God of love do this? Something is wrong. The Arminian solution is to point to passages within the Bible that seem to speak of man’s will, and they conclude that God gives every man a chance to choose (thus vindicating God), and the responsibility is now upon man to believe.

But once we see that Scripture really says that none will be tormented forever and ever, and that God will ultimately save and reconcile all to Himself, we no longer have a need to vindicate God from the Calvinist teachings.

To counter one false hypothesis (Calvinism), the Arminians developed a second false hypothesis to vindicate God. The problem is that in either case we portray God as loving and perfect, and yet perfectly willing to either cast men into eternal torment because that is His choice, or because He is not able to lead men out of a destiny in eternal torment, caused by man’s stubborn will which has thwarted God’s perfect will.

A Hypothesis

As we study Scripture, we must not rely on a pastor, preacher, evangelist, teacher, scholar or author, no matter how distinguished they may be! That is our problem. The Body of Christ is divided into many different denominations and sects, all teaching different things, yet most people gravitate to one particular fragment of “The Church” and they let those in authority tell them how to interpret Scripture. No one thinks for himself. Anytime a question arises, we run to the experts for the answers. After all ... they have studied, and this is their field of expertise. So we turn to the pastor, the preacher, the scholar or the author.

Step back for a minute and consider how many different viewpoints there are, and you will quickly come to the conclusion that all teachers and preachers cannot be right. Many of them are therefore wrong! Yet most of us today are simply handed a little package as to how Scripture is to be interpreted and how God is to be understood, and we accept the package as our own ... hook, line and sinker.

When we hear men teach or preach, we must consider their hypothesis, and study for ourselves as the Bereans were commended for doing.

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who receive the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures day by day, to see if these have it thus. (Acts 17:11)

How All Parts of the Bible Fit Together

Most theologies, or hypotheses about God, are based on an interpretation of the Bible. Disagreements result because various individuals or groups do not agree how all parts of the Bible fit together, and therefore how God's Word for us today is to be understood.

What follows is not fact ... but my hypothesis. It is not just another hypothesis I am asking you to believe in place of the hypothesis you may presently subscribe to. Like the Bereans of old, I ask you to listen and think, and turn to your Bible to seek for yourself how all parts fit together, and what God is revealing to us in this present age.

Having tried to step back from all of the influences that have been a part of my Biblical interpretation in the past, here is what I think God is revealing in His Word today.

Out of the mass of humanity, none are just ... none are understanding ... none are even seeking out God (see Romans 3:10-11). Therefore all any of us is able to achieve on our own is death, with no hope thereafter ... since death is the payment for sin. Since none are even seeking out God, how can we even generate the faith necessary to believe, even if we hear the gospel of salvation?

So man is helpless. History has shown that even though God has given His Law to inform and to guide man, man has been unable to uphold the Law. This mortal (dying) state we have inherited from Adam has blinded us in the sense that we live by the flesh and not the spirit. We turn away from God, and are not able to seek Him or generate the faith necessary to believe Him.

But in the midst of man's blindness, though our condition seems dark and helpless, God "calls" a portion of mankind ... those He has chosen and has designated for His purposes. God once chose Abraham, with the purpose that thru Abraham all peoples would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). This promise was later passed not to all of Abraham's descendents, but to certain ones God has chosen. Jacob is one to whom the promise is passed (Genesis 28:14) and he is later renamed Israel (Genesis 35:10). Later his sons become a nation ... the Israelites ... God's chosen people.

We must keep in mind the reason God chooses certain men over others. It is not to show favoritism or to reward for good behavior, but to select certain ones to serve as His instruments, with the ultimate purpose of blessing all mankind.

In David's day the kingdom grew and flourished. But later the kingdom divided, declined and was conquered. The prophets in the Old Testament called the Israelites to repentance, and promised a time of the kingdom's restoration unto Israel.

But when the king comes (Jesus) and announces that the kingdom is near, He is rejected by His people. Even after Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter and the other apostles call for repentance so that the king will return and all will be restored (Acts 3:19), but time and again the message is rejected by Israel. The kingdom was not restored ... so how can Israel be used as God's instrument to bless all people?

So God turns to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28), thru His chosen instrument Saul (Acts 9:15), who was later renamed Paul (Acts 13:9). Israel is temporarily set aside as God works in a new way, using a new instrument ... the Body of Christ. Israel has not been rejected by God forever, but only “until the complement of the nations may be entering” (Romans 11:25). Nor was this rejection by Israel a surprise to God, for “in their offense is salvation to the nations.” (Romans 11:11) “God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all.” (Romans 11:32) This apparent rejection and re-direction was a part of God’s plan from the start.

So while none are able to seek after God, God chooses some ... the “called-out-ones” ... to whom God reveals Himself, and “saves” in this present age. But the called-out-ones (the “church”) are not the only ones God will ultimately save. Just as in the calling of Abraham, God’s plan was to use Abraham as His instrument to the end that all peoples would be blessed ... so also today God calls the church ... the Body of Christ ... with the ultimate purpose of blessing all peoples.

Consider 1 Timothy 2:4

“... God, Who wills that all mankind be saved and come into a realization of the truth”

And 1 Timothy 4:9-11

“... God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of believers”

Most evangelists today confuse God’s message to mankind, and they make an offer to humanity:

- Choose to believe and be saved, **but**
- If you fail to believe your destiny after death is endless torment

Error has crept into the church because we have tried to substitute ourselves for Israel. Israel was told that the kingdom was near, and its arrival was conditioned on repentance. But when the coming of the kingdom was delayed temporarily due to Israel’s failure to repent, we cannot assume that the message now going to the Gentiles is identical. After all, how can Gentiles anticipate a restored kingdom, when we were never a part of the kingdom to start with. It was Israel’s kingdom in David’s day, and the restoration of Israel’s kingdom that the Old Testament prophets spoke of.

John the Baptist warned his audience to flee the wrath that is to come, preparing the way for the kingdom to come upon the earth. Jesus proclaimed the restored kingdom was near, and He called the sheep of Israel to repentance. As Jesus spoke of the coming kingdom He warned of the penalties for disobedience.

But all of these words pertained to Israel, and to the coming restored kingdom. When the kingdom was rejected by the Israelites and the king crucified, was God’s message to the Gentiles the same?

Consider Paul’s message in

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

“Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the

world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated to God!'"

A far different message from, "flee the wrath which is to come" or a threat of endless torment ...

"God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them."

So while all men are helpless, God thru Christ has dealt with the problem of man's offenses. God calls **some** of humanity to be His church, toward the end that **all** mankind will be blessed. The church is not to make an "offer" of salvation ... but is charged to "proclaim" what God is doing.

"God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them."

And to beseech to the world:

"Be conciliated to God."

We beseech not because men who do not believe are destined for eternal torment ... this is not found in God's Word and is a teaching fabricated by man's erroneous interpretations of God's Word. We beseech because we are called to beseech ... are we make not an offer to humanity, but a proclamation of God.

God has revealed to us in His plan

1 Corinthians 15:22

"As in Adam all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified."

But all are not being saved in this present age. Some are dying without faith, and without realizing what God is in the process of doing. Only His church is being "called" in this age, to serve God in a particular way that He has determined.

But ultimately God's plan is to reconcile ALL to Himself.

1 Corinthians 15:23

Yet each in his own class:

- (1) the Firstfruit, Christ;
- (2) thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence;
- (3) thereafter the consummation ...

And this consummation is described in the words that follow:

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Christ gives up the kingdom to His God

All sovereignty, authority and power are nullified
The last enemy (death) is abolished
Christ subjects all under his feet
Christ subjects Himself to God

And God is then

1 Corinthians 15:28

“All in all”

Christ’s purpose has thus been fulfilled ... to subject all to God ... bringing about this complete reconciliation. How can a place of eternal torment exist in the midst of complete reconciliation? How can eternal torment exist if God is All in all?

Christ does not reign forever and ever as some faulty Bible translations tell us ... but UNTIL His mission is accomplished ... that is

1 Corinthians 15:25-27

All enemies are under His feet
The last enemy (death) is abolished
All is subjected under His feet

God’s purpose is to subject all to Himself ... far from the chaos that we see in the world today.

Christ is the Firstborn of every creature, and

Colossians 1:16

“... in Him is all created”

And

Colossians 1:20

“... through Him to reconcile all to Him”

In this present age we who are His Body delight to dwell in Him (Colossians 1:19). But those not yet reconciled are still outside of Him. Yet Christ is in the process of subjecting all to Himself ... that is the process that we are in the midst of even today.

And we, the church, are Christ’s “complement” in this work.

“[God] gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Christ is in the process of accomplishing God’s grand plan ... to cause God to become All in all. How sad that the church today has such a limited view of what God is in the process of doing.

Paul's audience apparently had the same problem understanding the full plan of God. Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus ... that God:

Ephesians 1:17ff

“may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength, which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the All in all.”

Far from the limited gospel being preached today, and the threat of eternal torment for those that choose not to believe ... Christ is head over all and is in the process, with we the church as His complement, of completing the all in all.

Evangelism today should not be for the purpose of rescuing people from eternal torment in the age to come by making them an offer to accept or reject. It should be for the purpose of proclaiming God's message ... “Be reconciled” ... and for the purpose of proclaiming God's love, God's grace, God's wisdom, and God's plan to ultimately reconcile all to Himself through Christ Jesus.

Consider Paul's evangelism. He was the first to go to the “pagans” outside of the sheep of Israel. If Paul believed that all Gentiles dying without acknowledging Christ were destined to burn forever in hell, his approach to evangelism would have been completely different. He would have warned of the fires of hell with his every breath ... but he did not. His message to the Gentiles was not an offer (accept Jesus Christ and be saved ... and if you do not you are destined for hell). Instead his message was a proclamation.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21

“... God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, ‘Be conciliated to God!’”

Paul's motive was not to rescue the perishing ... but instead to proclaim the grace, and the love, and the wisdom of God ... and because of God's goodness he beseeched all who would listen to become reconciled to God. After all, this is God's plan for the entire universe ... that all become reconciled to Him.

“Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him (Christ), then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all.”
(1 Corinthians 15:28)

What we see here is nothing short of a complete reconciliation of all things unto God, at which point God becomes All in all.

We who have been called to be His Body are in Christ today, and in Him we delight to dwell. And Christ is about the process of reconciling ALL to God. That is the message, not the offer, that we are called to proclaim today as Christ's ambassadors.

Bob Evely

Message from the Bible Conference in Fairview SC 10/28/05