

## Distinctly Defining the Gospels

When one considers the writings of the Bible, it is incorrect to assess all its contents into one grouping thus labeling it all one message or one gospel. First the Greek word (Modern Greek) **ehv• ahg• yehl• ee•on** is simply rendered "good news", "good tidings" or "good message". Now most will agree there are many good messages in the Bible, but to hold the position that the Bible presents only one gospel; is tantamount to saying that God has sent man only one conveyance of good news through the ages.

In actuality God has revealed His good news or messages (gospels) to mankind progressively through the ages. First, He proclaimed to Adam and Eve as He placed them in the garden, that they should be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over it (Genesis 1:28). Next He prophetically announced to them, after the fall of Adam that the woman's (Eve's) seed should some day crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:5). Afterward, after many years, God had determined that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth and that He would destroy the inhabitants thereof. Noah and his family were granted favor and therefore they received the good news that they would be spared in the Ark, which God instructed them to abide in.

Next we note that to Abraham, God preached or proclaimed the gospel or good news that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Subsequently to this, all through the Old Testament scriptures, there is documentation of God decreeing and proclaiming more and more good news for mankind (specifically to Israel). Now this entails the various covenants, i.e., Palestanic, Davidic and New, as He spake through the patriarchs and prophets. This all culminated in the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom as introduced by John the Baptist, preached by Jesus and His disciples (Luke 9:1-6) and offered by the Kingdom Apostles as recorded in the early chapters of the book of Acts, even though the full implication of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was not fully expressed (Luke 18:31-34).

But during all this time God had a secret, i.e., a hidden message, yes good news, indeed even the best news. Here our reference is to the Gospel of the Grace of God as revealed to the Apostle Paul for the dispensational age of grace. As we focus on this gospel (our gospel), we observe that it is primarily concentrated on the Body of Christ, the Church, with its heavenly calling and position. Here we note that not one word of this gospel can be found in the writings of prophecy. Indeed, God kept this great purpose a secret until He implemented the Body itself into being as expressed in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans verse 25, wherein Paul states that this gospel was "kept secret since the world began". In I Corinthians 2:7, Paul referred to it as "a Mystery that was ordained before the world unto our glory". In Ephesians 3:5, Paul documents that "In other ages, it was not made known". In Ephesians 3:9, Paul states, "from the beginning of the world, it was hid in God". In Colossians 1:26, Paul states that our gospel was "hid from ages and from generations".

So manifestly, there is a great difference between that which was spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began "and that which was" kept secret since the world began. Thus, there is a great contrast between the Kingdom Gospel, which outlines the implementation of Old Testament prophecy as well as the Messianic future age to come as it is distinguished from the Grace Gospel, which details the revelation of Grace Mystery Truth.

Now it should be crystal clear that God's plan to establish the Messianic Kingdom was no secret to the Jews of the day of Christ's ministry on earth. Note that the Kingdom or Kingdom Gospel is the very theme of Old Testament prophecy and is described there in great detail. Some of the principal facts to be noted in regard to it are as follows:

1. It will be set up on earth (Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 5:5; Luke 2:14).
2. It will be a theocracy (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Zechariah 14:1-61; Matthew 1:23).
3. It will be centered at Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; 24:23; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah. 5:2; Luke 1:32,33; Matthew 2:1,2; 19:28).
4. It will extend to all the earth (Psalm 72:11; Daniel 7:14; Zechariah 8:22).
5. All Israel will then be saved (Jeremiah 31:34; Ezekiel 37:23).
6. Israel's suffering and sorrow will then be over (Isaiah 40:2; 61:3; 35:10).
7. Israel will then (not now) become a blessing to all nations, Isaiah 60:3; Zechariah 13:23; Genesis 22:17,18).
8. The government will be purified (Isaiah 11:4; 61:11; Jeremiah 23:5).
9. War and blood shed will be abolished (Isaiah 2:4; 9:6).
10. Health and long life will be restored to the human race (Isaiah 35:5,6; 65:25).
11. The animal creation will be tamed (Isaiah 11:6-9).
12. The curse will be removed from the vegetable creation (Isaiah 35:1-2; 6-7).

Now of a surety, all scripture is of course equally important as it is the infallible word of God and as stated in II Timothy 3:16, all scripture is profitable to the man of God yet it is profitable only when it is rightly divided, i.e., into dispensational and covenants arrangements. Now when this is fully comprehended and closely adhered to; then the thoughtful student of the word soon discovers that certain passages have a more direct bearing on the elect of other ages than on the elect of this (grace) age. Thus in that sense their importance or value rating is determined by who the passage is directly addressed to. For example, the command to keep the Passover directly involved Israel under the Law and was, in that sense, of greater importance to them than it is to us. In the same sense, all the writings of prophecy, (with the exception of Paul's enlightenment of the catching away of the Saints or the Rapture as some call it), deal directly with Israel and the Gentile nations. But it is void of any information concerning the Body of Christ, the grace Church in this dispensation. Thus while a deep enlightenment of the prophetic word is commendable, it is much more important for God's people to prioritize the Mystery, the great body of truth which more directly concerns us.

Also there are many that are caught up in the denominational clutches of the term Pentecostal or Pentecost. Those who are entrenched in this dogma have established as a foundational doctrine; the event recorded in Acts chapters two and three. But a close examination of the scripture authenticates that the messages at Pentecost as delivered by the Apostle Peter and other Kingdom apostles are all Kingdom in nature and are addressed exclusively to Israel. It is clearly documented that our gospel, the gospel of the grace of God, was first preached at Antioch as recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, well after the conversion of and revelation of the Mystery to the Apostle Paul.

Thus when God finally set the nation Israel aside (read Romans chapter 11), the declaration was historically decreed in Acts 28:28 wherein Paul states "be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear it". Therefore it is documented that our gospel, i.e., the only gospel for this dispensation of grace is that message which is directly addressed to Gentiles and the elect remnant Jews (Rom. 11:6) who comprise those who are members of the Body of Christ, in this age.

The Apostle Paul certifies this statement in Romans 11:13 as he documents the calls of his ministry in stating that "I speak to you Gentiles inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify or magnify mine ministry or office. Thus, while Israel and the prophetic program are temporarily set aside, the Church is made up predominantly of Gentiles in the flesh, with Paul as the chief Apostle. So our concentration is basically on our message, the Mystery rather than prophecy. This is the reason why Paul speaks of "this Mystery among the Gentiles" in Colossians 1:27 and as he explains to the Gentile believers of today in Romans 11:25, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in".

Thus when the period referred to here, has reached its fulfillment and run its course, then God will again resume His dealings with Israel, and resurrect the prophetic kingdom gospel. It will run its course and thus this plan will be brought to its conclusion as Paul declares in Romans 11:26,27, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, (Is 59:20-21, Jer 31:34), there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away unrighteousness from Jacob:" "for this is my covenant with them".

So the interruption of this prophetic plan must be considered in any assessment of the importance of the prophetic word. Now while we herein acknowledge the importance of all scriptures as the word of God we further recognize that (Kingdom Gospel) prophecy deals directly with Israel and the subject Gentile nations, but not with the Body of Christ, the Church.

Now notice that it is the Apostle Peter **not** the Apostle Paul who states in II Peter 1:19 that, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy where unto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts". Here we believe that Peter's statement "A more sure word of prophecy" references his further or advance revelation and understanding of that which had already been prophesied by the writings of the Old Testament.

Note when reference is made to the council at Jerusalem as recorded in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts and the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Galatians, it clearly defines the line of demarcation, i.e., Paul's gospel to the uncircumcised or Gentiles and Peter's (as well as John and James) gospel to the Jews or circumcision. Thus it should be apparent that those who were the apostles to (of) the circumcision wrote particularly of the kingdom that is designated for a future era. That era is **not** today!! It cannot be resumed and implemented until the present day (grace) Church, the Body of Christ has been caught up and the time of tribulation begins; when Israel will be "scattered" (I Peter 1:1; James 1:1) and the end of all things will again be "at hand" (I Peter 4:7; I John 2:18). So it is this distinguishing of the two messages that will undoubtedly clear up the conflict of their conveyances. Note again that it is the Apostle John, not the Apostle Paul who states in Revelation 1:3, that "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep these things which are written therein: for the time is at hand".

Now, it is a surety that a blessing is always obtained by those who reverently study any part of the Bible, but John's instruction is that the special blessing is conferred upon those who have received the understanding of the prophecy of revelation for the purpose of keeping its precepts in that day when the revelation of Christ in glory will again be at hand. Hence it is so very important to remember that while all scripture is indeed **for us**, Paul's epistles are directly addressed **to us** thus it constitutes our private mail. Accordingly, it is the Apostle Paul who was specifically chosen of God as the Apostle of the Gentiles, to deliver to the grace church, its message, the Mystery, which is the gospel of the grace of God as revealed to him by our Lord Jesus Christ. How unfortunate, in this dispensation of the grace of God that the Church abounds with so many so-called prophetic experts while experts in this Mystery among the Gentiles are rarely to be found!

Now it must be thoroughly understood that the reference to the revelation of the Mystery as revealed to the Apostle Paul, identifies a distinct body of truth, which was committed unto him (Paul) to deliver to the grace church. Although there are many mysteries to be found in the scriptures, only one stand

out pre-eminently as "the Mystery". Note, when Jesus (the Messiah) first appeared on earth according to God's foreordained plan, He did not immediately establish His kingdom by force. The Kingdom was first proclaimed "at hand" and offered for acceptance. This proclamation and offer was of course exclusively made to Israel, for the Gentiles had long been given up, according to Romans 1:28, "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge". But Israel did not prove themselves to be any better than the Gentiles as they crucified their heaven-sent King and when God raised Him up from the dead, they still rejected Him as the resurrected and glorified Christ.

They then inflicted warfare against those who dared to acknowledge Him as Messiah. In the first chapter of the gospel of John, verses 10 & 11, it states, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not". Thus they were allowed to demonstrate their own moral failure; which prolonged the establishment of the long promised-kingdom. But the power and grace of God will nevertheless establish it in a future age in spite of the fact that men (and Satan) will have done everything in their power to hinder or even destroy it. As it states in Romans 5:20, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound". Thus, when Israel rejected her Messiah, God set her aside (temporarily) along with the other nations, that He might offer reconciliation by grace alone to those whom He had chosen in Him before the foundation (creation) of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

Accordingly "the dispensation of the grace of God was ushered in according to Ephesians 3:2, thus He now has and does currently reconcile His elect to Himself, in one body by and through the cross. Note in Ephesians 2:16-17, it states "And that he might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) which were afar off, and to them (Israelites) that were nigh".

Now we must herein observe that nothing concerning these revelations in Paul's writings; are to be found anywhere in prophecy. Thus it was the surprise of grace, which was "hid from ages and generations"; it was "kept secret since the world began". Now the main features of this hitherto unrevealed message and plan are as follows:

1. Israel has been temporarily set aside (Romans 11:7, 12, 15, 20, 32).
2. Mercy is shown to both Jews and Gentile alike.
3. The Gospel of the Grace of God is the designated message for this dispensation (Acts 20:24; Ephesians 3:2).
4. Believers are reconciled to God by the preaching of the Cross (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21,22).
5. Jewish and Gentile believers are baptized (spiritual) into one body (Romans 12:5; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; I Corinthians 12:13, 27).
6. All who are members of the Body of Christ have been positioned in Christ in the Heavens (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1-3).

Now this is vastly different from that which is a part of the earthly reign of Jesus Christ on earth at Jerusalem over Israel and the nations! This is certainly distinguishable and variant from peace on earth with all Israel saved, war and disease abolished, the animal creation tamed and the curse removed from the vegetable creation! How unfortunate it is that these great distinctions between prophecy and the Mystery have not been more understood among the rank and file of those who minister the word of God; because it deprives so many of God's people of the knowledge of such a glorious volume of truth which discloses eternal spiritual benefits that are far greater than the eternal earthly benefits that are to be realized by the permanent residents of the earth.

Now because some have failed to distinguish and recognize the Mystery, they have found it necessary to alter prophecy to account for the present condition of Israel and the presence of the predominantly Gentile church of this age. It should be apparent to all that study prophecy that the actual fulfillment of it has obviously ceased subsequent to the crucifixion of our Lord as one realizes that there is yet much left to be fulfilled. Now some have supposed that God could not have possibly meant exactly what He said when He decreed in prophecy that Christ should sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem as King of Israel.

So incredibly, it is taught in some quarters that these things must not have been intended in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense, and thus have concluded that Christ is now seated on "David's throne" at God's right hand (Psalms 110:1); thus confusing earthly Jerusalem with "the Jerusalem, which is above". Those who teach such have further concluded that the present church, the Body or Church of today is "spiritual" Israel. They also teach that Canaan, the promise land, as well as the new Jerusalem with its gates of pearl and streets of gold is heaven, which in actuality is simply not correct. Now there is in fact nothing spiritual about these erroneous interpretations of the scripture. No! It is actually carnal not spiritual, to fail to see the true light of God's word and as a result seek to explain away the difficulties experienced in the inaccuracies of improperly allocating the messages to their intended recipients.

Subsequently many of God's people abide under doctrinal systems whereby the failure to match the distinctive message to its proper designee, results in the arbitrary altering of those things which are plainly written. Now God's people who are properly informed will vigorously object to this religious system of traditional orthodoxy because:

1. It enslaves the masses to the point of placing them at the mercy of earthly-minded theologians.
2. It adversely undermines the veracity of God's word.
3. It subtly endorses apostasy; indeed it is the origin of apostasy in as much as that which is actually spoken is systematically "spiritualized".

For examples, there are those who actually view the throne of David and the house of Israel in Luke 1:32-33 in a spiritual rather than a literal sense and then of course the teachings of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" in proclaiming to comprise the 144,000. Now when asked what tribe do they belong, their answer is, "it is not physical, but spiritual" Israelites that are referred to in the prophecy for the 144,000! Yet the writings distinctly state that there are to be 12,000 from each tribe and the tribes are even named! Also, note that the Church of Rome, one of the most powerful political/traditional systems, with a state and ruler on earth, actually employs the same reasoning. Even though the current regime seems at first glimpse to support the literal interpretation of the prophecy, it is not the case, for Rome is not Jerusalem nor is Christ Himself presently reigning. But this is a so-called spiritual system that is alleging to establish the Kingdom of Christ on earth with its followers as subjects under the Kingdom.

Now there are those who have traditionally systematized the "spiritualization" of the prophetic scriptures simply because they cannot account for the seeming cessation in their fulfillment but incredibly they do not recognize that the answer or solution to the so-called delay of the events of prophecy, is found in the acknowledgement of the Mystery. It is very clear when one recognizes the truth of the Mystery, as it eliminates any need or tendency to alter or to seek to explain away unfulfilled prophecy. Indeed, one of the revealed secrets of the Mystery is the fact that the prophesied Kingdom has been placed on hold during this dispensation.

Now the knowledge and understanding of the truth for this current age must be magnified in the hearts and minds of God's people. Thus we must recognize the importance of the Mystery to us as members of the Body of Christ. It is documented by the message of the Mystery itself that Paul was sent

particularly to the Gentiles with this revelation (Ephesians 3:1-3). Here we close by noting the characteristics of the Mystery:

1. God has made it known to the Church through Paul (Ephesians 1:9).
2. It is His will that all the elect see it (Ephesians 3:9).
3. Paul asked prayers for open doors to make it known (Colossians 4:3).
4. He asked prayers for an open mouth and boldness to proclaim it (Ephesians 6:19).
5. Knowledge of it imparts spiritual encouragement and enlightened (Colossians 2:2).
6. Believers are established by it (Romans 16:25).
7. It is proclaimed for the encouragement of obedience of faith.

Published 032604