**From Acts to the Epistles BOOK**

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FOREWORD

The New Testament can be divided into *four main sections* — the four gospels, the book of Acts, the twenty-one epistles, and the book of Revelation. Each section forms an integral part of the New Testament, and only by seeing the relationship of the different parts to the whole can the New Testament be properly understood.

Then, viewing the matter from another perspective, the New Testament is simply a *continuation, unveiling*, and *outworking* of that which was previously revealed in the Old Testament. In this respect, the New cannot be properly understood apart from the Old. The Old will help explain and shed additional light upon that which is being opened up in the New; and, in a corresponding respect, the New will, as well, open up and help explain numerous things in the Old. The two Testaments are *inseparably connected* in this respect.

Scripture, beginning in Genesis and concluding in Revelation, forms *a divinely given interrelated and interdependent progressive unveiling of God’s plans and purposes*. And no part of this revelation — however large or however small — can stand alone. *The whole* of the revelation must stand together, as a unit.

Thus, beginning in the book of Acts and continuing into the epistles and on into the book of Revelation necessitates continually going back to the gospels, and behind that to various parts of the whole of the Old Testament. Placing the book of Acts within *its contextual setting* — in relation to both that which precedes and that which follows — is the only possible way that it can be properly understood.

The book of Acts records a continuation of events from the gospel accounts, occupying a place immediately following the four gospels on the one hand and a place leading into the twenty-one epistles on the other. And this book provides that which man *must know* to properly understand the progression of God’s plans and purposes as they move from the gospels into the epistles, reaching their climax in the book of Revelation.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts forms the God-provided bridge between the gospels and the epistles, apart from which the epistles *cannot* be properly understood. *The gospels* center on an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel (rejected by Israel, followed by the nation’s crucifixion of her King); *the book of Acts* centers on a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel (rejected once again, with the offer eventually being taken from Israel and the nation being set aside); and *the epistles* center on the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to an entirely new entity, *the one new man “in Christ,”* called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected.

The expression, “*the kingdom of the heavens*” (literal rendering from the Greek text, found thirty-two times in the gospel of Matthew), is simply a reference to *the rule of the heavens over the earth*. As in [Daniel 4:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.26&t=NKJV), “*the heavens do rule*” — beginning with God, the supreme Ruler over all, and progressing through an orderly structure of ruling angels (subordinate provincial rulers, with other angels possessing lesser positions of power and authority ruling under them), placed over provinces throughout the universe.

There are two spheres of rulership in God’s kingdom — *heavenly* and *earthly*. And this pertains to both God’s universal kingdom as a whole and to the various provinces in His kingdom.

This is simply the way in which God established the whole of His government in the beginning. He Himself rules from a place in the heavens over an ordered universe; and it is evident from the present form of the earth’s government (existing in the same form that it will take yet future) that a rule of this nature — a rule from the heavens over the governed realm — is the form that God, in the beginning, used when He established the government throughout the different provinces of His kingdom as well.

As this governmental rule pertains to the province upon which we live, Satan and his angels rule from a place in the heavens over the earth; and this rule is revealed to take the form of powers in the heavens ruling through powers on the earth ([Daniel 10:13-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13-21&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.6&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.2&t=NKJV); [3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.10&t=NKJV); [6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV)).

Again, “*the heavens do rule*.” That’s the way matters in God’s ordered government throughout the universe that He created have always existed, continue to exist, and will always exist.

**The Existing Kingdom**

**Past, Present, and Future**

Satan, in his unfallen state, at a time in eternity past, was placed over the province upon which man presently resides — over the earth. And a great host of ruling angels were placed in subordinate positions of power and authority with him.

The day came though when Satan became dissatisfied with his appointed position and rebelled against God’s supreme power and authority. He sought to “*exalt*” his throne above all the other God-appointed provincial rulers (angels ruling over other provinces [worlds similar to the earth] elsewhere in the universe) and “*be like the most High*” ([Isaiah 14:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13-14&t=NKJV)).

Because of this act, rather than exalting his throne, Satan became disqualified to rule even the province over which he had been placed. And this necessitated his subsequent removal, with another being appointed to take his place.

But God didn’t immediately act in this respect. Rather, God allowed Satan to continue holding his position, for a time.

(A principle of biblical government necessitates that an incumbent ruler continue to hold his appointed position until his replacement is not only on the scene but ready to ascend the throne and hold the scepter [something seen in the account of Saul and David in the Books of 1&2 Samuel]. Also see [Saul and David Type/Antitype](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-one.php#Saul%20and%20David%20Type/Antitype) in this site.)

Satan’s reign though, following his rebellion against God’s supreme power and authority was quite different than it had been before that time. Two-thirds of the angels originally holding positions of power and authority over the earth with him refused to have a part in his actions. Only one-third followed Satan ([Revelation 12:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.4&t=NKJV)), and this left him with a disrupted power structure in the government of his kingdom, completely out of line with that which God had originally established. And not only did a ruin of this nature exist in the governmental structure of his kingdom, but the physical state of his kingdom was reduced to a ruined condition as well ([Genesis 1:2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2a&t=NKJV)).

But the day came when God restored the physical kingdom and created man to replace the incumbent ruler. The physical creation was restored over a six-day period, and man was created on the sixth day to “*have dominion*” — the dominion that Satan and his angels possessed ([Genesis 1:2-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-28&t=NKJV) [2b]).

Satan, knowing why man had been created, immediately sought a way to bring about man’s disqualification. And this is what he accomplished through man’s fall, an act that, for the time, prevented man from ascending the throne and which allowed Satan to continue holding the scepter.

Following man’s fall, Satan and his angels ruled over a restored province, though under a curse because of man’s sin ([Genesis 3:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.17-18&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Romans 8:19-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.19-22&t=NKJV)). But God, far from being finished with man at this point, had only begun to work out His plans and purposes as they pertained to man and one ruined province in His kingdom.

Redemption was to be provided in order that man, at a future point in time, could realize the purpose for his creation in the beginning. Man, a creation quite different than angels, created in the image and likeness of God, was to be redeemed; and, as God originally intended, man was to one day hold the scepter in Satan’s stead (*cf.* [Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV)).

The Bible is a book of redemption, and this redemption encompasses far more than just man’s eternal salvation through faith in God’s provided Redeemer. It encompasses bringing redeemed man back into the position for which he was created. The purpose surrounding man’s redemption is the same as the purpose surrounding man’s creation in the beginning — “*let them have dominion*” ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)).

And from the point of the fall in Genesis, chapter three to the point of this dominion being realized by man in Revelation chapter twenty, all of God’s redemptive purposes in Scripture are seen to *move toward this end*. They are all seen to move toward man one day possessing dominion over the earth, in the stead of Satan and his angels.

The “*gifts and calling of God are without repentance* [‘without a change of mind’]” ([Romans 11:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.29&t=NKJV)). God is not going to change His mind concerning the reason He called man into existence. Man will, man *must*, one day hold the scepter, *but in God’s time.*

In the meantime, Satan and his angels continue to occupy the throne, continuing to rule from a place in the heavens over the earth. But the day is coming when there will be “*war in heaven*.” Michael and his angels will fight against Satan and his angels, and Satan and his angels will be “*cast out*,” anticipating *Man —* namely *Christ and His co-heirs* — taking the kingdom and occupying these positions, exercising power and authority over the earth ([Revelation 12:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.4&t=NKJV), [7-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7-10&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV); [19:11-20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-20.6&t=NKJV)).

**The Proffered Kingdom**

**In the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles**

When John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples appeared to Israel with the message, “*Repent: for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand*” (*cf*. [Matthew 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.2&t=NKJV); [4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.17&t=NKJV); [10:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.7&t=NKJV)), there could be no mistake concerning exactly what was meant. There was no kingdom connected with the heavens and the earth outside of the one that God had established in the beginning, the one over which a disqualified provincial angel ruled.

The expression, “*the kingdom of the heavens*,” could only be a reference to *the kingdom ruled by Satan and his angels from a heavenly sphere, a kingdom that one day would be ruled by Christ and His co-heirs from the same heavenly sphere*. And the various things about this kingdom are things that the Jewish people should have been fully aware of, for the structure of the kingdom as it exists throughout Man’s Day and will exist at a future time is a clearly revealed subject of Old Testament revelation.

This subject was introduced by Moses in Genesis. Moses spoke of that day when the seed of Abraham would exercise power and authority over the earth from two spheres — *heavenly* and *earthly* ([Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV)); and this power and authority, according to Moses, would be realized in that future day when God’s Son exercises the Melchizedek priesthood ([Genesis 14:18-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+14.18-22&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Psalm 110:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.1-4&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+5-7&t=NKJV)). And, as previously shown, the form in which this kingdom exists throughout Man’s Day (and will exist in that coming day when Christ and His co-heirs take the kingdom) is revealed in Daniel, chapter ten ([Daniel 10:13-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13-21&t=NKJV)).

At Christ’s first coming through Himself, the ministry of John, and the twelve apostles, “*the kingdom of the heavens*” was proffered to Israel. Through the ministry of Jesus, John, and the twelve, the nation of Israel was offered *the scepter held by Satan and his angels.*

Had Israel accepted the offer, Christ would have taken the kingdom; and Israel, with the nation’s Messiah, would have held the scepter. But Israel refused the offer, and the nation climaxed this refusal by crucifying the central person making the offer — Messiah Himself.

Then, the book of Acts details a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel — beginning on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.1ff&t=NKJV)) and terminating some thirty-two years later with Paul in Rome ([Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV)). Israel though again refused, and during this period God began His work of calling out *the one new man “in Christ”* to one day occupy the heavenly positions in the kingdom that Israel had spurned. And once Israel’s refusal in the re-offer of the kingdom reached a terminal point in God’s eyes, he set the nation aside and, with respect to the kingdom of the heavens, turned His attention toward the new entity, *the new creation “in Christ.”*

This is how the gospels lead into Acts and how Acts leads into the epistles, with Acts forming a bridge between the gospels and the epistles. As stated at the beginning, *the gospels* record the original offer of this kingdom to Israel, *the book of Acts* records the re-offer of this kingdom to Israel (as well as recording the bringing into existence of the Church), and *the epistles* record the subsequent (the present) offer being extended to Christians.

All these things are dealt with at length throughout the thirteen chapters of this book, From Acts to the Epistles.

**Importance of the Kingdom**

**Understanding the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles**

There can be no such thing as properly understanding the gospels, Acts, or the epistles apart from “the kingdom” being seen as *central*. Christ’s death on Calvary, effecting man’s redemption, has to do with *the kingdom*. Christ Himself, while enduring the sufferings surrounding Calvary, looked beyond these sufferings to the glory that lay out ahead ([Hebrews 12:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.1-2&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Luke 24:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.26&t=NKJV)). The coming kingdom, the Messianic Era, the time during which Christ and His co-heirs will exercise power and authority over the earth for 1,000 years, was that upon which Christ focused His attention while paying the price for man’s redemption. And it is *this same kingdom* upon which He has instructed redeemed man — in the midst of trials, testing, and sufferings — to focus his attention as well ([1 Peter 2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.21&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Genesis 19:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.17&t=NKJV)).

Man’s redemption is inseparably connected with the coming kingdom of Christ. And though man’s redemption is *eternal* in duration and connected with *a continuing regality* in the eternal ages beyond the Messianic era, *this is not where Scripture places the emphasis*. The central focus in Scripture pertaining to man’s present redemption and future rule *centers on the 1,000-year Messianic Era*.

(Regality exercised by Man beyond the Messianic Era will extend out into the heavens beyond the new earth [[Revelation 22:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1-5&t=NKJV)]. This is a realm extending far beyond the present kingdom of the heavens ruled by Satan and his angels, out where Satan sought to extend his rule at a time in eternity past.

Scripture though centers on *man, the present earth, and the present kingdom*. Scripture centers on man occupying the present kingdom of the heavens ruled by Satan and his angels, with Christ and His co-heirs taking 1,000 years to bring order out of disorder [[1 Corinthians 15:22-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.22-28&t=NKJV)].

The eternal ages lying beyond are mentioned in Scripture only to an extent which will allow man to understand where God is going to carry matters once order has been restored in the government of one ruined province in His universe.)

Thus, the central purpose presented in Scripture surrounding man’s redemption is *that man might ultimately occupy the position for which he was created — to rule and to reign over this earth.* This is something which cannot be overemphasized. And to speak of man’s redemption apart from the purpose surrounding man’s creation, which resulted in his fall that necessitates his redemption, is to not see the complete biblical scope of redemption at all.

This is the perspective from which this book, From Acts to the Epistles, has been written. The focus is kept exactly where it is presented throughout the whole of Scripture — *out ahead on that coming Sabbath rest awaiting the people of God, the coming Messianic Era.* And viewing matters in Acts and on into the epistles from a Scriptural framework of this nature is the only possible way that they can be properly understood.

Interpretation must be both *textual* and *contextual,* “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*” This is the only way that a person can go beyond “*man’s wisdom*,” see that “*which the Holy Spirit teaches*,” and, resultantly, come into an understanding of “the deep things of God” ([1 Corinthians 2:9-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.9-13&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter 1

**Continuing from the Gospels**

*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* ([Acts 1:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6b&t=NKJV)).

Prior to His death, burial, and resurrection, Christ and His disciples carried a message to Israel pertaining to “*the kingdom of the heavens*.” Then, during the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry, Christ spoke to His disciples of “*things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” ([Matthew 4:17-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.17-25&t=NKJV); [10:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.5-8&t=NKJV); [Acts 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.3&t=NKJV)). And immediately before His ascension, Christ spoke to them of the coming baptism in the Holy Spirit ([Acts 1:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.4-5&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.11&t=NKJV)).

Christ spoke to the disciples of the coming baptism in the Holy Spirit at the climax of His earthly ministry, and since the Spirit being present after the fashion to which Christ referred is inseparably connected with *Israel* and *the kingdom* ([Acts 2:4ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4ff&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Joel 2:27-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27-32&t=NKJV); [Acts 2:14-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.14-21&t=NKJV)), the question that the disciples asked could only have been expected of them: *“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* ([Acts 1:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6b&t=NKJV)).

The message concerning *the kingdom WAS* the subject pervading every thought in the disciples’ minds at this time. And, for a number of years following Pentecost, in relation to Israel, the message proclaimed had to do with *the kingdom*, as before. The message proclaimed to Israel during this time *WAS* a continuation of the message previously proclaimed by Christ and His disciples. It *WAS a re-offer* of that which had previously been offered — *the kingdom of the heavens*.

The *SAME* individuals Christ had previously sent to Israel *continued* to carry a message to Israel surrounding the kingdom, attended by the *SAME* supernatural signs, wonders, and miracles. There were though *TWO main differences* in the original offer and the re-offer.

Rather than accusing Israel of rejecting and killing only the prophets that God had sent unto them, to reveal to them “*the coming of the Just One*” ([Matthew 23:34-37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.34-37&t=NKJV)), the messengers now accused Israel, as well, of rejecting and crucifying the One of whom the rejected and slain prophets had spoken, *i.e.*, Messiah Himself (*cf.* [Acts 2:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.23&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.36&t=NKJV); [3:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.13-15&t=NKJV); [4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.10&t=NKJV); [5:28-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.28-30&t=NKJV); [7:51-53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.51-53&t=NKJV)).

Then the other main difference lay in the fact that the kingdom had been taken from Israel at the conclusion of the original offer, *AND* the Church had been called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected. Thus, in the re-offer, it was the infant Church — entirely Jewish for the first few years of its existence — which was in possession of the kingdom (though *YET* to be realized). And God used those in the Church to reach Israel with a message concerning something that no longer belonged to Israel.

In the gospel accounts, Israel was the rightful possessor of the kingdom of the heavens (though, again, yet to be realized). Israel had been made the repository for *BOTH* spheres of the kingdom (heavenly and earthly), something that went all the way back to promises given to Abraham (*e.g*., [Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Genesis 14:17-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+14.17-22&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 11:8-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.8-16&t=NKJV)). Thus, *PRECEDING* the events of Calvary, Israel was offered something rightfully belonging to the nation; and the kingdom could have been established at that time, conditioned upon Israel’s national repentance and baptism.

But in the book of Acts, Israel was *NO LONGER* the rightful possessor of the kingdom. A new entity — the “*one new man*” in Christ — had been called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected. And in the re-offer of the kingdom, it was this new entity that proclaimed the message to Israel, for those forming this new entity were now the rightful possessors of the kingdom.

**The Re-offer of the Kingdom**

This re-offer of the kingdom to Israel is something that Christ had foretold during His earthly ministry, during the original offer. Note the parable of the fruitless fig tree in Luke chapter thirteen.

*He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.*

*Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’*

*But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it.*

*And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’”* ([Luke 13:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.6-9&t=NKJV))

The picture is that of fruit being sought from the fig tree (Israel) at two different times, which would correspond to times both *before* and *after* the events of Calvary and the calling into existence of the Church. And, though Christ cursed the fig tree following the nation’s failure to bring forth fruit preceding Calvary, the roots remained. This allowed the Vinedresser to “*dig around it and fertilize it*,” giving the fig tree another opportunity to spring forth and bear fruit.

And it mattered not that Israel (through the nation’s religious leaders) had previously committed a sin that would not be forgiven the nation for two ages ([Matthew 12:22-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-32&t=NKJV)), or that Christ had previously pronounced that the fig tree would remain fruitless for an age ([Matthew 21:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.19&t=NKJV)), there was *STILL* a cultivating and a fertilizing of the fig tree following the events surrounding Calvary and the calling into existence of the Church. And, though Israel and those proclaiming the message were living during the age in which Israel *couldn’t bear fruit*, the cultivating and fertilizing of the fig tree were done with a view to Israel bearing fruit (though, again, Israel *couldn’t bear fruit* during this time).

Some students of the Word studying the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in the book of Acts would see major problems in this whole line of thought, for Israel *couldn’t possibly have accepted the re-offer*. And, since that was correct, how could a bona fide re-offer of the kingdom have been made?

The kingdom had been taken from Israel, and the “*one new man*” in Christ had been called into existence to bring forth fruit in the realm where Israel had failed. And God *MUST* carry out and complete His work with this new creation, which would take 2,000 years, completing man’s 6,000-year day — time which *MUST* transpire before the kingdom could be restored to Israel.

Thus, since this was the situation at that time, again the question: How could a bona fide re-offer of the kingdom have been made to Israel? It would have been *IMPOSSIBLE* for Israel to accept (*cf.* [Matthew 19:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+19.26&t=NKJV)).

Bear one thing in mind, and the seeming dilemma can be easily resolved. *Exactly the same situation* existed in the previous offer. Israel, in actuality, *couldn’t have accepted* then either. It would have been *just as impossible* then as later. Both *the events surrounding Calvary* and *the existence of the Church*, were dealt with in the Old Testament (mainly in the types); and the things that had previously been stated surrounding both *had to be brought to pass.*

That would be to say, to fulfill Old Testament prophecy (numerous prophecies), not only *MUST* the Passover Lamb be slain, *BUT* the Church *MUST* be called into existence. And *ONLY* Israel could slay the Passover Lamb ([Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV)), which meant *rejection of both the King and the kingdom on Israel’s part* in order for the numerous Old Testament prophecies to come to pass.

Thus, when all of this is put together, there is only *ONE* possible conclusion that can be reached. *Israel had to reject the offer of the kingdom of the heavens at Christ’s first coming, for Messiah had to be rejected and slain by Israel, and the Church had to subsequently be called into existence.* All of this had already been foretold by Moses and the prophets, and matters had to come to pass *exactly as recorded in God’s previous revelation to man.*

And, in this respect, there was really *nothing* to prevent a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel following the events of Calvary and the calling into existence of the Church that did not exist when the kingdom of the heavens was offered to Israel the first time. *BOTH* the events surrounding Calvary and the calling into existence of the Church could be seen in one respect before Christ’s first coming and in another respect shortly after Christ’s ascension; and an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel in either instance would, of necessity, have been the *SAME* — *a bona fide offer that couldn’t possibly have been accepted.*

**Signs, Wonders, and Miracles**

A major thing that has to be taken into consideration — the thing that will possibly shed more light on this whole matter than anything else — is properly understanding the place that signs, wonders, and miracles occupy throughout both the original offer and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel.

Signs, wonders, and miracles have to do with two things — 1) **Israel**, and 2) **the kingdom** — and both Israel and the kingdom must be in view *at the same time* for signs, wonders and miracles to exist. If there is an absence of either one (either Israel, or the kingdom), signs, wonders, and miracles, as seen throughout the gospel accounts and the book of Acts, *CANNOT* exist.

*1. Signs, Wonders, and Miracles in the OLD TESTAMENT*

Signs, wonders, and miracles, performed *through individuals*, were manifested *ONLY* on *two occasions* in *ALL* of the Old Testament.

They were manifested by Moses and Aaron surrounding Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, with a view to the nation’s entrance into the land of Canaan; and they were manifested by Moses’ successor, Joshua, surrounding Israel’s subsequent entrance into the land of Canaan ([Exodus 4:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.29-31&t=NKJV); [7:10ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+7.10ff&t=NKJV); [Joshua 3:7ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+3.7ff&t=NKJV); [10:12-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+10.12-14&t=NKJV)).

That was the first occasion. The second was a manifestation by Elijah and his successor Elisha, some five hundred years later ([1 Kings 17:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+17.1ff&t=NKJV); [2 Kings 2:13ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+2.13ff&t=NKJV)).

Outside of these *TWO* occasions there is *NOT* *a single reference* to an individual being empowered to perform signs, wonders, and miracles throughout *ALL* of the Old Testament Scriptures. Numerous miracles are recorded in these Scriptures (*e.g*., the burning bush that was not consumed [[Exodus 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.2&t=NKJV)], the sun being moved back ten degrees on the dial [[Isaiah 38:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+38.7-8&t=NKJV)], the three Israelites being protected in the fiery furnace [[Daniel 3:19-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+3.19-25&t=NKJV)], or Jonah being raised from the dead [[Jonah 1:17-2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jonah+1.17-2.10&t=NKJV)]), but these were miraculous works performed *directly by God*, *NOT* by individuals whom God had empowered to perform them.

Note that the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles during the days of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua was in relation to *Israel* and *the kingdom*. Supernatural manifestations of power occurred relative to Israel being removed from Egypt and being established in the land of Canaan, within a theocracy.

Thus, *a first-mention principle* was set forth at this point in Scripture, establishing *an unchangeable truth*. Any time there is a mention of signs, wonders, and miracles being performed *BY* *individuals* beyond this point, *BOTH Israel* and *the kingdom* have to be in view.

During the days of Elijah and Elisha the people of Israel had been established in the land, within a theocracy, for about five hundred years. But, because of continued disobedience on the part of the people, the theocracy never reached the heights that God had intended. The theocracy reached its greatest heights during the days of David and his son Solomon (though far from the heights that God had intended); but after that, following the division of the kingdom, things began to go in another direction entirely. And it was during these days that Elijah was called forth (with Elisha finishing his ministry) to call the nation to repentance.

The manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles accompanying their ministry pertained to *Israel* and *the kingdom*. They had to, for a first-mention principle had previously been established; and any future manifestation had to be *EXACTLY* *in accord* with the way matters were set forth at the beginning.

The signs, wonders, and miracles were simply *the credentials* of those manifesting them in Israel’s presence. Through a manifestation of supernatural powers accompanying the message, Israel was to recognize that the messenger had been sent from God; and the people were to heed the message accordingly ([Exodus 4:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.1-9&t=NKJV), [29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.29-31&t=NKJV)).

The people of Israel though failed to heed the message; the nation *DIDN'T* repent. And the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities followed (722 B.C. and 605 B.C. respectively).

“*The times of the Gentiles*” began with the Babylonian captivity, has lasted to the present day, and *WILL LAST* until the end of the Tribulation. This is simply a prolonged, uninterrupted period of time — lasting about 2,600 years — during which Israel must dwell apart from a theocracy and remain scattered among the Gentile nations. And the Gentiles, among whom Israel dwells, will hold the scepter throughout this time.

*2. Signs, Wonders, and Miracles in the NEW TESTAMENT*

After moving through 1,500 years of Jewish history and seeing signs, wonders, and miracles manifested at only two different points within that history, things suddenly changed. Israel’s Messiah (following the ministry of His forerunner, John the Baptist) appeared with a message concerning the kingdom of the heavens; and this message was accompanied by numerous signs, wonders, and miracles ([Matthew 4:17-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.17-25&t=NKJV); [8:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.1ff&t=NKJV)).

Then, in conjunction with and very early in His ministry, Christ called twelve disciples to help carry this message; and they were empowered to perform signs, wonders, and miracles in connection with their ministry as well ([Matthew 10:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.5-8&t=NKJV)).

(Also, Jesus later “*appointed*” seventy others to go “*before His face into every city and place, where He Himself was about to go*” — though *VERY LITTLE* is said about them in the gospel accounts — and He empowered them to perform signs, wonders, and miracles [[Luke 10:1-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+10.1-19&t=NKJV)]. Thus, at this time, there was a manifestation of supernatural signs in the camp of Israel *UNLIKE anything* heretofore seen in the history of the nation.)

Christ had been sent *ONLY* to “*the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” ([Matthew 15:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+15.24&t=NKJV)), and Christ sent the disciples whom He called to Israel *ALONE* ([Matthew 10:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.6&t=NKJV)). Both Christ and His disciples went to Israel with *the same* message and *the same* accompanying manifestation of supernatural powers. It was a message surrounding the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the nation, *attended* by a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles.

Whether it was Jesus or His disciples proclaiming the proffered kingdom, signs, wonders, and miracles accompanied their ministry and formed the credentials of those carrying the message. They were supernatural events that authenticated their message as being true and from God ([John 3:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.1-2&t=NKJV); [Acts 2:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.22&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Exodus 4:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.1-9&t=NKJV)). The religious leaders in Israel were to see these signs, wonders, and miracles and know, from these, that the messengers were God-sent. Then, believing and understanding the message that they had heard, they were responsible for carrying it to the people of Israel (*cf.* [Exodus 4:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.29-31&t=NKJV); [Numbers 13:1-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.1-26&t=NKJV)).

However, *EXACTLY* the opposite occurred when the message was proclaimed by Christ and His disciples. The religious leaders *NOT ONLY* r*efused to believe* the message, but they, in their unbelief, carried *a false message* to the people of Israel ([Matthew 12:14-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.14-32&t=NKJV); [23:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.13&t=NKJV)).

(This is why Christ, near the end of His earthly ministry, condemned the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees — the fundamental religious leaders of that day — in no uncertain terms [[Matthew 23:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.1ff&t=NKJV)]. They *HAD heard* the true message, and they *HAD seen* the accompanying miraculous powers, authenticating the message; but they *HAD rejected* the message and *HAD sought* to do away with the accompanying supernatural powers mainly through attacking the Messenger.

The Scribes and Pharisees had sought to discredit the Messenger in the eyes of the people, bringing about reproach on the Messenger and casting doubt on His message [*e.g.*, [Matthew 9:27-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+9.27-34&t=NKJV); [12:22-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-24&t=NKJV); *cf.* [John 12:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+12.10-11&t=NKJV)]. And, whether by word or deed, this resulted in their bearing *a false message* to the people of Israel [[Matthew 23:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.13&t=NKJV)].)

And all of this had its end result in Israel’s *rejection* of *NOT ONLY* the message but the Messenger as well, *the removal* of the kingdom of the heavens from Israel, *the crucifixion* of Israel’s Messiah, and *the bringing into existence* of a separate and distinct entity to be the recipient of that which had been offered to and rejected by Israel. Israel failed to bring forth fruit in relation to the kingdom of the heavens, and the “*one new man*” in Christ was called into existence to be accorded the opportunity to bring forth fruit in this realm ([Matthew 21:33-43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.33-43&t=NKJV)).

But, though the kingdom was taken from Israel and the Church was called into existence to be the recipient of this offer, there was a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. And, if for *NO OTHER* reason, this is evident because of t*he continuance of signs, wonders, and miracles.*

That would be to say, *IF* God had terminated His dealings with Israel at or before the time that the Church was called into existence, signs, wonders, and miracles would have ceased to exist. These supernatural works have *NOTHING* to do with the “*one new man*” *in Christ* (who is “*neither Jew nor Greek*” [[Galatians 3:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.28&t=NKJV)]). They have to do with Israel alone ([1 Corinthians 1:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.22&t=NKJV)), and they have to do with *Israel in relation to the kingdom*.

These supernatural works were manifested by those carrying the message to Israel ([Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV); [3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.1ff&t=NKJV); [4:29-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.29-33&t=NKJV); [5:12ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.12ff&t=NKJV); [6:8ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.8ff&t=NKJV)); and when Gentiles began to be added to the body of Christ, they were manifested within churches comprised of saved Gentiles, such as the church in Corinth (Corinthians 12-14). And a manifestation of supernatural works in the Church after this fashion was centered on the thought of *provoking Israel “to jealousy”* ([Romans 10:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.19&t=NKJV); [11:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.11&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.14&t=NKJV)). That is, God was using those whom Israel considered *Gentile dogs* to manifest supernatural powers that naturally belonged to Israel *in order to provoke the nation to jealousy.*

And, between a segment of the *“one new man” in Christ* carrying the message to Israel and another segment seeking to provoke the nation to jealousy — all being done through a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles — the Jewish people were dealt with in what might be considered *a maximum manner*. In one respect, God pulled out all stops (*cf.* [Luke 10:13-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+10.13-24&t=NKJV); [11:29-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+11.29-32&t=NKJV)); but the religious leaders in Israel would still have nothing to do with the message.

*A) Viewing Things from the Beginning*

The true nature of the events that occurred on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the first two chapters of the book of Acts — when the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel began — is *NOT* understood in Christendom today *AT ALL*. Whole denominations have been built on a false understanding of these chapters, and cult groups have seized upon [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV) as revealing the way in which a person is to be saved; and practically the whole of Christendom, to counter the teaching of the cults, has taught things concerning this verse that are equally erroneous.

And, *IF* either Christian groups or the cult groups understood that which is stated in the verses leading into [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV), the whole matter *WOULDN'T* even exist. Neither one would act so completely out of line with Scripture.

The matter really doesn’t revolve around what [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV) states *per se*. Rather, the matter revolves around what is stated in the verses leading into [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV). *Understand the contextual verses first; then the text can be properly understood.* It’s that simple (*cf.* [1 Corinthians 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.13&t=NKJV)).

Attention has already been called to what the Lord taught His disciples throughout the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry, to the Lord’s promise concerning the Spirit, and to the question that the disciples posed ([Acts 1:3-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.3-6&t=NKJV)). In view of Joel’s prophecy ([Joel 2:27-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27-32&t=NKJV)), the disciples could only have associated the coming of the Spirit with *the kingdom*. Thus, they asked, “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” ([Acts 1:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6b&t=NKJV)).

And, that this is the correct interpretation of the passage, note what happened on the day of Pentecost, note the way that the Spirit of God worded matters in the recorded account, and note the way that the disciples understood the whole of that which occurred.

On the day of Pentecost, 30 A.D., one hundred twenty believers were waiting in a home in Jerusalem for the Spirit that Jesus had, ten days prior to that time, promised. They were “*all with one accord in one place*,” *waiting* ([Acts 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.1&t=NKJV)).

Then, “*when the day of Pentecost was fully come*,” just as the Lord had previously promised (though not having specified the particular day), the one hundred twenty were all “*immersed in the Holy Spirit”* (literal rendering of the promise in [Acts 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.5&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.11&t=NKJV)).

*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

*Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.*

*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* ([Acts 2:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.2-4&t=NKJV))

The promise concerning the Spirit being sent in [Acts 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.5&t=NKJV) had to do with *immersion in the Spirit*, and that promise was fulfilled in [Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV) through those immersed in the Spirit also correspondingly *being filled with the Spirit*. And this same work of the Spirit can be seen occurring at subsequent times in other parts of the book of Acts as well (*e.g.*, [Acts 10:45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.45&t=NKJV); [11:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11.15-16&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 9:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.17-18&t=NKJV); [19:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.16&t=NKJV)).

An experience of this nature, of course, has *NO* parallel in Christendom today. When an individual is saved by grace through faith today, the norm is *always the same*. Immersion in the Spirit *ALWAYS* occurs at the point of salvation ([1 Corinthians 12:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+12.13&t=NKJV)), and the filling of the Spirit is *ALWAYS* a subsequent experience (intimately and inseparably connected with maturity in the faith [*cf.* [Ephesians 5:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.18-19&t=NKJV); [Colossians 3:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+3.16&t=NKJV)]). The two *NEVER* occur simultaneously today, as in the first two chapters of Acts and several other parts of the book.

And there is a clearly revealed reason why these differences exist in Scripture. In short, one experience is seen *during* the time when the kingdom was being re-offered to Israel (especially during the early years), and the other is seen toward the end of and *following* this time.

The emphasis in [Acts 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2&t=NKJV) is on *Israel and the kingdom, NOT on the Church*. Though the Church was brought into existence on this day as the entity in possession of the kingdom of the heavens and the entity through which God would extend a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, events throughout Acts chapter two are *Jewish*.

Acts chapter two records the beginning of a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, an offer connected with Joel’s prophecy and an offer attended by signs, wonders, and miracles. And the immersion in and the filling with the Spirit that were brought to pass on this day had to do with a beginning fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.

An immersion in and a filling with the Spirit *in connection with Joel’s prophecy* — something experienced by individuals on the day of Pentecost and at subsequent times during the period when the kingdom was re-offered to Israel (from 30 A.D. to about 62 A.D.) — *CANNOT* be the norm for any type Christian experience today, for Joel’s prophecy is *NOT* presently being fulfilled. The fulfillment of this prophecy has been set aside until such a time as God once again resumes His dealings with Israel.

And though Christians experience an immersion in and a filling with the Spirit throughout the dispensation, there are marked differences when these experiences are either connected with or separated from Joel’s prophecy. This is something that the Spirit of God deals with in the New Testament through the use of two different Greek words for “fill.”

*1) Pimplemi*

The word in the Greek text for *fill* in [Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV) is *NOT* the same as the word for *fill* in [Ephesians 5:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.18&t=NKJV). The word used in [Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV) is *pimplemi* (*pletho* [a different rendering of the same word] in some lexicons or concordances), and the word used in [Ephesians 5:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.18&t=NKJV) is *pleroo*. Both words mean “to fill”; but there is a contextual difference in how the words are used, seen in *the purpose* in view.

*Pimplemi* in [Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV) is used in a manner that refers to individuals being filled with the Spirit in view of *an end* or *a conclusion* of something being attained. This is the word, for example, that is used referring to Elizabeth being brought to full-term in her pregnancy, prior to the birth of John the Baptist ([Luke 1:57](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.57&t=NKJV)). And, in conjunction with this thought, it is also the word used of John the Baptist being “*filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb*” ([Luke 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.15&t=NKJV)).

John was the forerunner of the Messiah. He was the one who appeared to Israel with the message first, “*Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is AT HAND*” ([Matthew 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.2&t=NKJV)). And note the terminal point — *the kingdom was at hand*. And John was *filled with the Spirit,* from his mother’s womb, to proclaim this fact as he went forth preparing the way for the Messiah.

This word is used five times in the book of Acts referring to individuals being filled with the Spirit ([Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV); [4:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.8&t=NKJV), [31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.31&t=NKJV); [9:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.17&t=NKJV); [13:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.9&t=NKJV)). The first occurrence has to do with events on the day of Pentecost; the second occurrence has to do with Peter; the third occurrence has to do with individuals collectively (as on the day of Pentecost); and the fourth and fifth occurrences have to do with Paul, following his conversion on the Damascus road.

In the first three occurrences, where the filling of the Spirit is referred to by the word *pimplemi*, a message to the Jews is in view; and that message is accompanied by signs, wonders, and miracles. That is, a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel is in view, accompanied by miraculous signs.

Then, when Israel reached a climactic point in the nation’s rejection of the kingdom in [Acts 7:54ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54ff&t=NKJV) (similar to the climactic point that the nation reached in the original offer [[Matthew 12:22ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22ff&t=NKJV)]), Paul appears in the book for the first time ([Acts 7:58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.58&t=NKJV)), the Samaritans appear in the book for the first time ([Acts 8:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.5&t=NKJV)), and Paul was subsequently saved as the apostle who would carry the message concerning the proffered kingdom to the Gentiles ([Acts 9:1-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-15&t=NKJV)).

Note the order for the proclamation of this message as originally given to the disciples in Acts chapter one.

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* ([Acts 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8&t=NKJV))

Paul was the one called to carry this message to the latter group. And the word *pimplemi* is used of Paul being filled with the Spirit for power, to carry this message, simply because the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel (with the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy still being in view); and the offer would remain open for about another thirty years.

The fact that the offer was still open to Israel was the reason Paul *always* went “*to the Jew first”* before turning to the Gentile, though he was the apostle called to go to the Gentiles. The order in [Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV), in accord with [Acts 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8&t=NKJV), was “*to the Jew first*”; and Paul didn’t, he couldn’t, violate this order (note that the book of Romans was written very near the end, though within, the approximately thirty-two-year period in which the kingdom of the heavens was re-offered to Israel).

*2) Pleroo*

The word *Pleroo* though, used for the filling of the Spirit in [Ephesians 5:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.18&t=NKJV), is used in a different manner. Both *pleroo* and *pimplemi* mean “to fill”; and both words can be used referring to an end or to the fulfillment of something, such as “time,” etc. (*e.g.*, [Acts 7:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.23&t=NKJV), [30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.30&t=NKJV)); but the use of *pleroo* in [Ephesians 5:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.18&t=NKJV) is not connected with Joel’s prophecy. The Holy Spirit previously used *pimplemi* for that purpose, at a time when the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy was in view.

Note that the Holy Spirit was very careful in His use of words in [Acts 2:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.2-4&t=NKJV).

The word used for “fill” in verse two is *pleroo*, referring to the house where the disciples were waiting, which was *filled* by “*a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind*”; but the Spirit of God changed words when He wanted to reveal the true nature of individuals inside that house being “filled” with the Spirit in verse four. Here He used *pimplemi*, and He continued to use *pimplemi* for this purpose (or a cognate, *pleres* [[Acts 6:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.3&t=NKJV), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.5&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.8&t=NKJV); [7:55](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.55&t=NKJV); [11:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11.24&t=NKJV)]) in other parts of the book of Acts.

Joel’s prophecy either being fulfilled or not being fulfilled is *the key*. The Spirit used *pimplemi* to describe His filling work in connection with the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy; and the Spirit later used *pleroo* to describe His filling work apart from the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. This is the distinguishing difference that marks the way that the two words are used in Scripture.

(The preceding presents the basics of how two different Greek words for “fill” are used in the New Testament — something that will allow a person to better grasp the true nature of that which began on the day of Pentecost and continued for about thirty-two years. And possessing at least some understanding of this period is vital to a correct understanding of the central subject matter in both the book of Acts [which presents a history of this period] and the epistles that follow [which were written either during the latter part of or immediately following this period].)

*B) The Day of Pentecost*

On the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. there were Jews gathered in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. The day of Pentecost was one of three annual feast days (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) that adult Jewish males were required to keep *in Jerusalem* ([Deuteronomy 16:1-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+16.1-16&t=NKJV)), and some had to travel long distances to get to Jerusalem in order to keep these feasts. Consequently, it was only natural that many Jews who came for the feast of Passover would remain in Jerusalem until the feast of Pentecost, slightly over fifty days later. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, estimates that there possibly may have been as many as 2,000,000 Jews in Jerusalem on this day in 30 A.D.

Thus, the Spirit was sent on a day when numerous Jews from every nation under heaven were in Jerusalem; and those filled with the Spirit were empowered to proclaim a message concerning the kingdom to these Jews, in all the various languages of their native countries. And these Jews were, in turn, expected to carry the message back to other Jews in the countries from which they had come.

This was the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, a ministry which would last for about thirty-two years (until about 62 A.D.).

Then, in conjunction with the one hundred twenty being filled with the Spirit there was a corresponding beginning fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy ([Acts 2:15-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.15-21&t=NKJV)). Then Peter delivered a message to Israel, which, after different fashions, became quite common in the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel ([Acts 2:22-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.22-36&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 3:12-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.12-26&t=NKJV); [4:5-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.5-12&t=NKJV); [5:12-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.12-16&t=NKJV), [29-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.29-32&t=NKJV); [6:8-7:53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.8-7.53&t=NKJV)). And that with which the religious leaders and all the others in Israel were confronted is also something that became quite common ([Acts 2:37-41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.37-41&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 4:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.1-4&t=NKJV), [13-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.13-22&t=NKJV); [5:17-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.17-28&t=NKJV), [33-42](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.33-42&t=NKJV); [7:54-60](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54-60&t=NKJV)).

The religious leaders, confronted with what they had done, asked, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” ([Acts 2:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.37&t=NKJV)). And Peter told them exactly what they must do: “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you* [national repentance and baptism]…” ([Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.1ff&t=NKJV)).

*ONLY* through this means could the wrong be corrected (the Jewish people, having previously rejected the message and crucified the Messenger, *now* changing their minds [[Acts 2:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.22-23&t=NKJV), [36-38a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.36-38a&t=NKJV)]); *ONLY* through this means could the Jewish people receive “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*” ([Acts 2:38b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38b&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV), [16-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.16-21&t=NKJV); [Acts 10:45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.45&t=NKJV); [11:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11.15-16&t=NKJV)), which had to do with Joel’s prophecy; and *ONLY AFTER* the Jewish people had done this would Messiah return and dwell in Israel’s midst, resulting in the complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy ([Joel 2:27ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27ff&t=NKJV); [Acts 3:19-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19-21&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter Two

**Restoration of the Kingdom**

*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* ([Acts 1:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6b&t=NKJV)).

The post-resurrection ministry of Christ in the book of Acts is covered in the nine introductory verses, and these verses not only set the tone for the remainder of the book but they are fraught with meaning. There is one central theme running through these opening verses — *the kingdom of God* ([Acts 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.3&t=NKJV)). Understand how the book opens, and you can understand the book of Acts; but misunderstand how the book opens, and the inverse of that will be equally true.

The importance of properly understanding the book of Acts lies in the fact that this book forms *the God-provided bridge* between the gospels and the epistles. In the gospels, the kingdom of the heavens was offered to and rejected by Israel. In the epistles though, the kingdom of the heavens is being offered to the “*one new man*,” *in Christ*, during an entirely separate and distinct dispensation. And Acts is the book that carries a person from one point to the other, providing information, apart from which the relationship existing between the gospels and the epistles cannot be properly seen and understood

*The central theme of the gospels* (introduced in the Old Testament) has to do with an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, ending in Israel’s rejection of the King and the kingdom, resulting in the King being crucified.

*The central theme of Acts* (introduced in the gospels) has to do with a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, ending in Israel’s continued rejection, resulting in the nation being set aside.

*The central theme of the epistles* (introduced in Acts) has to do with an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Church, resulting in acceptance at first, but with rejection and apostasy later increasingly becoming the norm.

And then, *the book of Revelation* climaxes the whole of the matter by outlining events that will occur at the close of this present dispensation, events pertaining to the Church ([Revelation 1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-4&t=NKJV)) and to the nations of the earth (both Israel and the Gentile nations [[Revelation 6-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-18&t=NKJV)]). And the book closes with Christ’s return, the overthrow of Gentile world power (bringing “*the times of the Gentiles*” to an end), the ushering in of a new dispensation (the Messianic Era), and the eternal ages that follow ([Revelation 19-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19-22&t=NKJV)).

Thus, the central theme of the New Testament is *the same* as that of the Old Testament. It must be, for the New is simply a continuing fulfillment of that previously revealed in the Old (revealed in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets). Both Testaments — the Old leading into the New — form one continuous divinely-given revelation dealing with “*things pertaining to the kingdom of God*.” Scripture begins this way in the book of Genesis, remains this way throughout, and ends this way in the book of Revelation (*ref.* the author’s book, in this site, [The Study of Scripture](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php), chapters 2-4).

For Christ to speak to His disciples throughout the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry concerning “*things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” was simply for Him to speak to them during this time about *that toward which all Scripture moves*. And the particular matter at hand, relating to the kingdom, concerned *Israe*l. Israel *had been* dealt with and *was about to be* dealt with again relative to the kingdom.

And, though the content of Christ’s instruction at this time is not given, in the light of existing conditions and the apostles’ subsequent ministry, the inference is clear. His instruction could only have centered on *Israel and the kingdom*.

After Christ had finished instructing His disciples, He called attention to their being *immersed in the Spirit “not many days from now”* ([Acts 1:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.4-5&t=NKJV)). And the disciples, hearing this promise concerning the Spirit at this particular time, *could only have thought one thing.*

Since the Spirit being sent after this fashion was intimately connected in the Old Testament with the establishment of the theocracy (*cf.* [Isaiah 32:15-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+32.15-20&t=NKJV); [44:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+44.3-5&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 39:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+39.28-29&t=NKJV); [Joel 2:27-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27-32&t=NKJV)), the disciples *could only have thought* that the Lord was about to restore the kingdom to Israel. And, in complete keeping with that which the Lord had taught them for forty days and that which He had stated about the Holy Spirit, they asked, “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” ([Acts 1:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6b&t=NKJV)).

The way in which the Greek text is structured in the first part of verse six connects the disciples’ following question about restoring the kingdom to Israel with the Lord’s previous statement to them about the Holy Spirit. And the Lord’s response to the disciples is in complete keeping with their question concerning the possibility that the kingdom was about to be restored to Israel.

**At This Time Restore**

Christ’s response to the disciples’ question — “*It is not for you to know times or seasons …*” — has left more than one person attempting to explain what the Lord meant by what He said. And the reason problems are encountered in this realm is very simple. Rather than remaining within the context, individuals invariably attempt to explain the Lord’s response in the light of Scriptures that have nothing to do with the subject matter at hand. Reference is usually made to passages such as Christ’s previous rebuke of the Jewish religious leaders for not understanding the signs of the times (*e.g.*, [Matthew 16:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.1-4&t=NKJV)).

Seemingly, Christ had previously rebuked individuals for not knowing the same thing that He here tells the disciples that it is not for them to know. But this is not the case at all. It cannot be. Scripture *always* provides encouragement, *never* discouragement, relative to studying, knowing, and understanding the signs of the times.

Note the disciples’ question and the Lord’s response in the light of the context, and matters become quite clear.

The kingdom of the heavens had been offered to Israel and was about to again be offered to Israel; but in the re-offer of the kingdom, something completely new was to occur first. The disciples (and others) were to be immersed in the Spirit in connection with this re-offer.

And the disciples, in the light of their question, could only have connected this with a beginning fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (the Spirit being poured out on all flesh, which is Messianic in its scope of fulfillment [[Joel 2:27-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27-32&t=NKJV)]). And, ten days beyond that, Peter clearly made this connection after the immersion in and filling with the Spirit had occurred: “*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel…*” ([Acts 2:16ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.16ff&t=NKJV)).

That was the setting for the Lord’s response to the question uppermost in the minds of the disciples. And how was He going to respond to a question concerning the kingdom being restored to Israel at a time when (1) it was about to be re-offered to Israel, but also at a time when (2) Israel couldn’t possibly accept?

The “*times or seasons*” in the Lord’s response had to do strictly with *Israel and the kingdom at this particular time*. The disciples (and others) were to proclaim the message to Israel, with a view to national repentance and baptism on the part of the nation. There was to be a bona fide re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (with Israel *expected to repent*), brought about through a message proclaimed by individuals who had been filled with the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, and were manifesting signs, wonders, and miracles.

Now, how was Christ going to explain to the disciples that they (along with others) were going to offer something to Israel after this fashion that Israel, as before, couldn’t possibly accept? He wasn’t, for that really isn’t the correct biblical way to look at the matter. This is the way in which finite man, after some fashion, has to look at the matter in order to come to some understanding of it himself. The biblical way to look at the matter is to be found in Christ’s response. And this is exactly why He responded to the disciples as He did.

*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* ([Acts 1:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.7-8&t=NKJV))

God in His omniscience and omnipotence could make a bona fide offer to Israel such as one finds throughout the book of Acts, though Israel, at any point in the book, couldn’t possibly accept the offer. This was something that He had placed within “*His own authority*,” and it was not for the disciples to know “*the times or seasons*” relative to this whole matter. Rather, they were simply to go out with a message to Israel and leave the results of their ministry to the Lord. All things involved were within the Lord’s omnipotent power and within His omniscient plans and purposes (*cf.* [Romans 11:32-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.32-36&t=NKJV)).

[Acts 1:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.7-8&t=NKJV) provides Christ’s last recorded words in the book of Acts prior to His ascension. After He had provided instruction for forty days, after he had told the disciples of the soon-coming of the promised Holy Spirit, and after He had answered their question,

“*He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight*” ([Acts 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.9&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Luke 24:49-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.49-51&t=NKJV)).

**The Commission, the Message**

The ministry of the disciples (and others), beginning on the day of Pentecost, would have to be in complete keeping with Christ’s previous commission to them. And, actually, during His forty-day post-resurrection ministry, Christ commissioned the disciples on more than one occasion. [Acts 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8&t=NKJV) records the last of these times, occurring immediately before His ascension.

The different recorded times in which Christ commissioned His disciples during the forty days following His resurrection are given at the end of Matthew, Mark, and Luke and at the beginning of Acts. And the commissions given during these different times must be looked upon as dealing with exactly the same thing — *a message “beginning at Jerusalem,” attended by signs, wonders, and miracles* (*cf.* [Matthew 28:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.19-20&t=NKJV); [Mark 16:15-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15-20&t=NKJV); [Luke 24:47-49](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.47-49&t=NKJV); [Acts 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8&t=NKJV)).

The fact that the message was to be carried to Israel *first*, attended by supernatural signs ([Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV), [43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.43&t=NKJV); [3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.1ff&t=NKJV)), reveals one truth. And the fact that the message was subsequently to be carried to the Gentile world, also attended by supernatural signs ([Mark 16:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15-18&t=NKJV)), reveals another.

Israel, hearing the message *first*, was expected to repent, bringing to pass the return of the King and the restoration of the kingdom; and, following this, Israel was then to carry the message to the Gentile world. The nation was to fulfill its calling as Jehovah’s witness to the ends of the earth ([Isaiah 43:1-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+43.1-12&t=NKJV)), carrying the message concerning the King and the kingdom to the Gentiles worldwide.

Viewing [Mark 16:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.16&t=NKJV) and [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV) together, one can easily see and understand this complete overall truth. And these are two verses which have suffered about as much at the hands of Christians in general as they have from the cult groups. Not only have certain cult groups removed these verses from their contexts to form a basis for their false salvation doctrines, but Christians in general have also sought to see basic issues surrounding one’s eternal salvation in these verses (though interpreting them quite differently).

And with respect to correct, basic interpretation, both groups have missed the mark completely. Both *have ignored* and, accordingly, *have not dealt with* the subject at hand.

Note how these two verses read:

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.* ([Mark 16:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.16&t=NKJV))

*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* ([Acts 2:38b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38b&t=NKJV))

The verse in Acts has to do solely with *Israel and the kingdom*. The fulfillment of this verse does not extend beyond Jerusalem and Judea in the Lord’s commission. But the verse in Mark has to do with *the Gentile nations and the kingdom*, with Israel proclaiming the message. The fulfillment of this verse extends beyond Jerusalem and Judea, into Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth ([Acts 2:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.15&t=NKJV)). And Israel *must be the one* present as the one that proclaims this message, for signs, wonders, and miracles would accompany the message.

And note the serious nature of the matter. We’re talking about *the very crux* of a central teaching in Acts, which will allow one to properly understand this book, a book leading into the epistles. Go wrong here, and you will remain wrong the rest of the way (*cf.* [Matthew 7:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+7.21-23&t=NKJV)).

All things with respect to miraculous signs, Israel, and the Gentile nations can best be seen in their proper perspective by observing the Lord’s commission in Matthew in the light of His commissions in Mark, Luke, and Acts (particularly Mark). In so doing, it must be observed that what is often called “The Great Commission” in the gospel of Matthew has to do, *first and foremost*, with *Israel and the kingdom*. And once God set Israel aside until He completed His work with the Church — which automatically placed the kingdom in abeyance — then the commissions given by Christ could no longer be applicable to Israel in the same respect that they had been before this time.

Beyond this point, and for the remainder of the dispensation (lasting over 1,900 years), individuals in the Church would continue carrying the message; but this would be done *apart from* any possibility that Israel could repent, with the kingdom being restored to the nation. And since Israel would no longer occupy her previous position in relation to the kingdom, miraculous signs would also no longer exist.

And Christ’s commission in relation to the Church would, of necessity, involve a somewhat different approach. It would involve the proclamation of *the gospel of the grace of God* on the one hand and the proclamation of *the gospel of the glory of Christ* on the other (*cf*. [Ephesians 2:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-10&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.11&t=NKJV); [2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+2.4&t=NKJV)).

(These things will be dealt with in several subsequent chapters. The subject matter at hand in this chapter has to do with Christ’s commission during that time when the re-offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel.)

Note Matthew’s record of Christ’s commission to His disciples, along with the verses leading into this commission:

*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain that Jesus had appointed for them.*

*When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.*

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.* ([Matthew 28:16-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.16-20&t=NKJV)).

*1. The Disciples’ Position; Christ’s Position*

The disciples had been positioned by the Lord at a particular place on a “*mountain*.” The Lord had “*appointed*” (Gk: “ordained”) that they occupy this place on *the mountain* at the time He commissioned them, as recorded by Matthew. Then note that His final commission to the disciples was also given on *a mountain* — the Mount of Olives ([Acts 1:8-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8-12&t=NKJV)).

A “mountain” in Scripture signifies *a kingdom* ([Isaiah 2:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.1-4&t=NKJV); [Daniel 2:34-35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.34-35&t=NKJV), [44-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.44-45&t=NKJV); [Matthew 16:28-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.28-17.5&t=NKJV)). And the inherent thought in relation to Christ ordaining that His disciples occupy a particular place on *a mountain* when He commissioned them is one seen numerous times in Scripture — both in the Old and New Testaments.

Abraham, for example, dwelled in the high country as he “*stood before the LORD*”; but Lot, in contrast, dwelled in the low-lying Jordan plain. And Lot was told immediately prior to the destruction of the cities of the plain, “…*escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed*.” And Abraham, at the same time, simply continued in the same place, *in the high country, standing before the Lord*. Abraham was already on the mountain. *This was where he lived* ([Genesis 18:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+18.22&t=NKJV); [19:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.17&t=NKJV), [27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.27&t=NKJV)).

The thought is evident, as outlined in Daniel, chapter two. The kingdom of this world, as typified by the cities in the Jordan plain, is to be destroyed one day, suddenly and completely. It is to be destroyed by the Stone smiting the image at its feet (pointing to Christ destroying the final form of Gentile world power, under Satan). And that Stone will then become “*a great mountain*” and *fill the whole earth* ([Daniel 2:34-35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.34-35&t=NKJV)). In that day, “*the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it*” ([Isaiah 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.2&t=NKJV)).

Thus, deliverance during Abraham’s day or at any point beyond is associated with *the mountain*, not with the plain. The former, though *presently unseen*, will one day fill the whole earth; and the latter, though *presently seen on every hand*, will one day pass completely out of existence.

When Moses sent twelve leaders from each of the twelve tribes into the land at Kadesh-Barnea, he told them, “*Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountain*” ([Numbers 13:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.17&t=NKJV)). These Israelites were to go into the land (spoken of through the symbolism of *a mountain*), learn everything they could about the land and its inhabitants, and bring back two things: *fruit* from the land, and a *report* concerning the land ([Numbers 13:18ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.18ff&t=NKJV)).

This was done with a view to the people of Israel, under Moses, subsequently moving into the land, conquering the inhabitants, and realizing their calling as God’s firstborn son. They were to be established in the land and realize the rights of primogeniture as a kingdom of priests within a theocracy.

Thus, since *a kingdom* was in view, the twelve who traversed the land for forty days, began by going “*up into the mountain*,” *i.e.* began by going *up into the kingdom*. And it was this land, spoken of through the symbolism of a “mountain,” signifying *a kingdom* that the Israelites had been moving toward ever since the death of the firstborn in Egypt; and it was this land in which they were to dwell within a theocracy.

In other words, following the death of the firstborn in Egypt, the Israelites’ attention was to be centered on *one goal* — realizing their calling in the land set before them. Their attention was to be fixed on *the mountain, the kingdom*.

And exactly the same thing can be seen relative to Christians in the antitype. Following the appropriation of the blood, in the antitype of [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV), the Christians’ attention is to be centered on realizing a calling in another land (a heavenly land). Their attention is to be fixed on *the mountain, the kingdom.*

In this respect, Christ has provided the example that Christians are to follow during the present time as they patiently endure sufferings and persecution (*cf.* [2 Timothy 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.12&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12&t=NKJV), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.13&t=NKJV)): “…*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*.” And the example, contextually, is taken from His sufferings at Calvary ([1 Peter 2:20-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.20-24&t=NKJV)).

Note the reference to Christ’s sufferings and how He viewed them in [Hebrews 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.2&t=NKJV). Christians, as they run the race in the proper fashion ([Hebrews 12:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.1&t=NKJV)), are to look “*to Jesus* [*lit.*, ‘from, to Jesus’ (*i.e.*, *from* the things of the present surrounding world, *to* Jesus] *the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame…*” That is, Jesus, during His time of sufferings at Calvary, looked beyond the Cross (present) to the Crown (future); and He considered His present sufferings and shame of little consequence compared to His coming glory and exaltation.

And He has left Christians an example that they should do *the same* in the midst of present sufferings. They should keep their eyes fixed on that which lies out ahead, considering all present sufferings of little consequence compared to the proffered future glory.

Thus, the thought behind Christ ordaining that His disciples occupy a particular place *on a mountain* when He commissioned them had to do with the fact that they were going forth to Israel with a message concerning the King and His kingdom. *The King and His kingdom were to occupy center-stage*.

Then note Christ’s words relative to Himself: “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*” ([Matthew 28:18b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.18b&t=NKJV)). The reference is to the power and authority that He is to one day exercise in the kingdom, both *heavenly and earthly.* And these two spheres of the kingdom are also in view in the previous reference in Matthew’s gospel to that which the Son possesses ([Matthew 11:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+11.25-27&t=NKJV)).

The dual aspect of Christ’s coming kingdom (*heavenly and earthly*) can possibly best be seen and understood in the light of God’s present universal kingdom. Note that God rules from a place in the heavens over His kingdom. And the different parts of His kingdom — different provinces — are undoubtedly, from what can be seen concerning the earth, ruled after the same fashion, *i.e.*, from the heavens (the heavens associated with the provinces) over the provinces.

Satan, the incumbent ruler over the earth ([Luke 4:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.6&t=NKJV)), rules from a place in the heavens above the earth ([Daniel 10:13-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13-21&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.2&t=NKJV); [3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.10&t=NKJV); [6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV)). Then, during the Messianic Era, when Christ rules the earth, He will rule from a place in the heavens above the earth, from the New Jerusalem.

And Christ’s statement to His disciples, while in their appointed place *in the mountain*, immediately prior to commissioning them, pertained entirely to *the power* and *authority* that He will exercise in this *future kingdom*. And His commission must be understood accordingly.

(Insofar as an application of Christ’s commission to the Church today is concerned, all of the preceding relative to the place where those proclaiming the message have been ordained to reside [on the mountain] and the place that Christ occupies [the possessor of all power, both heavenly and earthly], would, of necessity, be completely applicable. The salvation message [by grace through faith] is to be proclaimed *among all nations*, with *a purpose* beyond eternal salvation in view; and that purpose is to be seen in the gospel of the glory of Christ, to be proclaimed to individuals after they have been saved.)

*2. Having Gone…*

In most versions of Scripture, as in the KJV, [Matthew 28:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.19&t=NKJV) begins with a command: “*Go ye therefore…*” However, in the Greek text, the verse begins with an aorist participle, which could be better translated, “Having gone…” The thought is that Israel was *expected to repent*; and because of the nation’s calling — called to be Jehovah’s witness to the Gentile nations of the earth ([Isaiah 43:1-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+43.1-10&t=NKJV)) — Israel, following the nation’s repentance, *would be expected* to go to the Gentiles in fulfillment of her calling (as Jonah did following his repentance and removal from the place of death).

The command in the verse in the KJV begins with the word “*teach* [*lit.*, ‘disciple’].” This word is an imperative in the Greek text; and the thought is that Israel, having gone out among the nations with the good news (concerning salvation, the King, and the kingdom), was to bring forth disciples. These disciples were then to be baptized and taught, in that order.

Now, with these things in mind, note the commission in [Mark 16:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15-18&t=NKJV) that Christ gave at another time during the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry. The words “*Go ye*” ([Mark 16:15 KJV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15&t=KJV)) are a translation of the same aorist participle seen in [Matthew 28:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.19&t=NKJV). And the translation here, along with the expectation relative to Israel repenting and going, would be the same as in Matthew’s gospel — “*Having gone*…”

The command (imperative) in [Mark 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15&t=NKJV) is in the word “*preach*.” That is, “*Having gone into all the world*,” they were then to “*preach the gospel to every creature*.”

And the message, as Israel went forth, would be attended by signs, wonders, and miracles ([Mark 16:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.17-18&t=NKJV)). Supernatural manifestations of power would accompany the message because of the presence of not only *Israel* but also *the King and the kingdom*. Then, beyond that, the end result portended by the message had to do with blessings to be realized by the Gentiles in the kingdom.

The object of the proclaimed message was to bring about *a salvation* connected, textually, with belief and baptism:

*“He who believes and is baptized will be saved…”* ([Mark 16:16a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.16a&t=NKJV)).

Salvation, as it is used in [Mark 16:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.16&t=NKJV), moves beyond the thought of individuals passing from death unto life. It must, for it is connected not only with *baptism* but with *a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles*, which have to do with *the kingdom*. And all of this sets forth the indisputable fact that “salvation” in this verse has to do with *the kingdom*, not with eternal life.

Salvation in this verse has to do with the same thing seen in [Acts 2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.21&t=NKJV) — “*And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved*.” (*cf*. [Romans 10:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.13-14&t=NKJV)) — which is a quotation from [Joel 2:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.32&t=NKJV) pertaining to “deliverance” during the Messianic Era.

Note the type that begins in Exodus chapter twelve and matters will become quite clear. Things having to do with one’s *eternal salvation* are dealt with in events surrounding the death of the firstborn at the very beginning ([Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV)). But *belief* and *baptism* in [Mark 16:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.16&t=NKJV), textually, are associated with *a subsequent deliverance* (made possible because of the death of the firstborn).

In the type, this deliverance had to do with events beyond the death of the firstborn. This deliverance had to do with looking out ahead toward the land of Canaan and with the Red Sea passage occurring at the beginning of the wilderness journey.

And these are the things which, first and foremost, are involved in the Lord’s commission to the disciples, whether seen in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or Acts.

Israel though had to repent and be baptized first (national repentance and baptism [[Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV)]). Then Israel, as Jehovah’s witness, would be in a position to go forth to Samaria and to the Gentile nations throughout the world, bringing about the fulfillment of the Lord’s commission in [Mark 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15&t=NKJV). And supernatural signs would follow the proclamation of the message throughout the commission — whether to Israel, to Samaria, or to the Gentile nations.

Had Israel on the day of Pentecost followed Peter’s instructions (in response to the question which had been asked [[Acts 2:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.37&t=NKJV)]) — “Repent, and be baptized…” ([Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV)) — Christ would have returned and restored the kingdom to Israel; and the nation would subsequently have gone forth to the Gentiles with the message concerning the King and the kingdom, fulfilling [Mark 16:15ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15ff&t=NKJV).

Christ’s return and the “restitution [‘restoration’] of all things [which would include the restoration of the kingdom to Israel]” was contingent on Israel’s repentance ([Acts 3:19-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19-21&t=NKJV)). And the ministry of the apostles throughout the book of Acts was a ministry toward this end.

And the apostles, realizing the importance of Israel’s repentance, carried the message to the nation after such a zealous fashion and with such fervor that they were threatened, beaten, imprisoned, and even killed by the Jewish religious leaders ([Acts 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.1ff&t=NKJV); [4:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.1ff&t=NKJV); [5:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.1ff&t=NKJV); [7:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.1ff&t=NKJV)). And Paul, comprehending the importance of this matter, near the close of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, went so far as to say,

“*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh* [if such would bring about their repentance]” ([Romans 9:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9.3&t=NKJV)).

But Israel didn’t repent — not on the day of Pentecost or any subsequent day throughout the approximately thirty-two years in which the re-offer of the kingdom remained open. Thus, since Israel didn’t repent, [Mark 16:15ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15ff&t=NKJV) not only remained unfulfilled but, in actuality, can’t be fulfilled today in the fashion in which it was intended.

The gospel to be proclaimed in the Lord’s commission in [Mark 16:15ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15ff&t=NKJV) was the gospel of the kingdom, and the message was to be attended by signs, wonders, and miracles. And all of that is alien to the message that is to be proclaimed by the Church today, to either Israel or to the Gentile nations.

The message that the Church is to carry to the unsaved today is the simple gospel of the grace of God. Israel has been set aside, and the kingdom is no longer “at hand.” And with Israel set aside and the kingdom no longer at hand, signs, wonders, and miracles can no longer form a part of any message being proclaimed. Thus, a message today, in line with that which is stated in [Mark 16:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15-18&t=NKJV), would be completely out of place.

A message of this nature, under the direction and power of the Spirit of God, cannot presently exist. Such would be impossible. And the reason why the matter would be impossible is very simple: the Spirit of God empowering individuals to manifest supernatural signs today would be acting contrary to the revealed Word of God.

But, note what can presently be found in Christendom. Entire denominations have been founded on seeking after the signs, wonders, and miracles seen in these verses (along with those in Acts, chapter two and other sections of the book). And the present Charismatic Movement, which has crossed all denominational lines, proclaims the same erroneous view relative to these supernatural signs.

This whole thing has taken its toll in Christendom over the years. Christians today, seeing all of this, are confused to say the least. They generally have little to no understanding of the place that signs, wonders, and miracles occupy in Scripture; and Christians, on a scale larger than at any other time in history, are, accordingly, being misled.

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Chapter Three

**Restoration of All Things**

*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world* [age] *began*. ([Acts 3:19-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19-21&t=NKJV))

Events occurring on the day of Pentecost set the tone for the ministry of the apostles throughout the book of Acts. Individuals were filled with the Spirit after a fashion peculiar to that period when the kingdom of the heavens was re-offered to Israel, and this filling of the Spirit formed a beginning fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy ([Acts 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.4&t=NKJV), [16-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.16-21&t=NKJV)).

Those filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were empowered to manifest signs, wonders, and miracles in the presence of Israel; and on this beginning day, the sign was “tongues.” Jews present in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven heard the message in their own native language. The apostles (and others), having no knowledge of all these various languages, were empowered to speak and deliver a message to these Jews in their own languages.

Then, beyond the manifested sign and being able to reach the Jews in Jerusalem with the message (*cf.* [Isaiah 28:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+28.10&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+28.11&t=NKJV)), there were also those Jews in the various nations from which these men had come who must be reached. And the men present in Jerusalem, after hearing the message, would then be expected to carry this message back to the Jewish people in their own countries.

But as was the case in the ministry of Christ and the apostles before Calvary, so it was in the continuing ministry of the apostles at and following Pentecost. Though the Jews present were “*all amazed*” when hearing the message in their own native tongue [language], there was “doubt”; and this was followed by *confusion* and/or *unbelief*. Some asked, “*Whatever could this mean?*” And others said, “*They are full of new wine*” ([Acts 2:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.12-13&t=NKJV)).

But Peter, standing up with the other apostles, told these Jews exactly what was happening. Peter said, “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*…” There was *a beginning fulfillment* of Joel’s prophecy by their being filled with the Spirit and being empowered to speak in other languages ([Acts 14-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14-21&t=NKJV)).

Then Peter directed these Jews’ attention to the issue at hand ([Acts 2:22ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.22ff&t=NKJV)). Israel’s Messiah had previously appeared to the nation, manifesting “*miracles, wonders, and signs*”; and God, through these miraculous works, had provided visible evidence to Israel concerning the authenticity of both the Messenger and the message.

However, Israel had rejected the message and crucified the Messenger ([Acts 2:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.22-23&t=NKJV)). But God had raised Him from the dead, and there were numerous witnesses to this fact ([Acts 2:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.24&t=NKJV), [32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.32&t=NKJV); *cf.* [1 Corinthians 15:4-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.4-7&t=NKJV)).

And not only had God raised Him from the dead, but He was, at that very time, in the heavens at God’s right hand, *waiting.* He was waiting for that day when His “*enemies*” would be made His “*footstool*” ([Acts 2:30-35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.30-35&t=NKJV)).

Peter, in verses thirty-four and thirty-five, quoted from [Psalm 110:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.1&t=NKJV), the first verse of a Messianic Psalm. And note how the Psalm goes on to read:

*The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! . . . The Lord hath sworn and will not relent* [KJV: “repent,” will not change His mind], “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*.” ([Psalm 110:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.2&t=NKJV), [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.4&t=NKJV))

Events occurring on the day of Pentecost in Acts, chapter two had one purpose in view: *Israel’s repentance*. The Jewish people, nationwide, were called upon *to change their minds*. Only through this means could the nation bring about Christ’s return, bring about the continuing and complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, and bring about a restoration of the kingdom to Israel. This was what the question in [Acts 2:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.37&t=NKJV) and the answer in the next verse involved.

And the same thing can be seen over and over in the ministry of the apostles to Israel as one begins to work his way through the book of Acts, especially through the first seven chapters. There are manifestations of supernatural signs, followed by a confrontation with the religious leaders in Israel, followed by a call to repentance; and the complete sequence is always followed by *the nation remaining in unbelief*, though some of the Jews hearing the message at different times believed (as the three thousand on the day of Pentecost).

**Repent…and Be Converted**

Exactly what is meant by *repentance* and *conversion* in relation to Israel during the ministry of the apostles throughout the book of Acts? Note the message previously proclaimed to Israel in the gospel accounts, beginning with John the Baptist and continuing with Christ and the apostles; then note the continuing message proclaimed by the apostles in the book of Acts. The message was *essentially the same* throughout, though, following the events of Calvary, it took on the added tone (which became a central emphasis) of the Jewish people having been “*the betrayers and murderers*” of Jesus (*cf.* [Acts 2:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.23&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.36&t=NKJV); [3:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.14-15&t=NKJV); [4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.10&t=NKJV); [5:28-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.28-30&t=NKJV); [7:52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.52&t=NKJV)).

But there is something often not understood — *which must be understood* — about the message proclaimed to Israel. This message, beginning with John the Baptist, was not a salvation message in the same sense that salvation by grace through faith is to be proclaimed to Jew and Gentile alike today. Rather, the message dealt with salvation in an entirely different sense. This message dealt with salvation (deliverance) in relation to *the kingdom*, not in relation to eternal life.

Before Calvary, with Messiah present, there was a call for Israel *to repent*; and this was with a view to *deliverance being brought to pass for the nation in the kingdom*, which would be established. Following Calvary, with Messiah absent, there was again a call for Israel to *repent*; and this, as before, was with a view to *deliverance being brought to pass for the nation in the kingdom*, which would be established following Messiah’s return.

In this respect, the main difference in the message proclaimed to Israel in the original offer (in the gospel accounts) and the message proclaimed to Israel in the re-offer (in the book of Acts) was *the presence* or *the absence* of Israel’s Messiah. The conditions on Israel’s part at both times were identical: *repentance* and *baptism* (*cf.* [Matthew 3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.1-6&t=NKJV); [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV)). In the original offer, Christ was already present and could have established the kingdom; whereas, in the re-offer, Christ was absent and would have had to return in order to establish the kingdom.

Thus, correctly understanding the message proclaimed to Israel in either the gospel accounts or in Acts, it’s easy to see and understand that a salvation message pertaining to one’s eternal destiny was *not* part of this message. This message concerned *salvation* (deliverance) *in relation to the kingdom*.

But this is not to say that a message surrounding one’s eternal destiny cannot be seen in the gospel accounts or in Acts, for such is not the case at all.

Even during John’s ministry, preceding Christ’s ministry, he referred to Jesus on a particular occasion as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” ([John 1:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.29&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.36&t=NKJV)); and this statement could only draw from Old Testament typology (*e.g.*, [Genesis 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4&t=NKJV); [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22&t=NKJV); [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV)) and point to *the events surrounding Calvary*, which would occur later.

Then, that which John had expressed began to come into full focus once Israel had rejected the proffered kingdom ([Matthew 12:22-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-32&t=NKJV)). Events in Christ’s ministry turned more toward the Cross; and, during this time, numerous things can be found in the gospel accounts and in Acts pertaining to the Cross rather than to the Crown.

At the time of Israel’s climactic rejection in [Matthew 12:22-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-32&t=NKJV), some of the Scribes and Pharisees, who had just seen Christ perform a miraculous work, asked for a sign; but Christ, seeing that they had rejected the miraculous sign that He performed (among others prior to that time), refused their request. He told them that no sign would be given but “*the sign of the prophet Jonah*,” which pointed to His coming death, burial, and resurrection ([Matthew 12:38-40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.38-40&t=NKJV)).

This is undoubtedly why Jesus dealt with Nicodemus as He did following a similar rejection by the Jews ([John 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.1ff&t=NKJV); *cf*. [John 2:18-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+2.18-25&t=NKJV)). Nicodemus came to Jesus, admitting, “*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*” ([John 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.2&t=NKJV)). However, Jesus, rather than dealing with the signs Nicodemus referred to, dealt with “*the sign of the prophet Jonah*” once again (using a parallel type).

Christ first dealt with truths relative to seeing and entering the kingdom ([John 3:3-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.3-13&t=NKJV)), and then He concluded with explanatory, related truths drawn from an Old Testament type, paralleling the account of Jonah. Christ drew from the account of Moses lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness ([Numbers 21:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+21.6-9&t=NKJV)), a type of His being lifted up on Calvary, to occur not many days hence ([Numbers 21:14ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+21.14ff&t=NKJV)).

And the message of salvation by grace through faith can be derived from sections of Scripture such as [Matthew 12:40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.40&t=NKJV), [John 1:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.29&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.36&t=NKJV), or [John 3:3ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.3ff&t=NKJV), among many others. But, again, this was *not* part of the central message proclaimed to Israel by John, Jesus, or the disciples before Calvary; and this was *not* part of the same message proclaimed to Israel by the apostles (and others) following Calvary.

That is to say, there was no call for the Jewish people to receive Jesus as their *Savior*, in the sense of providing *salvation from eternal damnation* (either before Calvary in the gospel accounts or following Calvary in the book of Acts). The call was for the Jewish people to receive Jesus as their *King*, One Who would save them in the sense of providing *deliverance in the proffered kingdom* (*cf.* [Matthew 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+2.2&t=NKJV); [21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.5&t=NKJV), [8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.8-9&t=NKJV), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.15&t=NKJV); [John 19:14-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.14-19&t=NKJV); [Acts 2:30-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.30-36&t=NKJV)).

Note a statement delivered to the Jewish religious leaders following Calvary by Peter and the other apostles in this respect:

*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* ([Acts 5:30-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.30-31&t=NKJV))

The word “*Prince*” is *Archegos* in the Greek text and refers to “a Ruler.” As Israel’s *King* He would be their *Savior,* their *Deliverer.*

But prior to Christ returning as King, Israel had to repent. Then Jesus would be sent as King to bring about deliverance (as Savior), providing forgiveness for the Jewish peoples’ sins, with their main sin being that of crucifying their Messiah. But, again, the call for Israel to repent was not a message pertaining to eternal salvation or eternal damnation.

There are things about the generation of Jews to whom the kingdom of the heavens was offered both before and following Calvary that people don’t seem to understand. This *wasn’t* a lost generation of Jews in need of hearing a salvation message — no more so than the generation during Daniel’s day, or David’s day, or Jews living at any other time throughout the fourteen centuries extending from Moses to Christ.

If such had been the case, the message of John, Jesus, and the apostles (both before and following Calvary) would have been quite different. It would have dealt with the issue of eternal salvation first. *But it didn’t*. *It dealt with a kingly message first, with salvation being seen in the message in the sense of deliverance by the King in His kingdom*.

1. *Salvation in the Old and New Testaments*

It may come as a surprise for some to learn that salvation, presented in the Old Testament — whether dealing with eternal verities or with the Messianic Kingdom — is *identical* to the way salvation is presented in the New Testament.

In either Testament, *salvation with respect to one’s eternal destiny* is entirely through divine intervention, it is by the shedding of blood, it involves a substitutionary atonement, and a Man is revealed to be the Substitute. But *salvation with respect to Christ and His kingdom* is always seen in both Testaments as a separate matter, having to do with issues *subsequent to* those surrounding one’s eternal destiny.

These are truths set forth initially in the opening two chapters of Genesis ([Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV)). Then, Scripture beyond that provides all the necessary details to fully understand this opening section. And, within subsequent Scripture, *no change can ever occur from that set forth at the very beginning.*

*Everything must remain the same throughout*, which is why there can be *no difference* in salvation throughout Scripture — whether relative to one’s eternal destiny or relative to deliverance in the kingdom. And that is also why correctly understanding these matters at the outset, at the very beginning of Scripture, cannot be overemphasized. If one understands matters correctly at the beginning, he will have a foundational base that will allow him to correctly understand related subject matter dealt with in various ways at later points in Scripture.

But confining the discussion to salvation with respect to one’s eternal destiny — for that must be settled *first* — one thing stands out about the opening four chapters of Genesis. Not only does the foundational framework set forth in the opening two chapters deal with this matter *first* (which can only be the case, for this *must occur* *first* [[Genesis 1:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-5&t=NKJV)]), but Scripture in the immediately following two chapters ([Genesis 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4&t=NKJV)), as well, deals with this matter *first* (which should also only be expected, for, again, this is what *must occur, as well as be understood, first*).

In Genesis, chapter one, the beginning restoration of the ruined creation — typifying man, a subsequent ruined creation, passing from death unto life — occurred *entirely through divine intervention*. The Spirit of God moved, God spoke, and light came into existence. The ruined material creation was *completely powerless*, as ruined man is today, to act in and of self ([Genesis 1:2-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-5&t=NKJV) [2b]).

Then, in chapter three, dealing once again with the same subject as the opening five verses of chapter one, God began to provide additional information. Adam partook of sin to effect Eve’s redemption (as Christ was made sin to effect our redemption [[2 Corinthians 5:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.21&t=NKJV)]), and in the latter part of the chapter God slew innocent animals and clothed Adam and Eve with skins from these animals.

Thus, salvation in chapter three is seen in a dual sense. It is seen through the act of a man (typifying the Man, Christ Jesus), and it is seen through the shedding of blood (typifying the shed blood of Christ). And, typically, from God clothing Adam and Eve, man is seen clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Then, in chapter four, salvation is once again seen in a dual sense, but from a different perspective. It is seen through the shed blood of lambs from the flock, and it is seen through the shed blood of a man himself (Abel, the one who offered the lambs to God). And this dual type looks out ahead to the act of One Person — “*the Lamb of God*” putting away sin through the sacrifice of Himself (*cf.* [Hebrews 12:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.24&t=NKJV)).

Thus, in this chapter, additional information is provided to not only help a person understand chapter three but also the opening five verses in chapter one. And, when all of the material in these opening four chapters of Genesis is put together and understood, a person will possess a good grasp of salvation by grace through faith — a salvation based *entirely* on the finished work of Christ, one wrought *entirely* through divine intervention.

Then in Genesis chapter twenty-two, all of the preceding is put together *in one type*. And for an individual to properly understand this one type (where different things in several preceding types have been put together), he must have an understanding of the individual preceding types and how they relate to one another. Only then will he be in a position to dig into the type set forth in chapter twenty-two and mine its treasures.

In brief, in this chapter, Abraham offered his son on a particular mountain in the land of Moriah (a place chosen by God, where His Son, in the antitype, was to be offered 2,000 years later); and a substitutionary atonement was involved through a ram dying in the stead of Isaac (with Isaac, through the death of the ram, seen as having himself died [*cf.* [Hebrews 11:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.17&t=NKJV)]).

Then the preceding — along with other places like Joseph’s experiences when he went to his brethren in Genesis chapter thirty-seven — brings a person to and prepares the person for the death of the firstborn in Exodus chapter twelve. When one arrives at this chapter in Exodus, *all of the necessary preliminary data has already been provided*; and an individual having availed himself of this preliminary data finds himself in a position where he can properly understand the material in this chapter.

Thus, a person is not to begin in Exodus, chapter twelve when studying Scripture. Rather a person is to begin in Genesis chapter one and work his way through Genesis to the book of Exodus, availing himself of all the previous data so that he can properly understand Exodus chapter twelve (and beyond). And this is of *vital importance*, for this chapter in Exodus is *the beginning chapter* in a type that extends all the way into the book of Joshua.

This is the basic overall type that establishes the framework upon which so much of Scripture rests (*cf.* [1 Corinthians 9:24-10:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-10.11&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 3-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3-6&t=NKJV)), with the overall type itself resting upon the foundational framework set forth at the beginning, in the opening two chapters of Genesis ([Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Hebrews 4:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.1-9&t=NKJV)).

2. *Shed Blood in the Old and New Testaments*

According to Scripture, Christ was slain *two different times* in history — “*from the foundation of the world*” ([Revelation 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.8&t=NKJV)) and at “*Calvary*” in 30 A.D. ([Acts 2:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.23&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.36&t=NKJV)). The “*foundation of the world*” carries one back to the time of the restoration of the ruined creation, beginning with [Genesis 1:2b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2b&t=NKJV) (*ref.* [Hebrews 4:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.3-4&t=NKJV)). At the very beginning of man’s history, God, looking 4,000 years ahead, saw His Son as *already slain*. But bear one thing in mind, though Christ is seen in Scripture as “*slain from the foundation of the world*,” He is only seen in Scripture as being “*offered*” at *one time* — at “*Calvary,*” in 30 A.D. ([Hebrews 9:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.25-28&t=NKJV)). Note the reference in verse twenty-six to “*the foundation of the world*.” The allusion is to Christ being slain at this time, though not “*offered*” until 4,000 years later when slain within man’s history ([Genesis 1:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26&t=NKJV), [28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.28&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.18&t=NKJV)).

And between these two points lie all the animal sacrifices, the “offerings,” in the Old Testament. These sacrifices began with God Himself slaying animals to clothe Adam and Eve *immediately following* the entrance of sin into the human race; and they ended with the slaying of the paschal lambs in 30 A.D., slain by the Israelites throughout the camp *at the very time* that the nation was slaying *the Paschal Lamb at Calvary*.

Thus, there is the picture. Christ was slain at the time man’s history began, preceding the entrance of sin into the human race (though not *offered* at this time); animals were slain immediately following the entrance of sin into the human race (for *offerings*), and they continued to be slain throughout the next 4,000 years (for *offerings*), for death had “*passed upon all men*” ([Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV)); and, “*when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son*,” to be slain (as the *offering*), though already “*slain from the foundation of the world*” ([Galatians 4:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+4.4-5&t=NKJV); [Revelation 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.8&t=NKJV)).

Then, tying that in with the different types once again ([Genesis 1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1-4&t=NKJV); [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22&t=NKJV); [37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+37&t=NKJV); [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV)), it is easy to see that redemption for man is the same throughout Scripture, Old or New Testament. As stated in [Hebrews 9:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.22&t=NKJV), “…*without shedding of blood is no remission*.” And this blood was to ultimately be shed by a Man — *slain* from “*the foundation of the world*,” offered 4,000 years later — with all the bloody animal sacrifices (for *offerings*) lying between these two times, pointing to Christ’s sacrifice, *His offering once for all*.

A) *Atonement; Reconciliation*

The word “*atonement*” (Hebrew: *kaphar*) means “to cover.” This is the word used throughout the Old Testament relative to the blood of animal sacrifices providing *a covering* for sins (*e.g*., [Leviticus 16:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+16.6&t=NKJV), [10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+16.10-11&t=NKJV), [16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+16.16-18&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+16.20&t=NKJV)…). The blood of animal sacrifices *could not do away with sins*. *It could only cover sins*. This is why in Hebrews it states:

*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.* ([Hebrews 10:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.4&t=NKJV))

Thus, there were continual sacrifices throughout the Old Testament, year after year; and *blood* from these continual sacrifices provided *a covering* for sins.

This can easily be seen through activities on the Day of Atonement when the high priest placed blood on the mercy seat. God dwelt in the Holy of Holies, above the mercy seat, between the cherubim, one on each end of the mercy seat ([Exodus 25:21-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+25.21-22&t=NKJV)). The two tablets of stone, containing the broken law, were in the ark below the mercy seat ([Exodus 40:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+40.20&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Exodus 31:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+31.18&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 9:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.4&t=NKJV)); and, with blood on the mercy seat, when God looked toward the broken law, He saw *a blood covering*, not the broken law. The blood could not do away with the Israelites’ sins, but it could, and did, cover them.

The shed blood of Christ though is another matter. It *does not cover* sins. Rather, *it does away* with sins.

The word used in connection with Christ’s shed blood is not a Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *kapha*r. Instead, the Greek word *katallasso*, translated “*reconciliation*,” is used (*cf.* [Romans 5:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.10-11&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 5:18-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.18-21&t=NKJV)).

*Katallasso* means, “to change,” “to bring back into harmony.” There is not even the slightest thought of forming a covering. Rather, the thought with reference to sin has to do with bringing back into harmony through *doing away with sin*, leaving *nothing* to cover.

This is why the writer of Hebrews drew a sharp contrast between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ in this respect ([Hebrews 7-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+7-10&t=NKJV)). And this is also why he used the expression, “*put away sin*,” with reference to Christ’s sacrifice ([Hebrews 9:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.26&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Hebrews 10:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.1&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.12&t=NKJV)).

B) *Paschal Lambs; Passover Lamb*

With these thoughts in mind, what was the difference between God viewing *the shed blood* *of animal sacrifices* or viewing *the shed blood of His Son* insofar as *not seeing* man’s sins was concerned? There wasn’t any difference. There couldn’t be.

God didn’t see man’s sins in either instance. In the former, man’s sins *were covered*; God saw only *the blood* that *covered* them. In the latter, man’s sins *were done away with*; God saw only *the blood* that *did away* with them.

God looked upon *the blood in both instances* — the only thing that could *cover* or *do away* with sins. That’s why there can be no remission for sins *apart from* the shedding of blood. And that is also why to talk about salvation in either the Old or the New Testament apart from the shedding of blood is *utter nonsense*.

God’s requirement for and recognition of a substitutionary atonement began at the time of Adam’s sin and can be seen throughout the Old Testament, with all the sacrifices pointing to and typifying Christ’s sacrifice. And this can perhaps best be seen and illustrated through viewing the death of the paschal lambs in Exodus chapter twelve.

Insofar as *the death of the firstborn* and *God’s corresponding satisfaction* are concerned, note that there is *no difference* between Jews applying the blood of the paschal lambs (by faith) to the doorposts and lintel during Moses’ day and Christians applying the blood of the Passover Lamb, by faith, today. In both instances God is seen recognizing *a vicarious death of the firstborn*, and in both instances, *God’s satisfaction can be seen*. The statement, “…*when I see the blood, I will pass over you*…” ([Exodus 12:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.13&t=NKJV)), is *equally true in both instances*, in both type and antitype.

And also note that God would have had to look upon the shed blood of the paschal lambs *exactly the same way* throughout the fourteen centuries (thirty-five generations) from Moses to Christ — “…*when I see the blood, I will pass over you*…” God looked for the blood. That was *the one criterion, the only criterion*.

God could only have recognized an individual vicarious death in each generation *exactly the same way*; and, since the generation living when Christ was upon earth was still slaying the paschal lambs year after year, God could only have *still* been recognizing an individual vicarious death and been satisfied. God looked for the blood. *That was the one criterion during Moses’ day, and that could only have remained the one criterion throughout the fourteen centuries from Moses to Christ.*

3. *Thus…*

Contrary to common belief, Christ didn’t come to a lost generation of Jews — no more so than if He had appeared to any other generation extending all the way back to Moses. The paschal lambs were still being slain year after year, with the blood being properly applied; and God could only have still looked at the blood (which covered sin) *the same way* that He had always looked at it.

And this is exactly what the apostles recognized when carrying the message to the same generation once again following Calvary. The salvation message they carried concerned *deliverance in the kingdom*, exactly the same as the message which John, Christ, and the disciples had carried to Israel before Calvary.

The message was being carried to a generation of Jews living on both sides of Calvary — Jews who had applied the blood of the paschal lambs preceding Calvary but had rejected the King and His kingdom. Still though, preceding Calvary, there was *a vicarious death, resulting in God’s satisfaction; and this could not be nullified*.

But a status of this nature was for *that generation alone*. Jews in any subsequent generation would be as Jews are today. A vicarious death, resulting in God’s satisfaction, could be theirs *only through* availing themselves of the shed blood of the Paschal Lamb. *They had to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Thus, repenting and being converted in [Acts 3:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19&t=NKJV) had to do with the Jews of *that one generation* changing their minds and going in a different direction. Eternal salvation was not in view, *only deliverance in relation to Christ’s return and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.*

And the 3,000 being “*saved*” on the day of Pentecost, or at times following, including Paul’s conversion ([Acts 9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9&t=NKJV)), must be looked upon after the same fashion. Their heeding the message must be looked upon in the sense of a change of mind and a change of direction, with any thought of salvation having to do with *Christ’s return* and *deliverance in the kingdom*. They were saved “*from this untoward* [‘perverse’] *generation*” ([Acts 2:40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.40&t=NKJV)), *with respect to the kingdom.*

(And, in contrast, note Paul and Silas’ message in [Acts 16:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.31&t=NKJV) to a Gentile of their generation — a jailor at Philippi, one outside the camp of Israel, one having been *separated* from the blood of the paschal lambs.

This jailor was “*dead in trespasses and sins*.” He was *spiritually dead* and in no position to hear and understand spiritual truth concerning the kingdom. He had to *first* pass “*from death unto life*” before a message concerning the kingdom could be proclaimed to him.

In his case, contrasted with those in Israel, matters surrounding the death of the firstborn in [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV) had not occurred; and the firstborn *must die first*.

Thus, in response to his question concerning salvation, he was told, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved…*” He had to *first* apply the blood of the slain Paschal Lamb. A vicarious death had to occur *first* — the only means through which this man could be made alive spiritually and be placed in a position where he could subsequently understand spiritual truth concerning the kingdom.)

**And He Shall Send Jesus**

Christ was to remain in the heavens “*until the times of restoration of all things*” ([Acts 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.21&t=NKJV)). There was to be (or, will be future) *repentance* on Israel’s part. Then Christ would (or, will yet future) *return* and *restore the kingdom* to Israel.

(The word translated “*restitution*” in [Acts 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.21&t=NKJV) is the same word in the Greek text translated “*restore*” in [Acts 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6&t=NKJV). The word appears in a verb form in chapter one and in a noun form in chapter three, and exactly the same thing is in view both places [though in a broader sense in chapter three] — *the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.*

In the past, the kingdom of the heavens was in view [which would have necessitated that the kingdom covenanted to David (the earthly sphere of the kingdom) also subsequently be restored]. In the future though, only the kingdom covenanted to David can be in view; and only this earthly sphere of the kingdom can and will be restored to the nation. Israel has forfeited the right and privilege to rule from heavenly places in the kingdom. The Church is now in possession of the kingdom of the heavens; and Christians are the ones who will occupy heavenly positions of power and authority as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.)

Israel didn’t *repent* throughout the time covered by the book of Acts, and thus Christ did not return and bring about the “*restoration of all things*.” And the day eventually came when the door of opportunity closed for Israel, and God set the nation aside for a dispensation. Israel now has to await God’s completion of His dealings with the *“one new man” in Christ*, which will take two days, two thousand years.

But the day is coming, and is near at hand, when God will complete His dealings with the Church, remove the Church, and then turn back to Israel once again. And, during that future time, Israel, after passing through the fires of the great Tribulation, will repent. The Jews in that day, during a time of unparalleled trouble — “*such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be*” ([Matthew 24:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.21&t=NKJV)) — will call upon the God of their fathers for deliverance.

They will *repent*, change their minds, in that day. And, when they do, God will see their “*affliction*,” *hear their “cry*,” and *know their “sorrows”*; and He will *come down* in the person of His Son to “*deliver*” them ([Exodus 3:2-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.2-12&t=NKJV); [4:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.19-20&t=NKJV)).

But one thing needs to be understood relative to Israel being *delivered* in that day. True, Christ will return as King to effect salvation (deliverance) in relation to the kingdom. But the Jews of that day, unlike the Jews during the time Christ was on earth the first time, will have to be dealt with *first* in relation to matters surrounding that set forth in Exodus chapter twelve.

Israel will first have to experience her national Passover through *believing* on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb Who shed His blood for the nation. Then, and only then, can Israel be dealt with relative *to deliverance with respect to the kingdom.*

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Chapter Four

**Acceptance by Many**

*Then the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.* ([Acts 6:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.7&t=NKJV))

By the time of the events in the sixth chapter of the book of Acts there were multiple thousands of Jews who had believed the message being proclaimed ([Acts 2:41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.41&t=NKJV), [47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.47&t=NKJV); [4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.4&t=NKJV); [5:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.14&t=NKJV); [6:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.1&t=NKJV)). And [Acts 6:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.7&t=NKJV) reveals that “*a great many of the priests*” in Israel were numbered among these believers.

The fact that numerous priests had received the message and were being “*obedient to the faith*” was undoubtedly a major cause for concern among those in Israel. After all, in the Mosaic economy, the priests were the ones standing between and representing man to God and God to man, which was done on the basis of *shed blood*. And, though the sacrificial system within the Mosaic economy had been fulfilled at the time of Christ’s death and the rending of the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, the unbelieving nation still looked at the matter exactly as the Israelites had viewed it for over fourteen centuries.

However, the believing priests would have seen and understood the truth of the matter — an understanding that, because of their previous involvement in the temple worship, would undoubtedly have come quite naturally to them. They would have known and understood that the whole sacrificial system surrounding the temple worship had been fulfilled in Christ.

And having understood the true nature of Christ’s sacrifice and offering, they would also have understood the true nature of animal sacrifices that the Jews continued to offer following the events of Calvary. They would have understood that God, following the offering of His Son, no longer recognized such sacrifices.

*The shed blood of Christ* answered to all the sacrifices within the Mosaic economy — the blood of the paschal lambs that had been placed on the doorposts and lintel of the homes each year, the blood from multiple thousands of animals that the priests had slain at the brazen altar at various times throughout each year, and the blood placed on the mercy seat by the high priest on the Day of Atonement each year. And an increasing number of priests understanding and accepting the true nature of sacrifices within the Mosaic economy following Calvary could only have created a major cause for concern in the camp of Israel.

Jewish life revolved around the temple with its Levitical priests and sacrificial system. But many of the priests — who would be the ones to offer sacrifices at the brazen altar for the people — had repented. That is, they had *changed their minds* about Christ, His sacrifice, and the message being proclaimed. And being “*obedient to the faith*,” they would no longer be offering sacrifices for the people at the temple. They would know that the One True Sacrifice, in fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices, had been offered.

And, in this respect, the statement that many priests were being “*obedient to the faith*” sets the stage for the climactic turning point in the book of Acts. Immediately following is the long discourse concerning Stephen ([Acts 6:8ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.8ff&t=NKJV)). And this discourse leads to a climactic rejection by Israel ([Acts 7:54-57](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54-57&t=NKJV)), to the corresponding death of Stephen ([Acts 7:58-60](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.58-60&t=NKJV)), to the subsequent introduction of Paul ([Acts 7:58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.58&t=NKJV); [8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1&t=NKJV), [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.3&t=NKJV)), to the beginning of a great persecution against the Church in Jerusalem ([Acts 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1&t=NKJV)), to the scattering of believers throughout the land and beyond ([Acts 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1&t=NKJV)), and to the beginning of the proclamation of the message beyond Jerusalem and Judea ([Acts 8:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.4-5&t=NKJV)).

The fact that many priests were being “*obedient to the faith*” probably provides a (if not “the”) major reason for the “*great persecution*” arising against the Church in Jerusalem at this particular time ([Acts 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1&t=NKJV)). Believers were scattered “*throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria*” as a result of this persecution, and those scattered “*went everywhere preaching the word*” ([Acts 8:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1-4&t=NKJV)).

Then Paul, a Pharisee who had been taught by Gamaliel ([Acts 5:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.34&t=NKJV); [22:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.3&t=NKJV)), appears in Scripture as the central person going throughout the land seeking to put a stop to that which was happening. And Paul, “*breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*,” was following this course of action with the blessing of the high priest in Jerusalem ([Acts 8:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.3&t=NKJV); [9:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-2&t=NKJV); [22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.5&t=NKJV); [23:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+23.6&t=NKJV)).

**The Message**

The priests of that day were mainly Sadducees, individuals who didn’t believe in a resurrection, in angels, or in spirit realities (apart from God Himself). From a theological standpoint, they would be looked upon as the more liberal branch of Judaism, as opposed to the Pharisees, who would be looked upon as the fundamental legalists (*cf.* [Matthew 23:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.1-4&t=NKJV); [Acts 23:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+23.7-8&t=NKJV)). And the Pharisees and Sadducees comprised the two main religious parties in Israel at this time, with the Pharisees being, by far, the larger of the two.

The statement that a great number of the priests (who would, undoubtedly, have been mainly from the Sadducee party) “*were obedient to the faith*” is not another way of saying that they had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and, as a result, had been saved. Rather, these priests were part of the nation to which the kingdom of the heavens had been offered preceding Calvary and reoffered following Calvary. They were part of the nation that had been sacrificing the paschal lambs year after year.

These priests were part of a larger group of priests, previously responsible for carrying out a ministry on behalf of the people at the temple, which centered on *sacrifices* and *offerings*. They understood the sacrificial system and had to themselves follow prescribed cleansing rituals in order to be in a position to act on behalf of the people (which included *washings, clean garments*, and *shed blood* [[Exodus 29:1-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+29.1-34&t=NKJV)]).

Their beliefs and practices surrounding the sacrificial system within the Mosaic economy could only have been in keeping with their ministry; and, in this respect, they would have been numbered among those experiencing *a vicarious death of the firstborn preceding Calvary, resulting in God’s satisfaction.*

These priests had not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to bring about something that had already occurred, *i.e*., *the vicarious death of the firstborn, resulting in God’s satisfaction*. Such would have been *impossible*. Death, for them, *had already occurred*; and God, insofar as they were concerned, was *already satisfied*. Rather, they had done exactly what Peter, on the day of Pentecost, had stated that the entire nation had to do in order to bring about Christ’s return and the establishment of the kingdom ([Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV)). And Peter, at this time, viewed the entire nation in this same light (as having appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs), exactly as Christ and His disciples had previously viewed the nation.

1. *The True Issue*

Individuals often have a somewhat difficult time conceiving that either a Pharisee or a Sadducee could have already been saved at the time Christ was on earth with His offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, or afterwards during the time covered by the book of Acts when the kingdom of the heavens was reoffered to Israel. But this is invariably done on the basis of either *the actions or the various beliefs* of the Pharisees or the Sadducees.

And to look upon the matter after this fashion presents *a completely fallacious basis* for any Scriptural teaching concerning salvation. The only proper basis for viewing the status of one’s salvation is to look at things *the same way God looks at them*. God looks at matters surrounding one’s salvation with respect to *one thing*. God looks at *the death of the firstborn*; and God, because of *a sacrifice* and *shed blood*, recognizes *a vicarious death*, through which *He is satisfied*.

God doesn’t look for what man seems to want to see in a person at all. Rather, God looks for *shed blood*, setting forth *a substitutionary death*. This is *the only thing* that will result in *His satisfaction*.

Note something, and note it well. At the institution of the Passover during Moses’ day, when the Lord passed through the land of Egypt, He looked for *one thing*. He looked for *the blood of a slain lamb, which had been properly applied.*

The Lord didn’t look inside the homes of the Israelites to see what the people had done, were doing, or planned to do (which He, in His omniscience, knew). Nor did He look inside those homes to see what the Jewish people individually believed about various things — such as what the Sadducees later believed about the resurrection, angels, or spirit realities (which He, in His omniscience, also knew). *None of this* had anything to do with the matter at hand.

The *one and only criterion* was what they believed, and had done, about the slaying and application of the blood of the paschal lambs. *Nothing else* entered into the picture. It was as stated in [Exodus 12:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.13&t=NKJV), “…*when I see the blood, I will pass over you*…”

And exactly the same situation existed when Christ was upon earth 2,000 years ago. The paschal lambs were *still* being slain, the blood was *still* being applied, God was *still* recognizing a vicarious death of the firstborn, and God was *still* just as satisfied as He had been at any other time in Jewish history, dating all the way back to the institution of the Passover during the days of Moses (or — pertaining to sacrifices and God’s satisfaction — at any other time in man’s history throughout the 2,500 years preceding Moses, going all the way back to the slaying of animals in Eden).

It is as equally out of line with Scripture to look upon a Pharisee or a Sadducee during the time Christ was upon earth (who had availed himself of the blood of a paschal lamb) as *unsaved* because of his actions or certain beliefs as it is to look upon an individual today (who has availed himself of the blood of the Passover Lamb) as *unsaved* because of his actions or certain beliefs.

And herein is the heart of where so much false teaching relative to salvation lies today. Man wants to add something to that which God has unchangeably established; man wants to *see* something beyond the appropriation of the blood.

But God has *one statement* concerning the matter, and that one statement concerns *the blood of slain paschal lambs in the type* and *the blood of the slain Paschal Lamb in the antitype*: “…*when I see the blood* [nothing else, nothing more, nothing less], *I will pass over you*.”

That’s the way it has been since God slew innocent animals in Eden, that’s the way it has remained for the past 6,000 years, that’s the way it continues to remain today, and that’s the way it will continue to remain throughout the endless ages that lie ahead.

(See chapter 3, “[Restoration of All Things](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Restoration%20of%20All%20Things),” for supplementary material relative to salvation in both the Old and New Testaments.

Also note how going back to the Old Testament types helps, *more than anything else*, to clarify the issue at hand. And this is not only true in Scriptures dealing with salvation but in Scriptures dealing with any biblical doctrine. God gave the type to help explain the antitype; and man’s failure to properly understand the antitype can, invariably, be traced back to his failure to properly understand the type. *Understand the former, and you can understand the latter.* This is the way God has structured His Word; and to properly understand God’s Word, man *must* study this Word after the fashion in which it was written, beginning with the opening chapters of Genesis.)

2. *Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees*

The Pharisees emanated from the ranks of the Scribes, which is why the two are spoken of together so often throughout the gospel accounts. The Sadducees, on the other hand, emanated from the ranks of the priests. And though the Sadducee priestly party was the more liberal of the two, no group in Israel heard condemnatory words from Christ even remotely close to those heard by the fundamental, legalistic Scribes and Pharisees.

But, in this condemnation, the fundamental, legalistic position of the Scribes and Pharisees was not in view; nor would the more liberal position of the Sadducees have been in view had they been the ones Christ condemned after this fashion.

And if the Sadducees, instead, had done what the Pharisees did, then they would have been the ones addressed. But they hadn’t. The position that they held in Israel prevented such. It was the more numerous and influential Scribes and Pharisees who controlled the religious life in Israel. They were the ones who followed Christ about the country, seeking to discredit the Messenger and His message, presenting a false report to the people.

And, controlling the religious life of the people after this fashion, in the words of Christ, they “*shut up the kingdom of the heavens against* [‘in the presence of’] *men*…” They had no interest in entering the kingdom themselves, and they did everything within their power to squelch the interest of others, making sure that the nation had nothing to do with the King and the proffered kingdom ([Matthew 23:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.13&t=NKJV)). They were the ones directly responsible for the end result of Christ’s ministry — the rejection of the Messenger and His message, followed by the crucifixion of the Messenger.

Christ laid all of this to their charge in Matthew, chapter twenty-three. And is it any wonder that a whole chapter in Matthew’s gospel is given over to Christ’s condemnation of this ruling religious party? And is it any wonder that the Scribes and Pharisees suffered a condemnation without parallel in Christ’s ministry? They stood *completely alone* in this respect.

They were referred to as going about the country making proselytes but, in the process, because of their erroneous ways and what they taught, making a proselyte “*twofold more the child of hell* [Greek: *Geenna*, ‘*Gehenna*’]” than themselves. And, because of what they had done relative to Christ and His ministry, within Christ’s condemnation of them, He asked,

“…*how can you escape the damnation of hell* [‘*Gehenna*’]*?*” ([Matthew 23:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.15&t=NKJV), [33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.33&t=NKJV)).

“*Gehenna*” was a place south of Jerusalem — a ravine called the Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew word for *Gehenna*) — where the refuse of the city was taken to be discarded. It was the trash dump for the city.

The word *Gehenna* is used in the New Testament only by Christ, with the exception of [James 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+3.6&t=NKJV), where it is used in a figurative sense relative to the tongue. And Christ used this word during His earthly ministry, also in a figurative sense, referring to the place that would be occupied by those denied entrance into the kingdom of the heavens.

This was the way Christ used the word in an early discourse to His disciples concerning the kingdom of the heavens ([Matthew 5:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+5.22&t=NKJV), [29-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+5.29-30&t=NKJV)), this was the way Christ used the word at other times during His ministry ([Matthew 10:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.28&t=NKJV); [18:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+18.9&t=NKJV); [Mark 9:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+9.43&t=NKJV), [45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+9.45&t=NKJV), [47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+9.47&t=NKJV); [Luke 12:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.5&t=NKJV)), and this was the way Christ used the word in His condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew, chapter twenty-three ([Matthew 23:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.15&t=NKJV), [33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.33&t=NKJV)), immediately preceding His crucifixion.

Christ’s use of *Gehenna*, contrary to popular teaching, has no reference to the lake of fire, the final abode of the unsaved. Rather, He used the word in the gospel accounts *in one sense alone*. He used the word in texts that deal with *entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom of the heavens*.

Imagery involved in Christ’s reference to the place of refuse south of Jerusalem reflects on exactly the same teaching seen in [Genesis 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.30&t=NKJV) where “righteous” but *worldly-minded* Lot ultimately ended up dwelling in a cave on the mountain to which he had previously been told to escape ([Genesis 19:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.17&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 2:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.7-8&t=NKJV)), or the same teaching seen in [Matthew 22:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.11-14&t=NKJV) where the man appearing at the marriage festivities *without a wedding garment* was cast into the darkness outside.

These references, as well as the references to *Gehenna*, have to do with the same thing. They have to do with teachings surrounding the place that the unfaithful among the saved will occupy during the Messianic Era, not with teachings surrounding eternal verities as they pertain to the unsaved.

And, in the light of the preceding, Christ’s use of the word *Gehenna* in relation to the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees reveals something unmistakable. Christ, through using this word, made it very clear that those whom He so strongly condemned were in a position to not only enter the kingdom themselves but to also lead the entire nation in that direction. And, *apart from being saved*, they could not have occupied a position of this nature.

(Israel’s status in this respect is why Christ, at a previous time, could call attention to “*children* [‘sons’] *of the kingdom*” one day being cast “*into outer darkness*” [[Matthew 8:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.11-12&t=NKJV)]. The reference was to the destiny of individual Jews in relation to, not eternal life, but the kingdom of the heavens [the kingdom, at this point in Matthew’s gospel, had not yet been taken from Israel (*cf.* [Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV))]; and the expression, “*children* [‘sons’] *of the kingdom*,” is used elsewhere in Matthew’s gospel as a reference to *the saved*, not the unsaved [with a particular emphasis on *sonship* — referring specifically to the rights of firstborn sons — in the kingdom (*cf.* [Matthew 13:24-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.24-25&t=NKJV), [38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.38&t=NKJV))].

And understanding this status of the Jewish people at Christ’s first coming will allow a correct interpretation of numerous other passages as well. Note, for example, the often misunderstood account of the rich young ruler [[Luke 18:18-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.18-30&t=NKJV)]. This man, coming to Christ, asked what he must do “*to inherit eternal life* [*lit.*, ‘life for the age’],” not what he must do to be saved. And Christ honored and answered his question exactly as it had been asked.)

The message surrounding the kingdom is for *saved individuals*, not unsaved individuals. The message for the unsaved centers on the blood of the Passover Lamb. Only *after* a person has settled this issue is he in a position to hear and understand a message concerning the kingdom. That would be to say, only *after* a person has been saved is he in a position to hear and understand the reason why he has been saved.

**Obedience to the Faith**

The priests in [Acts 6:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.7&t=NKJV) were saved “*from this perverse generation*” ([Acts 2:40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.40&t=NKJV)). And, believing the message being proclaimed and coming out of that generation, they “*were obedient to the faith*.”

The structure of the verb in the Greek text (“*were obedient*,” an imperfect tense) points to something that these priests were continuously doing. That is, they were continuously giving heed to, they were continuously being “*obedient to* [following, subjecting themselves to] *the faith*.”

And ascertaining exactly what is meant by the expression, “*the faith*,” is quite simple if one remains within the context. The expression could only refer to one thing. The message being proclaimed throughout Israel had to do with the kingdom, and these priests had believed this message and were continuing to give heed to the things contained in the message.

These priests had been converted. They had repented (changed their minds), followed by baptism ([Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV); [3:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19&t=NKJV)); and they were now numbered among those anticipating the entire nation eventually doing the same, with the restoration of the kingdom to follow ([Acts 3:20-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.20-21&t=NKJV)).

The expression, “*the faith*,” had to do with the message surrounding the kingdom; and the expression is used in numerous portions of Scripture exactly the same way — both in Scriptures covering that period when the message was still open to Israel (lasting approx. 32 years) and that much longer period that followed (to last almost 2,000 years).

This was the expression that the Spirit of God used to refer to the message surrounding the kingdom when the infant Church was entirely Jewish and was in and around Jerusalem, and this was also the expression used for the same purpose when the Church began to spread out into the Gentile world.

1. *Use through Acts into the Epistles*

In Paul and Barnabas’ first missionary journey, going into Asia, three cities are singled out to reveal how they dealt with converts among the Gentiles. Retracing their route, Paul and Barnabas ministered to the Christians in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening these Christians by “*exhorting them to continue in the faith*…” ([Acts 14:22a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.22a&t=NKJV)).

And there can be no room to question or to wonder exactly what is meant by this exhortation. The remainder of the verse provides that information: “…*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” ([Acts 14:22b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.22b&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 16:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.5&t=NKJV)).

*Sufferings* must precede *glory* (*cf.* [Luke 24:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.26&t=NKJV); [I Peter 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Peter+1.11&t=NKJV); [2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Peter+2.21&t=NKJV); [4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV); [5:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Peter+5.1-4&t=NKJV)). The two are inseparably related, linked; and *continuing in “the faith”* involves both. *Continuing in “the faith”* involves the overall scope of the Word of the Kingdom.

After appointing elders in these churches (who would have had to be men possessing a knowledge of things surrounding the Word of the Kingdom, men who could have continued to teach these things to the people), they “*prayed with fasting*” and committed the Christians in these churches “*to the Lord*.” And following this, Paul and Barnabas went forth to proclaim the same message to Gentile converts elsewhere in Asia ([Acts 14:23ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.23ff&t=NKJV)).

Then note how Paul used the expression, “*the faith,*” in several of his epistles.

In **Second Timothy** Paul stated:

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith: Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.* ([2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV))

*Keeping “the faith”* in these verses has to do with victory in the spiritual warfare throughout the pilgrim journey with a view to that which lies out ahead. It has to do with victoriously finishing the course, the race, with a view to being approved for the crown at the judgment seat of Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV)). It has to do with patiently enduring under the present trials, testing, and sufferings, with a view to the glory to be revealed ([2 Timothy 2:10-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.10-12&t=NKJV)). It has to do with denying self, taking up one’s cross, and following Christ, with a view to ascending the throne with Him in that coming day ([Matthew 16:24-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-17.5&t=NKJV)).

The word “*fought*” in verse seven is a translation of the Greek word, *agonizomai*, from which we derive our English word, “agonize.” And the word translated “*fight*” in this verse is from the noun form of *agonizomai*, from *agon*.

A better translation of this part of the verse would read, “I have strained every muscle of my being in the good contest [the race, the warfare]…” And Paul, having governed his life after this fashion to the end (“*I have finished the race*”), had “*kept the faith*.” Resultantly, a crown awaited Paul, which would be given to him “*at that Day*,” allowing him to ascend the throne and occupy a position with Christ in the kingdom.

(Note also [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV) where exactly the same expression found in [2 Timothy 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7&t=NKJV) [straining every muscle in the present race of the faith] can be seen in a different textual setting. Also seen in [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV), a successful completion of the race is to be for the purpose of laying “*hold on eternal life* [*lit*., ‘life for the age’ (life for the 1,000-year Messianic Era)], *to which you were also called…*”

That is, successfully completing the present race of “*the faith* [‘faith’ in this verse is articular in the Greek text — ‘*the faith*’]” and, as a consequence, subsequently occupying a position with Christ in His kingdom, is that to which a person has been called. It is realizing the very purpose for his salvation.)

Then note [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV) where an intensified form of the word *agonizomai* (*epagonizomai*) is used, translated “*earnestly contend*.” Jude wanted to write about salvation by grace through faith ([Jude 1:3a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3a&t=NKJV)), but the Spirit of God led him to write about something entirely different.

The Spirit of God led Jude to write about the same thing Paul centered his epistles on, and the same thing the writers of Hebrews, James, Peter, and John also centered their epistles on. Jude was constrained to write to Christians about the importance of *straining every muscle of their being* with respect to “*the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*” ([Jude 1:3b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3b&t=NKJV)).

Jude — as Peter in his second epistle, and as Paul on numerous occasions in his ministry and epistles — centered his exhortation *to earnestly contend “for the faith”* around warnings against false teachers (*cf.* [Acts 20:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.29-31&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 1:18-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.18-20&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:15-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.15-26&t=NKJV); [3:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.1-8&t=NKJV)). And these false teachers were revealed to be individuals speaking perverse things against — not salvation by grace through faith — but “*the Word of the Kingdom*,” “*the faith*.”

In [2 Peter 2:19-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.19-21&t=NKJV), men speaking perverse things against “*the faith*,” are seen (at least, in this text) to be individuals who were knowledgeable concerning the Word of the Kingdom (the word translated “knowledge” in [2 Peter 2:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.20&t=NKJV) is from *epignosis* [“mature knowledge”] in the Greek text, a knowledge through which they had previously “escaped the pollutions of the world” [*cf.* [2 Peter 1:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.3-4&t=NKJV)]). They understood the Word of the Kingdom and were, at one time, engaged in the race of the faith after a correct fashion; but they had turned against what they knew to be correct teaching concerning “*the faith*” and had begun promulgating error, misleading numerous Christians.

Then, those who are seen in [2 Timothy 3:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.1-8&t=NKJV) were individuals “ever learning,” but, in this ever learning process, they had never been “*able to come to the knowledge* [Greek: *epignosis* (also in [2 Timothy 2:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.25&t=NKJV))] *of the truth*.” They were men who resisted “*the truth*,” they were men of “*corrupt minds*,” and they were “*reprobate* [Gk., *adokimos*, ‘disapproved,’ ‘rejected’; (*cf.* [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV), where *adokimos* is also used)] *concerning the faith*” ([2 Timothy 2:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.7-8&t=NKJV)).

These were individuals who failed to understand “*the faith*”; and they taught, *by example,* contrary to that which they failed to understand, misleading many. And they, exactly like the false teachers in 2 Peter and Jude, were not only looked upon as disapproved and rejected now but they would also be disapproved and rejected before the judgment seat.

2. *Futuristic Use by Christ*

Then Christ, previously, during His earthly ministry — looking at the end result of all the apostasy and false teaching relative to “*the faith*” — had called attention to one sublime truth. The end result, caused by the working of the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal very early in the dispensation ([Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV)), will be *a complete rejection* of teachings surrounding the Word of the Kingdom by Christendom at the end of the dispensation. The leaven will work until it *has corrupted the whole of Christendom*, with this corruptive work centering on *the Word of the Kingdom.*

Christ asked the question, “*Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, will He really find faith* [‘the faith’] *on the earth?*” ([Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV)). And the way in which the question is worded in the Greek text necessitates a negative response. The Son of Man is *not* going to find “*the faith*” being taught in the churches throughout the land at the time of His return.

Though the central message which is supposed to be taught to Christians concerns “*the faith*,” though the central message throughout all the epistles concerns “*the faith*,” though men like Peter and Paul wanted to stir Christians up by keeping teachings concerning “*the faith*” ever before them ([Colossians 1:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-28&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.12-15&t=NKJV); [3:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.1-2&t=NKJV)), Christians at the end of the dispensation will be found thinking along *completely different lines.*

Erroneous interpretation of Scripture throughout the churches, as it relates to the Word of the Kingdom, will be rampant. The churches, in this respect, will be Laodicean in their theology. And, as a result, the knowledge of Christians surrounding the Word of the Kingdom at the end of the dispensation will be nil, with their interest lying *in other realms.*

And segments of Christendom, existing after this fashion, may outwardly appear to be very fundamental in their approach to Scripture. Though the “Word of the Kingdom” will form no part of their theology, their beliefs and practices may outwardly appear to line up perfectly with Scripture.

But bear two things in mind: 1) True fundamentalism portends an adherence to the fundamentals of the faith, which would necessitate an adherence to the correct central teaching of Scripture; and 2) the leaven corrupting one area of Biblical doctrine can only, to varying degrees, extend over into other areas of biblical doctrine as well

(*E.g*., note the widely promulgated and accepted Lordship Salvation teaching. This is a false teaching surrounding salvation by grace through faith which exists under the guise of a fundamental approach to the message — a teaching which, through destroying the gospel of the glory of Christ, has corrupted the gospel of the grace of God [by taking Scriptures having to do with the gospel of the glory of Christ and attempting to teach the simple gospel of the grace of God from these Scriptures, Scriptures which have nothing to do with this gospel].)

That which has happened in Christendom is simply what the Word of God had previously stated would happen. The leaven is presently completing its work. And there is nothing whatsoever that man can do to either stop or curtail the working of the leaven. The matter is completely out of his hands. Christ alone can, and will, put a stop to the corruption being produced, but *in His time.*

Thus, the central message directed to Christians in Scripture is not going to be taught in the Churches of the land at the end of the dispensation. This fact, along with the reason, was *plainly revealed* by Christ when He was on earth the first time.

*At such a time* — when the leaven will have completed its work, permeating and corrupting the whole of Christendom — Christ is going to return, remove Christians from the earth, and judge Christians before His judgment seat in the heavens. And to realize the nearness of the hour, all a person has to do is lift up his eyes and look around.

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Chapter 5

**Rejection by the Nation**

*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.*

*Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,*

*who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.*

*When they heard these things they were cut to the heart and they gnashed at him with their teeth.*

*But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,*

*and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”*

*Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;*

*and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.* ([Acts 7:51-58a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.51-58a&t=NKJV))

As there was a climactic point in the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel at Christ’s first coming, so was there a climactic point in the re-offer of the kingdom following Christ’s ascension. And in each instance, reaching this climactic point resulted in a major shift in God’s dealings with Israel in relation to the proffered kingdom.

In the original offer, the climactic point is seen in the events recorded in Matthew, chapter twelve. Christ, in this chapter, had performed a miraculous sign in the presence of the people. He had healed a person possessed with a demon, who was both blind and dumb. And the people, seeing this miraculous sign, asked, “*Is not this the son of David?*” ([Matthew 12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.23&t=NKJV)).

The way in which the question is worded in the Greek text indicates that the people were in a state of confusion. The Scribes and Pharisees had been following Christ about the country, seeking, at every turn, to speak against that which He was doing. And the people, hearing Jesus and seeing His miraculous signs on the one hand and then hearing a false report by their religious leaders on the other, didn’t know which way to turn.

The question that they asked after seeing Christ heal a man possessed with a demon, who was both blind and dumb, could be better translated, “*Is it possible that this is the son of David* [with their thoughts leaning more toward the negative than the positive]*?*” And their attitude toward Christ and His ministry in this respect was undoubtedly caused by the previous influence of the Scribes and Pharisees (*cf*. [Matthew 23:13ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.13ff&t=NKJV)).

The people of Israel at this point in Christ’s ministry, after seeing His miraculous works, could do no more than look at the validity of the Messenger and His message in the sense of “perhaps,” “maybe,” “possibly.” And, their thoughts, more so than not, were in line with those of the Scribes and Pharisees. For, even though they left room for the possibility that Jesus was the Son of David, they didn’t really think so.

Then, when the Scribes and Pharisees heard about the healing of the man possessed with a demon, who was both blind and dumb, they had a false explanation for Christ’s miraculous signs — an explanation designed to completely discredit Christ in the eyes of the people. They simply attributed, to Satan, the power through which Christ performed miraculous signs ([Matthew 12:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.24&t=NKJV)).

Christ was performing miraculous signs through the power of the Holy Spirit, after the manner in which God exercises His power ([Matthew 12:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.28&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Genesis 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=NKJV)); and the accusation of the Scribes and Pharisees was called by Christ, “*the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*,” something that would not be forgiven the nation of Israel for two ages — the present age and the coming age ([Matthew 12:31-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.31-32&t=NKJV) [the word “world” in the Greek text ([Matthew 12:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.32&t=NKJV)) is “*aion*” and should be translated “age”]).

Then, immediately afterwards, the Scribes and Pharisees answered Jesus by stating, “*Master, we would see a sign from you*” ([Matthew 12:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.38&t=NKJV)). The intimation was clear. The Scribes and Pharisees had declared that the previously manifested sign was not from Christ, and they now requested to see a sign from Him. Thus, Christ responded after a fashion that was in complete keeping with their unbelief, false accusation, and ridiculing request:

*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*

*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* ([Matthew 12:39-40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.39-40&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 12:41-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.41-45&t=NKJV)).

This is where the ministry of Christ changed in the gospel accounts. Because of that which the Scribes and Pharisees had done, their attention, rather than being directed to a sign having to do with the kingdom, was directed to a sign having to do with Christ’s subsequent sufferings — sufferings that must precede His glory. Then, later that same day, after all of this had occurred, Jesus went out of the house, sat by the seaside, and began to speak to the people in parables ([Matthew 13:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.1ff&t=NKJV)).

Within the symbolism of the passage, the “house” refers to the house of Israel, and the “sea” refers to the Gentile nations. And Christ began to speak in “parables” because of Israel’s unbelief ([Matthew 13:10-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.10-15&t=NKJV)). Israel had turned her back on the Lord, and He, correspondingly, turned His back on the nation. And, remaining within the symbolism used, Christ left the house of Israel and went to the Gentiles, pointing to things which were about to occur because of the nation’s unbelief (*cf.* [Matthew 21:33-43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.33-43&t=NKJV)).

The word “parable” is simply an Anglicized Greek word — from *parabole* — which means, “to cast alongside.” The reference is to one truth placed alongside of a previous truth to help explain the previous truth. Thus, parables were given to further explain previously revealed truths.

However, for most of the nation, the parables would be meaningless. The people had heard but had not understood; they had seen but had closed their eyes ([Matthew 13:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.14-15&t=NKJV)). They had rejected the previous truths. Therefore, additional truths given in the form of parables to help explain the previous truths would be meaningless to them.

But for others in the nation — those who had heard and had understood, those who had seen and had not closed their eyes ([Matthew 13:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.16&t=NKJV)) — the parables would provide additional information so they could better understand the message that they had previously received. They had heard (and, through parables, were about to hear more) things that “*many prophets and righteous men*” had desired to see, but hadn’t been allowed to see in their day ([Matthew 13:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.17&t=NKJV); *cf.* [1 Peter 1:9-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9-12&t=NKJV)).

Christ though, by going out of the house in [Matthew 13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.1&t=NKJV), wasn’t through with Israel. He gave four parables outside the house ([Matthew 13:18-35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.18-35&t=NKJV)), then He went back inside the house and gave three more ([Matthew 13:36-50](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.36-50&t=NKJV)). But note, even though back inside the house, Christ continued to speak in parables. Thus, His ministry, even within the house, took a sharp turn at this point.

Shortly afterwards Christ called attention to the Church for the first time ([Matthew 16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV)), and the Cross began to move more and more to the forefront ([Matthew 16:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.21&t=NKJV); [17:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+17.22-23&t=NKJV); [20:17-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.17-19&t=NKJV)). Then, shortly before the events of Calvary, Jesus, through using a parable, called attention to that which the nation had done and was about to do — rejection, followed by crucifixion ([Matthew 21:33-42](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.33-42&t=NKJV)).

And, following this, Christ made the announcement that had been anticipated ever since the events in chapters twelve and thirteen:

*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.* ([Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV)).

The kingdom (that part of the kingdom that had been offered, the kingdom of the heavens, here called “*the kingdom of God*”) was taken from Israel with a view to the previously mentioned Church being called into existence to be the recipient of this offer (*cf.* [Matthew 16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)). And this leads into Christ’s sharp, lengthy, unparalleled rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees — those who sat in “*Moses’ seat*” and controlled the religious life of the people.

They, through continually speaking against Christ’s message and miraculous signs, were the ones directly responsible for the nation’s unbelief. And, resultantly, they were the ones not only directly responsible for the nation’s rejection of the message but also for the rejection and subsequent crucifixion of the Messenger as well ([Matthew 23:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.1ff&t=NKJV); *ref.* [Bible One - Acts to the Epistles, Ch. 4](http://bibleone.net/A2E_04.htm), “Acceptance by Many”).

But even after Israel had rejected and slain her Messiah, God saw fit to give that same generation of Jews another opportunity to repent. Following Christ’s resurrection and ascension, God used individuals in the early Church to carry the message to Israel once again.

For a period extending over approximately the first thirty-two years of the Church’s existence, Israel was given another opportunity to repent. And in this re-offer of the kingdom — actually, quite early in the re-offer — there was a climactic point in Israel’s rejection of the message, similar to the one seen in the original offer.

As in the original offer, miraculous signs were in view; and also, as in the original offer, the religious leaders in Israel completely rejected the signs ([Acts 6:8ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.8ff&t=NKJV)). This all led to Stephen appearing before the council and calling the religious leaders’ attention to selected segments of Israel’s history from their own Scriptures, extending all the way back to Abraham.

Stephen then brought his lengthy address to a close by calling their attention to one central fact. Unbelief and rejection had marked the nation’s history from the beginning, and the present generation had done no more than climax the actions of their ancestors from preceding generations.

*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.*

*Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.* ([Acts 7:51-52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.51-52&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 23:34-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.34-38&t=NKJV)).

The conclusion to this message is built on several key elements in the message itself; and that which happened immediately after Stephen concluded his message — things occurring both in heaven and upon earth — can be understood only if one first understands Stephen’s message. And this message must be understood within the framework of the way God gave it, which was the same way Stephen expected the Jewish religious leaders to understand it.

And this requires an element of spiritual perception. A person must see beyond the letter of Stephen’s message (beyond the mere historical content, *i.e.*, see that of which the history speaks) in order to understand the events that occurred both in heaven and upon earth at the conclusion of this message ([Acts 7:54ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54ff&t=NKJV)).

A fourfold description is given of Stephen in this respect. He was a man full of faith, the Spirit, grace, and power ([Acts 6:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.5&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.8&t=NKJV) [“faith” in v. 8 should be translated “grace”]). “Faith” is simply believing that which God has to say about a matter, which portends that a person possesses a knowledge of the Word of God (*cf.* [Romans 10:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.17&t=NKJV)); and “grace” is that which God is able to do, completely apart from human merit.

And a person in this position, filled with the Spirit (empowering the individual), can proclaim the Word, with results following. God, completely apart from any merit on man’s part, can take His proclaimed Word and bring about the desired results.

Thus, Stephen, in this position, knowing the Old Testament Scriptures to the extent that he did, could go beyond the letter to the spirit of the matter (*cf.* [2 Corinthians 3:6-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+3.6-18&t=NKJV)). He knew what the Scriptures taught, and he possessed the spiritual insight to be able to take these Scriptures and put them together after the manner in which the Spirit of God had intended that they be put together. And this is exactly what he did by calling attention to selected portions of Jewish history covering approximately 1,000 years.

And he did it so well that, at the conclusion, activity both in heaven and upon earth reached an apex in relation to the message surrounding the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. On the one hand, the heavens were opened, the Glory of God was visible, and the Son of Man could be seen standing at God’s right hand, awaiting the Jewish religious leaders’ reaction; and, on the other hand, the Jewish religious leaders showed their reaction after a manner heretofore unseen in the post-resurrection ministry of the apostles — by slaying Stephen ([Acts 7:54-60](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54-60&t=NKJV)).

**From Abraham to Christ**

Stephen’s address in Acts, chapter seven, can be divided into several parts. He began with events during Abraham’s day in order to introduce God’s promise concerning a seed, a land, and an inheritance in that land ([Acts 7:2-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.2-7&t=NKJV)). Then, for most of the remainder of the address, he centered his thoughts on the experiences of two individuals — Joseph and Moses ([Acts 7:8-43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.8-43&t=NKJV)). And drawing the address toward a conclusion, he briefly mentioned events in Israel’s history, having to do mainly with the tabernacle and temple — events extending from the days of Moses to the days of Solomon ([Acts 7:44-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.44-51&t=NKJV)).

Stephen then concluded his address by making an application that these religious leaders should have been able to easily understand, in its entirety, apart from his saying anything further. Stephen had called their attention to a sequence of events, designed in chronological order, to reveal three things: (1) Israel’s history, (2) Israel’s present status, and (3) Israel’s future. Israel’s present status and future were to be drawn from the nation’s history, and these religious leaders should have possessed enough spiritual insight with respect to their own Scriptures to do this.

And, knowing that these religious leaders should have possessed this insight, Stephen brought the matter to a close after a fashion that could only have triggered the whole of the matter within their thinking. He accused them of doing exactly what their ancestors had done — rejecting, and even slaying, those whom God had sent unto them. And, as a basis for his remarks, he had previously set before them both Joseph’s rejection by his brethren and Moses’ rejection by his brethren ([Acts 7:51-52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.51-52&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 7:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.9&t=NKJV), [23-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.23-28&t=NKJV)). Then, these religious leaders, seeing what they had done in the antitype (“the betrayers and murderers” of Christ), should have easily been able to see the remainder of the matter as well (revealing Israel’s future), through seeing that which subsequently happened to not only Joseph’s brethren but also Moses’ brethren.

*1. Overall Scope of Stephen’s Address*

Stephen’s address moves from the promise that God gave to Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia to the building of the tabernacle during Moses’ day and to the subsequent building of the temple during Solomon’s day. It moves from the promise concerning a seed, a land, and an inheritance in the land to that day approximately 1,000 years later when the seed of Abraham is seen in the land realizing an inheritance, with a temple, within a theocracy (though not in complete fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, but typifying a future day).

The promise was given to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, in Mesopotamia, when he was seventy years old, five years before he departed for the land of Canaan (*cf.* [Genesis 12:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1-4&t=NKJV); [15:13-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+15.13-16&t=NKJV); [Exodus 12:40-41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.40-41&t=NKJV); [Galatians 3:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.17-18&t=NKJV)). And, though the theocracy was established at Sinai when the tabernacle was completed and the Glory of God filled the Holy of Holies, there was no temple in the land until the days of Solomon. It was during Solomon’s reign as king over Israel that the Old Testament theocracy reached its greatest height. And the building of the temple at the greatest height of the theocracy was where Stephen drew his address to a close.

In this respect, Stephen’s address, covering many types, forms one overall type. It covers the whole scope of the matter — from the promise to the realization of the promise (though the full and complete realization is seen in the antitype, not in the type).

And the fact that there would be a complete, future realization of the promise given to Abraham should have been evident to the religious leaders hearing Stephen’s address. Knowing that God would keep His promise to Abraham, they should have been able to clearly see three things: (1) the promise was not realized in its fullness during that time in history when the kingdom was at its greatest height (in the type); (2) there was, at the time Stephen gave his address, no existing kingdom in Israel; and (3) the type, set forth through events during Solomon’s day, necessitates a complete, future fulfillment in the antitype.

The theocracy had been taken from Israel over six hundred years prior to the events surrounding Calvary, allowing the Gentiles to exercise governmental power and control over the earth (and this would also be within a theocracy, though under Satan, in his kingdom). However, any Jew believing that which God had promised Abraham and having any spiritual perception at all about that portended by events during the days of Solomon would know that the times of the Gentiles must have an end. Israel must be reestablished within a theocracy at some future point in time.

This would be in complete fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham — a promise that must be brought to pass; and it would fulfill the type set forth during Solomon’s reign — a type which, in the antitype, must be fulfilled. Israel must be reestablished in the land with her King, the Temple, and the Glory.

These are the two points beginning and ending Stephen’s message — the promise given to Abraham and the theocracy during Solomon’s day. And through beginning with the promise and ending with the theocracy, Stephen called attention to the entire scope of revealed Jewish history.

Then, between these two points, in order to drive the whole matter home, Stephen spent most of his discourse dealing with two individuals — Joseph and Moses. These religious leaders, after Stephen had put the whole matter together for them, should have been able to clearly see what their own Scriptures plainly taught.

They, with the spiritual perception that their position portended, should have been able to clearly see exactly what had happened, what was then happening, and what was about to happen. Stephen had outlined the whole matter, from their own Scriptures. He had laid the whole matter out for them. And, at that point, they should have been able to reflect on this sequence of Scriptures and see these things for themselves.

The Spirit of God had given this complete, overall type extending from Abraham to Solomon in order to explain the complete, overall antitype. And the various individual types, making up this larger, complete type, were given for the same reason. Stephen laid before them, from their own Scriptures, that which would explain exactly what had happened, what was happening, and what was about to happen. It was all there for them to see. And, again, they should have possessed the spiritual insight to grasp the matter at this point. Their eyes should have been opened, as had previously occurred with the two disciples on the Emmaus road ([Luke 24:25-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-31&t=NKJV)).

*2. Joseph, Moses, Christ*

Stephen, drawing from the Old Testament Scriptures, built his discourse mainly around two points in time — events surrounding Christ’s first coming, and events surrounding Christ’s second coming. The generation of Jews to whom he spoke had witnessed and participated in events surrounding Christ’s first coming, and they were being offered an opportunity to witness and participate in events surrounding Christ’s second coming as well, wherein the prophesied blessings lay.

Stephen dealt with the time Joseph went to his brothers and was rejected. And he also dealt with that later time when Joseph again stood in the presence of his brothers, with his brothers, this time, accepting him ([Acts 7:9-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.9-13&t=NKJV)). Then Stephen called attention to exactly the same sequence of events occurring in Moses’ life — rejection at the hands of his brethren, followed by their accepting him when he appeared again at a later date ([Acts 7:23-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.23-36&t=NKJV)). And the acceptance, in both cases, led into a type of that time also typified by Solomon’s day, where Stephen drew his review of Israeli history to a close.

Note once again what Stephen did in this discourse. He began by laying the groundwork by calling attention to the promise given to Abraham. Then he moved through three separate parts that all ended at the same point in time — the Messianic Kingdom. He moved through the days of Joseph, the days of Moses, and the days of Solomon.

And the religious leaders, hearing this message, should have had no trouble at all grasping the whole of that which Stephen had laid out for them. The message was clear.

Joseph’s brothers had rejected him, and a time of intense trouble followed. The seven years of famine that followed forced them to go to Joseph in Egypt; and this second meeting of Joseph and his brothers resulted in their accepting him, with deliverance and blessings following ([Genesis 37:18-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+37.18-20&t=NKJV); [41:56-42:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+41.56-42.6&t=NKJV); [45:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+45.1ff&t=NKJV)).

Moses’ brethren had rejected him, and a time of intense trouble followed. The bondage under the Assyrian ([Isaiah 52:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+52.4&t=NKJV)) became so great that the Israelites were forced to cry out to the God of their fathers; and God, hearing their cry and remembering His covenant, sent Moses back, resulting in the people accepting him, with deliverance and blessings following ([Exodus 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+2.14&t=NKJV); [3:7-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.7-10&t=NKJV); [12:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.1ff&t=NKJV)).

And the parallel concerning that which had happened in the antitype couldn’t be missed. The Jewish people had rejected the One Whom both Joseph and Moses typified; and, according to the types, a time of trouble could only follow (specifically, the Great Tribulation spoken of so much in the Old Testament, to occur following the present dispensation when God resumes His national dealings with Israel [though all the anti-Semitism throughout the dispensation would, in a respect, be in view]).

This is exactly the point Stephen drove home at the end of his discourse. Stephen used words designed to provoke these religious leaders to the point that they would be forced to see, from their own Scriptures, that which had been done. And knowing that they would be provoked to the point of seeing this much of the matter, the hope and expectation was there that they would also go on to see the remainder as well.

Between the rejection and acceptance lay trouble. Christ had been rejected, and only trouble awaited the nation. But still, even though this was set forth in the types, which couldn’t be broken, that generation was given a choice. The wrong could be rectified, and the nation could move into that prophesied era of blessings lying beyond Joseph’s rejection, beyond Moses’ rejection, and beyond Christ’s rejection. They could move into that prophesied era typified by the manifested Glory during Solomon’s day.

The choice left to Israel had been echoed by Peter on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV)) and by Peter again at a later time ([Acts 3:19-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19-26&t=NKJV)). This is what the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens had to do with, along with all the signs, wonders, and miracles continuing to be manifested. Israel was given an opportunity to repent (the nation was given an opportunity to change its mind), followed by national baptism.

Israel had rejected her Messiah, and the Jewish people were now being given an opportunity to receive the One Whom they had rejected. And, viewing the matter from the vantage point of Stephen’s discourse, blessings could follow only after acceptance. Only trouble could ensue during the interim lying between rejection and acceptance.

**Looking Up into Heaven**

Stephen simply laid out before Israel’s religious leaders exactly what God Himself had to say about the matter, exactly after the manner in which God had revealed it. And, with this in mind, is it any wonder that the heavens were opened, the Glory was manifested, and Jesus was seen standing at God’s right hand (*cf.* [Psalm 110:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.1&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.13&t=NKJV))?

Everything was in readiness in heaven, and the decision was left to Israel’s religious leaders on earth. Had the Jewish religious leaders at this point reacted positively to the message and, in turn, led the nation in a correct direction (national repentance, followed by national baptism), Christ would have returned and restored the kingdom to Israel.

*1. The Heavens Opened*

Beyond Acts, chapter seven, there are only three instances in Scripture of the heavens being opened. However, only the last instance corresponds with events following Stephen’s message.

The heavens were opened in [Acts 10:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.11&t=NKJV) to allow Peter to see a vision, revealing that God no longer distinguished between the Jews and the Gentiles in relation to the message being proclaimed ([Acts 10:12-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.12-14&t=NKJV), [28- 29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.28-+29&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 10:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.5-8&t=NKJV)), though it was still “*to the Jew first*” ([Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV)).

Then the heavens will be opened when Christ breaks the sixth seal during the coming Tribulation ([Revelation 6:12-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.12-17&t=NKJV)), allowing the earth-dwellers to see the source of the wrath coming upon the earth.

Then the heavens will be opened when the “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” comes forth at the end of the Tribulation to put an end to the times of the Gentiles, to reestablish Israel in her rightful place at the head of the nations, and to rule and reign over the earth for 1,000 years. Thus, only this last time that the heavens are seen opened corresponds to the heavens being opened in Acts, chapter seven. The heavens being opened following Stephen’s address anticipated the possibility that Christ would come forth, restoring the kingdom with its Glory to Israel. However, such didn’t occur because of the subsequent, climactic reaction of the Jewish religious leaders.

Rather than perceiving the whole of that which Stephen had laid out before them, they apparently saw no farther than the events surrounding Calvary (Joseph’s rejection and Moses’ rejection, typifying Christ’s rejection). And, resultantly, they became infuriated to the point that they took Stephen, cast him outside the city, and stoned him ([Acts 7:54-58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54-58&t=NKJV)).

And, as a consequence — though the message continued to be proclaimed, with the door remaining open for Israel to repent (continuing to remain open for almost three more decades) — the heavens would not be seen opened again in relation to Christ’s return and the restoration of the kingdom with its Glory to Israel until that future day following Israel’s greatest time of trouble, in [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV) (*cf.* [Revelation 6-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-18&t=NKJV)).

*2. The Glory; The Son of Man*

The Glory was removed from Israel at the time of the Babylonian captivity ([Ezekiel 10:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+10.4&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+10.18&t=NKJV); [11:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+11.22-23&t=NKJV)). And, with this captivity and the removal of the Glory, the theocracy ended and “*the times of the Gentiles*” began.

There can be no restored theocracy during “*the times of the Gentiles*.” But this period of time must also one day end, with the Glory and the theocracy subsequently being restored to Israel ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+43.1-5&t=NKJV)). This is what was anticipated by the Glory being seen through the opened heavens.

And the expression, “*Son of man*,” is a Messianic title, drawn from the Old Testament Scriptures (*cf.* [Psalm 8:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.4-6&t=NKJV); [Daniel 7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13-14&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 2:5-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5-10&t=NKJV)). This expression was used by Christ on numerous occasions during His earthly ministry, referring to Himself (*e.g.*, [Matthew 9:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+9.6&t=NKJV); [10:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.23&t=NKJV); [11:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+11.19&t=NKJV); [12:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.8&t=NKJV); [13:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.37&t=NKJV), [41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.41&t=NKJV)).

And Stephen’s use of this expression, describing to Israel’s religious leaders what he saw in heaven, was in complete keeping with its Messianic usage elsewhere. Stephen, through the opened heavens, saw the Glory of God and the Son of Man standing, awaiting Israel’s reaction to the message.

A more powerful message could not have been delivered to Israel’s religious leaders. This wasn’t what Stephen had to say about the matter. Rather, this was what God had to say. And, resultantly, it could put the heavens in motion to the extent that it did. And also, resultantly, it could cause the stir on earth that it caused.

On the one hand, the heavens were opened, revealing movement within the Godhead itself; on the other hand, Israel’s religious leaders on earth were so shaken that they slew the man who had called their attention to that which God had to say.

(And herein is a truth which needs to be instilled within every minister, along with every other Christian, in the country. If an individual, in his ministry and witness, wants to proclaim the type message that will result in movement among those both in heaven and upon earth, there’s only one way in which it can be done. It can be done only after the same fashion that Stephen did it.

This is why Paul told Timothy, “*Preach the word*…” [[2 Timothy 4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.2&t=NKJV)]. And note the context of Paul’s exhortation — Christ’s appearance to judge man and to rule and reign in His kingdom [[2 Timothy 4:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.1-8&t=NKJV)].)

Thus, with a message of the nature Stephen proclaimed, is it any wonder that the nation found itself at this climactic place, with Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, coming into the picture immediately afterwards? Stephen’s message, with its conclusion, is the apex in the book of Acts.

The course that the nation would take for the next two millennia was set at this point, with all the sufferings that the nation would have to endure. And, with Stephen’s death, the progression of events in the book of Acts began to increasingly go in a completely different direction.

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Chapter Six

**Paul’s Conversion**

*Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest*

*and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

*As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.*

*Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*

*And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”* ([Acts 9:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-5&t=NKJV))

Saul, later called Paul, is introduced in Scripture at the same time Stephen was cast out of the city and stoned by the council. Stephen had laid out before the council, from their own Scriptures, exactly what *had happened, was happening*, and *was about to happen*. And this was something that couldn’t be denied, for Stephen had simply called their attention to exactly what God had to say about the matter, *exactly* as God had revealed it. Then, closing his discourse, Stephen provoked the Jewish religious leaders to the point of forcing them to see what had been done, based on *revelation from their own Scriptures* ([Acts 7:51-58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.51-58&t=NKJV)).

Because of that which the Jewish religious leaders had just heard, Stephen, in his closing remarks, forced the issue after such a fashion that they were left with two choices: these religious leaders could either (1) acknowledge that which they had done, or (2) they could do away with the one who had called this to their attention. They could either *acknowledge* being “the betrayers and murderers” of “*the Just One*” and repent of their act (subsequently resulting in the entire nation repenting), or they could *do away* with Stephen.

And even though Stephen’s message moved the very Godhead in heaven to react after a fashion that anticipated the possibility that Israel would repent — the heavens being opened, with the Glory visible and Jesus seen standing at God’s right hand — God, in His omniscience, knew exactly what these Jewish religious leaders would do. He knew that they would reject the message and slay Stephen. And He had a particular man ready, standing by — a man introduced at this point in Scripture for reasons known only to God at that time.

Those in the council laid their clothes down “*at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen* . . .” Saul was “*consenting*” to Stephen’s death, and he was “*guarding the clothes*” of those who slew Stephen ([Acts 7:58-8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.58-8.1&t=NKJV); [22:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.20&t=NKJV)).

And not only was Saul introduced at this point in the book, but attention was immediately called to his actions. He was the great persecutor of the early Church. He “*made havoc of the Church*.” He entered into homes (the Church met in homes in those days) and dragged Christians away, having them imprisoned and beaten. Saul was at the center of the “*great persecution*” arising against the Church at the time of Stephen’s death ([Acts 8:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1-3&t=NKJV); [22:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.19&t=NKJV)).

But God had other plans for Saul. This was the man who, himself, would shortly be converted and subsequently experience a lifetime of sufferings for Christ’s sake ([Acts 9:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.16&t=NKJV)). This was the man who, following his conversion, would give himself wholly over to Christ, as, prior to his conversion, he, unknowingly, had given himself wholly over to the cause of destroying the work of Christ on earth. And, accordingly, this was the man through whom God *would make known the mystery*, the man God had chosen *to carry the message rejected by Israel to the Gentiles*, and the man God had chosen *to pen most of the New Testament epistles*.

This is why attention in the book of Acts, shortly following his introduction, shifts to Saul. He is introduced at the end of chapter seven, his activities are outlined at the beginning of chapter eight, his conversion is recorded at the beginning of chapter nine, and by the time of the events recorded in chapter thirteen he occupies the central place among Christians within God’s plans and purposes as they unfold throughout the remainder of the book.

Events surrounding the termination of Stephen’s message present one of the most interesting pictures in all of Scripture. *On the one hand*, the heavens were opened, with the Glory visible and Jesus seen standing at His Father’s right hand, awaiting the Jewish religious leaders’ reaction to the message. And, *on the other hand*, Saul was standing by, for God already knew how these religious leaders would react.

(Since God already knew how these religious leaders would react, some may be inclined to wonder why God would open the heavens and reveal His Glory and His Son after this fashion, intimating the possibility of something occurring that God already knew couldn’t occur. And, beyond that, God already had Saul standing by to be introduced at the time of Israel’s climactic rejection, with a view to the progression of events throughout the remainder of the dispensation going in a completely different direction, though the re-offer of the kingdom continued to remain open to Israel.

The outworking of God’s plans and purposes in the preceding respect can best be understood in the light of the overall offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel. Preceding Calvary there was an offer of the kingdom, and following Calvary there was a re-offer of the kingdom. And the nation couldn’t possibly have accepted the offer at either time, *which God, in His omniscience, knew beforehand*.

But, even though Israel couldn’t possibly have accepted the offer in either instance, *a bona fide offer* was made in both instances. And even following Stephen’s death *the same bona fide offer* remained open throughout the time covered by the remainder of the book, though things within God’s plans and purposes were then moving in an entirely different direction.

Thus, when the heavens were opened at the termination of Stephen’s message — with the Glory visible and Jesus seen standing — there was *a bona fide movement* within the Godhead in heaven relative to the possibility of Israel repenting. Such a movement was in complete keeping with the way things had been done during the original offer and during the re-offer of the kingdom. And this was done [as other things had been done before] even though God knew [as at any time before] that the nation wouldn’t repent.

This is simply the manner in which God is seen revealing Himself in Scripture. And God even revealed Himself through Paul after this fashion very near the end of that period during which the re-offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel. When Paul wrote Romans [about 60 A.D.], he said, “*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh*” [[Romans 9:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9.3&t=NKJV)]. Paul’s desire to see Israel repent was *so great* that he was willing for himself to be separated from Christ and His Glory if such could bring this to pass.

Even though things were going in a completely different direction at this time, with the door for Israel about to be closed, God had still left the door open to this degree. Paul and others, ministering out in the Gentile world, were still, in accord with [Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV), going “*to the Jew first*” *in every city* where their ministry carried them. This was in complete keeping with God’s plans and purposes, though this was also with a view to something that couldn’t happen. And, even though it couldn’t happen, they ministered after a fashion expecting that it could, and possibly would, happen.

Again, this is simply the manner in which God is seen revealing Himself in Scripture. And it is not so much for man in his finite wisdom to understand as it is for man in his finite wisdom to believe.)

**Paul — A Type**

The conversion and subsequent ministry of Paul forms *a dual type*. One facet of the type is revealed at the outset of God’s dealings with Paul in the book of Acts, and the other facet of the type is revealed toward the end of Paul’s ministry in his first letter to Timothy ([Acts 9:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1ff&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 1:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.15-16&t=NKJV)).

*The first type* reflects back on Stephen’s message, setting Paul forth as *a type* within the framework of that which Stephen had called attention to through drawing from several different types; and *the* *second type* reflects back on Paul’s ministry, setting Paul forth as *a type* within the framework of his calling.

And only an omniscient God — One able to see the future as well as He could see the past and present — could take a man such as Paul and, from his experiences and actions, establish a dual type of this nature.

But this is only a very minute part of the typical structure of Scripture. God, throughout His Word, beginning with Adam, has taken individuals, and, within the framework of His omniscience and sovereignty, has brought things to pass within their lives after such a fashion that He could later use these things to teach His people *great spiritual truths*. And the experiences of these individuals, forming types, must present teachings which are *completely harmonious*, one with the other.

The Word of God, in this respect, has been structured after an intricate, detailed fashion which defies all human understanding. It is *spiritual* in its structure, given by the infinite God, through the Spirit, and totally beyond finite, human comprehension; and it must be interpreted *by the Spirit Who gave it*, as He takes *spiritual things* one place and compares them with *spiritual things* at another place.

Anyone, saved or unsaved, can see the “*letter*” of Scripture. But only a saved person who allows the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead him “*into all truth*” can possess the type of spiritual perception that will allow him to move from the “*letter*” to the “*spirit*” of the Word, correctly viewing that which is *spiritual*.

*Scripture must be compared with Scripture, under the leadership of the Spirit of God*. The Spirit, Who gave the Word, *must be allowed* to open this Word to a Christian’s understanding through “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (*cf.* [John 16:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13-15&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 2:9-3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.9-3.2&t=NKJV)).

And one form of the spiritual manner in which the Word has been given can be seen in Paul’s conversion and subsequent ministry. Paul’s conversion *followed* Stephen extensively dealing with various types (forming one overall type) from the Old Testament, in relation to the message concerning the kingdom and Israel; and Paul’s conversion *preceded* that which God was about to do within His plans and purposes, in relation to the message concerning the kingdom and the Gentiles.

And, in keeping with the timing and reason for Paul’s conversion, God, as He brought matters to pass, did two things: (1) He, through Paul’s conversion, *formed one type* by reflecting back on that which Stephen had brought out in his message; and (2) He, through Paul’s calling, *would form another type* by reflecting on things that were about to occur within the framework of His plans and purposes. The first type was *in relation to Israel*, and the second would be *in relation to Christians.*

1. *In Relation to Israel*

Stephen, during the course of his message, began with God’s promise to Abraham and ended with God’s fulfillment of this promise during Solomon’s day (though the complete fulfillment is seen, not in the type through activities brought to pass in Solomon’s day, but in the antitype through activities that will be brought to pass in that coming day following Christ’s return). But Stephen also dealt with other types lying between these two points in his complete message, types that carry a person to the same goal, to the Messianic Kingdom. He dealt extensively with the experiences of Joseph; and then he also dealt extensively with the experiences of Moses, leading into those of his successor, Joshua.

That which had just occurred in Israel — the rejection of Israel’s Messiah — was set forth in the experiences of both Joseph and Moses. And that set forth in the experiences of Solomon, concluding Stephen’s message, was also previously set forth in additional experiences of both Joseph and Moses — experiences following the time of their acceptance by their brethren (concluded, in Moses’ case, with the experiences of his successor, Joshua).

Then when God began to deal with Paul, He set forth these same concluding truths again within the framework of Paul’s conversion. God, through Paul’s conversion, set forth once again *a type of Israel’s future conversion*. Even though Israel had rejected that which had been set forth several different ways in Stephen’s message (blessings to follow the rejection and sufferings, associated with Israel’s future conversion), God set the matter forth *once again* in the person through whom He was now about to deal because of Israel’s rejection.

God, because of Israel’s rejection, turned to Paul, the man whom He had chosen to carry the message surrounding the kingdom to the Gentiles. But in Paul’s very conversion, God showed *the end of that to which Stephen had referred*, though an entire dispensation lasting roughly 2,000 years would elapse before these things could occur. In the very conversion of the man whom God had chosen as the apostle to the Gentiles (with a view to Israel being set aside for the remainder of the dispensation), God showed the end of the matter in relation *to Israel*. God showed *exactly* what would happen to Israel at the end of the present dispensation, *exactly* as Stephen had shown the Jewish council, *exactly* as the Old Testament prophets had foretold.

Paul was saved through Christ’s personal appearance, through Christ personally revealing Himself to him. This same type was previously seen through both Joseph revealing himself to his brethren a second time ([Genesis 45:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+45.1ff&t=NKJV)) and Moses revealing himself to his brethren a second time ([Exodus 4:19ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.19ff&t=NKJV)). And all three types point to that coming day when Christ will reveal Himself to His brethren a second time ([Zechariah 12:10-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+12.10-14&t=NKJV); [13:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+13.6-9&t=NKJV); [Revelation 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.7&t=NKJV)).

Paul, in the type, was saved as the apostle to the Gentiles, the one who would carry the message concerning the King and His kingdom to all the Gentile nations. And, in the antitype, this is exactly what will occur following Israel’s national conversion. Israel, in accord with the nation’s calling, will carry God’s message to all the Gentile nations.

The Jewish people will carry the identical message that Joseph’s brothers carried in the type, following Joseph’s revelation to them — “*Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt*” ([Genesis 45:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+45.26&t=NKJV)). Carried over into the antitype that would read, “Jesus is yet alive, and He is Governor over all the earth.”

And they will carry the identical message that Moses’ brethren were to carry following his second appearance to them. Once they had been established in the land, within a theocracy, they, in fulfillment of their calling ([Isaiah 43:1-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+43.1-10&t=NKJV)), were to carry God’s message to the Gentile nations of the earth.

Exactly when will all this occur? God revealed once again, immediately following Paul’s conversion, the answer. It will occur *after two days, on the third day* ([Acts 9:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.9&t=NKJV)).

(The exact wording of [Acts 9:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.9&t=NKJV) states that Paul was without sight for “*three days*.” But note the exact wording of several other related texts. Jonah was in the belly of the fish “*three days and three nights*,” as Christ was in “*the heart of the earth*” this same length of time [[Jonah 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jonah+1.17&t=NKJV); [Matthew 12:40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.40&t=NKJV)]. Christ though, as Israel will be yet future, was raised “*on the third day*” [[Matthew 16:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.21&t=NKJV); [17:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+17.22-23&t=NKJV); [20:17-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.17-19&t=NKJV); [Luke 24:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.21&t=NKJV), [46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.46&t=NKJV)], which means that Jonah [a type of both Christ and Israel] had to also be raised *on the third day.*

Both Hosea in the Old Testament and John in the New reveal that Israel’s blindness will be lifted [synonymous with Israel, as Jonah, being removed from the place of death] *after two days, on the third day* [[Hosea 5:15-6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.15-6.2&t=NKJV); [John 11:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.6&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.7&t=NKJV), [43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.43&t=NKJV), [44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.44&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Romans 11:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.25-26&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 3:14-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+3.14-16&t=NKJV)].

Thus, when dealing with Paul as a type, the same thing must be said relative to the length of time Paul remained blind, with his sight then being restored. As a type of Israel, he was blind *for three days*, with his sight then being restored [[Jonah 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jonah+1.17&t=NKJV)]; but also, as a type of Israel, it was *after two days, on the third day* that his sight was restored [[Hosea 5:15-6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.15-6.2&t=NKJV)].

Viewing “*three days*” and “*on the third day*” as synonymous after this fashion is in complete keeping with the way God has established matters in the Old Testament and carried them over into the New [*cf.* [Genesis 40:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+40.13&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+40.20&t=NKJV); [1 Samuel 30:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+30.12-13&t=NKJV); [2 Chronicles 10:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+10.5&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+10.12&t=NKJV); [Esther 4:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Esther+4.16&t=NKJV); [5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Esther+5.1&t=NKJV); [Jonah 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jonah+1.17&t=NKJV); [Matthew 12:40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.40&t=NKJV)]. Only through reckoning time within a given sequence of days, *as God has established time*, can statements that Christ was raised “*on the third day*” be reconciled with statements that He was raised “*after three days*” [*cf.* [Matthew 27:63](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.63&t=NKJV); [Mark 8:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+8.31&t=NKJV); [Luke 24:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.7&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.21&t=NKJV), [46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.46&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 15:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.4&t=NKJV)]. And the same statements are seen in Scripture relative to Israel’s future restoration as well.)

Then note one additional thing about Paul’s conversion. Paul’s immersion in and filling with the Spirit, following his conversion, was connected with *Joel’s prophecy and its fulfillment*. Immediately following the time that his sight was restored — *after two days, on the third day* — Paul was “*filled with the Holy Spirit*”; and he then “*arose, and was baptized*” ([Acts 9:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.17-18&t=NKJV)).

The word used for “*fill*” — being filled with the Spirit — in verse seventeen is *pimplemi*. And this is the same word that the Spirit had previously used in chapter two relative to the disciples being filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, resulting in *a beginning fulfillment* *of Joel’s prophecy* at the time that the message surrounding the re-offer of the kingdom began to be proclaimed to Israel.

(*Ref*. Chapter 1, “[Continuing from the Gospels](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Continuing%20from%20the%20Gospels),” for a discussion of the Greek words pimplemi and pleroo in relation to Joel’s prophecy and Christians today.)

In effect, through using *pimplemi* relative to the work of the Spirit at the time of Paul’s conversion, God showed two things: (1) the offer of the kingdom still remained open to Israel, with Joel’s prophecy still continuing to be fulfilled; and (2) Joel’s prophecy (though not being fulfilled today, for God is not presently dealing with Israel) will be fulfilled in its completeness at the time of the fulfillment, in the antitype, of Paul’s conversion — at the time of Israel’s future conversion, following the two days of the present dispensation, *on the third day*.

2. *In Relation to Christians*

The additional type that God established through Paul’s experiences had to do with God’s longsuffering in His dealings with Paul, mainly in relation to the manner in which God dealt with Paul following his conversion experience in [Acts 9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9&t=NKJV). This type, in connection with God’s longsuffering, had to do with Paul’s calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. And, within this calling, it had to do with the manner in which Paul conducted his life (because of that which he knew lay out ahead), the resultant sufferings that he endured, and the resultant glory that would follow.

*This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

*However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.* ([1 Timothy 1:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.15-16&t=NKJV))

God established within the person of Paul a “*pattern* [Greek: *hupotuposis*, referring to ‘an original type,’ ‘a prototype’]. And God, in the person of His Son, had been longsuffering toward Paul, establishing this prototype.

Though God had been longsuffering toward Paul in his pre-conversion days (as Paul went about seeking to destroy the work of Christ on earth), the text centers on God’s longsuffering relative to Paul in his post-conversion days. That is, *the prototype* established in the person of Paul has to do with both, but the text and context center more specifically on the latter. And through His longsuffering in this respect, God established *an original type* that the Spirit could later use to teach Christians “*the deep things of God*” surrounding their calling ([1 Corinthians 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.10&t=NKJV)).

In the verses immediately preceding this section in 1 Timothy chapter one, Paul referred to “*the glorious gospel* [*lit.*, ‘the gospel of the glory’] *of the blessed God*,” which had been “*committed*” *to his trust*. And Paul then expressed thanks unto the Lord for empowering him, counting him faithful, and calling him into the ministry, though he had previously been “*a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious* [injurious with respect to ‘violence’].” But the grace that God had showed toward Paul “*was exceedingly abundant*,” looking completely beyond what man had done or was able to do to that which God was not only able to do but would do ([1 Timothy 1:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.11-14&t=NKJV)).

Then, in the verses immediately following this section in 1 Timothy chapter one, Paul first referred to “*the King eternal* . . .” to Whom “*be honor and glory forever and ever*.” Then he charged Timothy concerning *the spiritual warfare* and the necessity of *believing* and *being spiritually aware* of the issue at hand, which was in complete keeping with that which the Spirit of God had previously revealed through the prophets. And Paul’s charge in this respect was with a view to *the faith* — “*which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck*” ([1 Timothy 1:17-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.17-20&t=NKJV)).

The whole of the matter in [1 Timothy 1:11-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.11-20&t=NKJV) involves Paul set forth as *a pattern, an original type, a prototype*, of how individuals, after they have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, can govern their lives in order to one day come into a realization of the hope of their calling. It has to do with Paul set forth as *the pattern* that Christians can follow if they, as Paul, would one day realize the purpose for their salvation.

Paul was *a driven man*. He, on the basis of that which had been revealed to him, looked out ahead and saw *a goal*; and he was *completely, totally obsessed with reaching this revealed goal*. Attaining to this goal governed *everything* brought to pass in the course of his ministry.

Paul had been commissioned as the apostle to the Gentiles to carry the gospel of the glory of Christ to Christians throughout the Gentile world. And his thoughts were centered completely in this realm, in the realm of his calling. And though Paul, during the course of his ministry, often dealt with the unsaved and had to begin with the simple gospel of the grace of God (*e.g*., [Acts 16:30-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.30-31&t=NKJV); [20:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.24&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.3-4&t=NKJV); *cf.* [1 Corinthians 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.2&t=NKJV)), this was not the central focus of his ministry. Rather, the central focus of Paul’s ministry — that to which he had been called — had to do with *the gospel of the glory of Christ* (as seen in [1 Timothy 1:11-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.11-20&t=NKJV), along with numerous other places throughout his epistles).

This was the realm upon which *his every thought was constantly focused*. This was the realm upon which *his entire ministry centered*. Paul looked out toward that coming day when Christ would ascend the throne; and, knowing that the very purpose for his salvation had to do with ascending the throne with Christ in that coming day, Paul did two things: (1) Paul governed his own life accordingly, and (2) he sought to instruct and exhort other Christians to govern their lives after the same fashion, for the same reason (*cf.* [Ephesians 1:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.15-18&t=NKJV); [Philippians 3:7-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.7-21&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:23-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23-29&t=NKJV)).

And God set Paul forth as *a pattern, an original type, a prototype*, in this respect (*cf.* [Philippians 3:17-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.17-19&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+1.13&t=NKJV)). His life, because he had given himself wholly over to Christ and the Spirit’s leadership, was one of suffering, rejection, physical and spiritual abuse, imprisonment . . . ([2 Corinthians 11:23-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+11.23-27&t=NKJV)). But it was also one of corresponding involvement with his “*deep concern for all the churches*” ([2 Corinthians 11:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+11.28&t=NKJV)) and one wherein he could say toward the end of his journey:

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing*. ([2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV))

God, in the person of Paul, has set forth *His example, His prototype*. Paul’s life *was given over entirely* to fulfilling that to which he had been called. The personal cost, in his eyes, was immaterial. He took exactly the same attitude toward sufferings in his ministry that Christ had taken toward sufferings at Calvary ([Hebrews 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.2&t=NKJV)).

Achieving the goal would be worth any sufferings or persecution that he would have to endure. And his interest, far from being in himself alone, was equally, *if not more so*, in seeing that Christians within the scope of his ministry achieved this same goal as well (*cf.* [Acts 20:25-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.25-32&t=NKJV)).

**Paul — the Apostle to the Gentiles**

Paul was saved to carry the message that Israel had rejected to Christians throughout the Gentile world (though there were no Christians in the Gentile world at that time). The message had gone to the Samaritans at the time of the dispersion following Stephen’s death ([Acts 8:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.5&t=NKJV)), but this message was carried to the Gentiles only following Paul’s conversion.

Those in the household of Cornelius were the first Gentiles to hear the message, though this message came from Peter’s lips rather than from Paul’s ([Acts 10:34-48](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.34-48&t=NKJV)). But Peter, within the next three chapters of the book ([Acts 11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11&t=NKJV); [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+12&t=NKJV); [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13&t=NKJV)), would gradually be replaced by Paul as the central person through whom God would carry out His plans and purposes in the early Church. “*The gospel of the circumcision*” had been committed to Peter; but now Paul had been called forth to carry the gospel to the “*uncircumcised*” ([Galatians 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.7&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 9:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.15&t=NKJV); [26:13-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.13-20&t=NKJV); [Romans 11:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.13&t=NKJV)). Thus, there is a transition in central personages, from Peter to Paul, at this point in the book.

(It is often taught that the eunuch from Ethiopia in [Acts 8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8&t=NKJV) was a Gentile from that part of the world. However, this cannot be correct, for the message was not carried beyond Samaria, to the Gentiles, until later [in [Acts 10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10&t=NKJV)].

The eunuch in chapter eight, to whom Philip proclaimed truths concerning Christ from [Isaiah 53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53&t=NKJV), could only have been a Jew living in Ethiopia who had been to Jerusalem to worship [as those Jews from “*every nation under heaven*” on the day of Pentecost in chapter two of the book].)

1. *Because of Israel’s Rejection*

In the original offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel in the gospel accounts there was a climactic rejection by Israel, recorded in [Matthew 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12&t=NKJV). And it was only following this climactic rejection that the calling into existence of the Church came into view in Christ’s ministry ([Matthew 16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV)).

The same thing can be seen in the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, though from a different perspective. There was a climactic rejection by Israel in [Acts 7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7&t=NKJV), and this was immediately followed by a heretofore unseen individual being introduced. Paul, the one whom God had chosen to carry the message to the Gentiles, was waiting in the wings.

The Church was God’s new entity on earth to carry God’s message to the Gentiles (though God’s command was to carry the message “*to the Jew first*” so long as the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel). And Paul was the central person within this new entity — the one whom God had chosen — to lead those comprising this new entity *in a correct direction* at the beginning. Paul was *to set the course* that Christians comprising the Church at the time of and following his conversion were to take, and he was *to be the prototype* set forth by God to show how other Christians, as well, should conduct their lives as they moved in this direction.

And not only was this the case, but Paul was the one through whom God had chosen to make known all the various things surrounding the message being carried to the Gentiles — things encompassed within the scope of *the mystery* ([Ephesians 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV)). Then, beyond that, Paul was correspondingly the vehicle through whom God would, by means of *His revealed Word*, communicate to the Church the numerous things surrounding the ministry to which He had called Paul.

God would use Paul to write thirteen epistles (fourteen if he wrote Hebrews). And these epistles, along with the general epistles, would reflect on preceding revelation and provide *all the various God-given facets* of information surrounding the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Gentiles.

2. *The Course of the Dispensation Set*

From the moment that the Jewish religious leaders rejected Stephen’s message and “*ran upon him with one accord*,” placing their clothes “*at the feet of a young man named Saul*,” and “*stoned Stephen*” ([Acts 7:57-59](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.57-59&t=NKJV)), *the course of the dispensation was set*. God, from this point forward, though the door still remained open for Israel to repent, would begin to work with and through Paul.

From this point forward, the progression of events would *increasingly* go in a completely different direction. From this point forward, *the focal point* for the message would be the Gentile world.

And because of the man whom God had chosen — a man wholly given over to fulfilling his calling — this message would be carried throughout the Gentile world during the short course of the next three decades ([Colossians 1:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5-6&t=NKJV), [20-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.20-23&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter Seven

**Paul’s Immediate Message**

*Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*

*Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”*

*But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*

*Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. . . .*

*And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.* ([Acts 9:20-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.20-24&t=NKJV))

Paul, traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus, carried “*letters*” from the high priest in Jerusalem. These letters were addressed to “*the brethren*” (to the Jews in the synagogues in Damascus); and they gave Paul the authority, as the official agent of the Sanhedrin, to carry out the task at hand. These letters would be recognized by the Jews in Damascus as official documents, allowing Paul the freedom to find, bind, and take back to Jerusalem any individuals that he found in Damascus “*of the Way*” (*cf.* [Acts 9:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-2&t=NKJV); [22:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.4-5&t=NKJV); [26:10-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.10-12&t=NKJV)).

Paul though was converted in route to Damascus through Christ’s personal appearance to him. And following his immersion in and being filled with the Spirit, he spent several days with the Christians he had come to Damascus to bind and take back to Jerusalem. Then, immediately afterward, he went to the synagogues in Damascus, but not with reference to the letters that he carried. Rather, he went to the synagogues to proclaim that which he himself had come to realize — that Jesus was *the Son of God, the very Christ* ([Acts 9:1-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-22&t=NKJV)).

This astonished those who heard him, for they knew what he had been doing and the original intent of his journey from Jerusalem to Damascus. And, because of that which he was now doing, the Jews in Damascus “*took counsel to kill him*” ([Acts 9:20-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.20-23&t=NKJV)).

But, unlike Stephen’s ministry that had come to an end following his proclamation of this same truth, the Lord was just beginning to work through Paul. Some of the Christians in Damascus lowered Paul over the city wall in a basket (since the city gates were guarded), and Paul then traveled to Jerusalem and sought to “*join himself to the disciples*” there. But, prior to Barnabas’ intervention on Paul’s behalf, explaining what had happened at Damascus, the Christians in Jerusalem were afraid of him ([Acts 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.24-27&t=NKJV)).

Afterward, Paul began to speak “*boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*” in Jerusalem, resulting in some of the Christians in the city having to take him to Caesarea and then sending him to Tarsus, outside the land of Israel ([Acts 9:28-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.28-30&t=NKJV)). And it was after this that the Lord led Paul into Arabia and personally taught him — over a period lasting possibly as long as three years — the message that he was to carry to the Gentiles ([Galatians 1:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-18&t=NKJV)).

Note in the book of Acts that Paul is conspicuously absent during the period extending from verse thirty of chapter nine to verse twenty-five of chapter eleven. And this period not only covers several years but events occurring during this period open the way for Paul, at the end of this period, to be reintroduced and begin the ministry to which he had been called.

During this period, the message had begun to be carried to the Gentiles ([Acts 10:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.1ff&t=NKJV)); and once Paul had been taught the various things about the message that he was to carry to the Gentiles, then he is reintroduced in the book and replaces Peter as the central person in the early Church through whom God would then continue His work ([Acts 13:2ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.2ff&t=NKJV)).

Peter had been God’s chosen spokesman to carry the message to the Jews; but, with Israel’s climactic rejection after hearing Stephen, there was a shift within God’s plans and purposes from the Jews to the Gentiles; and attention at this time immediately turned to Paul, who was God’s chosen spokesman to later carry the message to the Gentiles (*cf.* [Galatians 2:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.7-8&t=NKJV)). And, though the door still remained open for Israel to repent, with the message, of necessity, still going “*to the Jew first*,” it was now “*also to the Greek* [Gentile]” ([Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV)).

Following Stephen’s death, the emphasis shifted from Peter’s ministry to Paul’s ministry (though Paul hadn’t even been converted at this time, and his main ministry would not begin for several years). The emphasis shifted from the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel to an offer of the kingdom to the Gentiles (saved Gentiles, Christians), though, again, the message was still “*to the Jew first*.”

(In order to see the proper sequence of different things that have been briefly covered in the preceding several paragraphs, the remainder of this chapter will deal with Paul’s ministry immediately following his conversion, the next chapter [8] will deal with “*the mystery*” opened up and revealed to Paul by the Lord in Arabia, and several following chapters [particularly 9, 10, and 12] will deal with Paul’s ministry after his return from Arabia.

Paul’s ministry within the scope of his calling — as the apostle to the Gentiles — is seen only following his return from Arabia, for this ministry had to do with “*the mystery*” revealed to him while in Arabia [*cf.* [Galatians 1:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-18&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:20-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.20-29&t=NKJV)]. Paul’s ministry immediately following his conversion [a relatively short ministry] was to Israel, *with the kingdom of the heavens in view*; and following his being taught by the Lord in Arabia, his ministry [covering several decades] was to the Gentiles — though, still “*to the Jew first*” — *with the kingdom of the heavens in view.*

The whole of the New Testament has to do with a message surrounding *the kingdom of the heavens*. This message is introduced in the gospels [derived from the Old Testament Scriptures], continued in Acts, then continued in the epistles [both the Pauline and general epistles], and then realized in the book of Revelation.

Salvation itself is looked upon in *two main senses* in the New Testament: (1) Man passing from death unto life [being brought back into a position wherein he can realize the purpose for his very existence — to rule and reign ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV))], and (2) man ultimately coming into a realization of the purpose for his very existence [occupying a position with Christ in the kingdom].

The message to Israel in both the gospel accounts and the book of Acts centers on the latter, not the former. The message was directed to a people to whom God had, during Moses’ day given the Passover lamb; and these people — the Jewish people — had been sacrificing and applying the blood of the paschal lambs year after year throughout the centuries from Moses to Christ.

However, the message going to the Gentiles, or to any generation of Jews living beyond the time when the kingdom of the heavens was originally offered and then re-offered to Israel, is another matter entirely. The bearer of the message would have to begin with the former — the simple gospel of the grace of God. Only then could a message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens come into view [reference chapters 3 & 4, “[Restoration of All Things](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Restoration%20of%20All%20Things),” and “[Acceptance by Many](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Acceptance%20by%20Many)”].

These things, along with *a new creation “in Christ”* being in view [with the Jew and the Gentile together in one body], is why Paul had to be taken into Arabia and receive extensive instructions from the Lord concerning the message that he had been called to proclaim. And if a person doesn’t come into some understanding of the overall proclamation of the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens — beginning with Israel and progressing to the Gentiles, with the kingdom ultimately being realized — that person will fail to understand the main purpose of salvation and *the main message of the New Testament*, whether in the gospels, Acts, the epistles, or the book of Revelation.)

**God’s Son, The Christ**

Paul, at the time of his conversion, was a Jew who had been well trained in the Old Testament Scriptures. He had previously sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the great teachers of the law of that day ([Acts 22:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.3&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 5:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.34&t=NKJV)). Paul understood the “letter” of Scripture; and once his blindness had been lifted, his prior training allowed him to easily see — from the very Scriptures that he had studied over the years, Scriptures that he knew — exactly what had happened, what was presently happening, and what would happen should Israel repent.

Paul didn’t have to spend time studying the Scriptures to know that Jesus was *the Son of God, the very Christ*. He didn’t have to spend time studying the Scriptures to know the things surrounding that which Stephen had previously tried to get the religious leaders in Israel to see. Paul knew the “letter” of Scripture and could now easily see that of which the “letter” spoke, within its *correct spiritual framework*.

And after being immersed in and filled with the Spirit and spending several days with the Christians in Damascus, he immediately went into the synagogues of the city and preached Christ — *“that He is the Son of God,” “proving that this is very Christ”* ([Acts 9:20-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.20-22&t=NKJV)). He *confounded the Jews*, showing them from their own Scriptures (using the Scriptures to *prove*) *the exact identity* of the One Whom they had rejected and crucified.

Had Paul been called as another apostle to carry the message to Israel, there would have been little need for the Lord to later take him aside for an extensive period to teach him the message that he was to proclaim. Paul was already preeminently qualified for a ministry of this nature to Israel. But he was far from qualified for the ministry to which he had been called, for this ministry involved going to a people “*having no hope, and without God in the world*.” And aside from that, it involved “*a remnant according to the election of grace*.” Then, including both *those without God* and *those within the remnant*, it involved what is called in Scripture, “*the mystery*” (*cf.* [Romans 11:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.5&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV); [3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV)).

Israel was about to be set aside, and God was about to deal solely with the *one new man “in Christ”* for almost two millennia before resuming His dealings with Israel. This *one new man “in Christ”* would be comprised of those taken mainly from among the Gentile nations (though “*a remnant according to the election of grace* [believing Jews]” would be included), and Paul was called forth as the person through whom God would communicate truths having to do with the message surrounding the kingdom as it would pertain to this *new creation* during the interim (*cf.* [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV); [Galatians 1:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-12&t=NKJV); [3:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26-29&t=NKJV)).

Thus, Paul’s ministry to Israel following his conversion was relatively short, for God had other plans for Paul. But, though short and not his main calling, it was perfectly in keeping with the ministry of others to Israel which had proceeded and it was perfectly in line with his own ministry to the Gentiles which would follow.

1. *The Message*

Paul’s proclamation of Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus as “*the Son of God*,” the “*very Christ*” ([Acts 9:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.20&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.22&t=NKJV)) was a message carrying a prevalent basic Scriptural thought surrounding *Sonship*. It had to do with the position that Christ held relative to *the government of the earth*. It was a message concerning *Christ and the proffered kingdom*.

“Sonship” implies *rulership* (*cf.* [Matthew 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.17&t=NKJV); [4:3-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.3-8&t=NKJV); [17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+17.5&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.17&t=NKJV)). *Sons alone* occupy positions of rulership within God’s kingdom. That’s the way it has always been, that’s the way it presently exists, and that’s the way it will always continue to exist.

Satan, the incumbent ruler over the earth (the ruler that God placed over the earth in the beginning, the only ruler this earth has ever had), is *a son of God*; and angels ruling under him are also *sons of God.*

Angels are sons of God because of *a special creative act of God.* And an angelic rule of the nature that Satan holds is not peculiar to just this earth, one province in God’s kingdom. This is a form of rule that exists on provinces throughout God’s kingdom, apparently not only in our own galaxy but in other galaxies created and placed throughout the entire universe over which God exercises governmental power and control ([Job 1:6-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+1.6-12&t=NKJV); [2:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+2.1-7&t=NKJV)).

Satan is “*the anointed* [‘messianic’] *cherub*,” placed by God “*upon the holy mountain of God*,” though one day to be cast out of this “*mountain*” ([Ezekiel 28:14-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14-16&t=NKJV)).

(The “cherubim” [singular, “cherub”] are first mentioned in Scripture in connection with *the earth’s government*, establishing an unchangeable way — a first-mention principle — in which angels designated by this name are seen throughout Scripture. They are first seen in Scripture guarding the entrance to the garden in Eden following man being driven from the garden because of sin. They were placed as guardians to prevent man from reentering the garden, in his fallen state, and eating of the tree of life — the tree that would have provided [and will yet future provide] the wisdom and knowledge for man to rule and reign over the earth.

And a “mountain” in Scripture signifies *a kingdom*. Satan, in his unfallen state, was given a kingdom [this earth], and he was placed, by God, in the position of the messianic angel [the ruling angel] over this “*mountain*,” this *kingdom* [[Ezekiel 28:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14&t=NKJV)].)

Satan though, the appointed ruling angel over one kingdom in the universe, rebelled against the One Who had placed him in this position. He sought *to exalt his throne* and become “*like the most High*,” *i.e.*, he sought to rule all the kingdoms of the universe rather than just the one kingdom over which he had been placed ([Isaiah 14:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.14&t=NKJV)). And, as a result, judgment was pronounced upon Satan ([Isaiah 14:15-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.15-17&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 28:15-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.15-19&t=NKJV)), and his kingdom was reduced to a state of complete ruin ([Genesis 1:2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2a&t=NKJV)).

But Satan himself and the angels who accompanied him in his rebellion continued to reign, though over a ruined kingdom. A principle of biblical government necessitates an incumbent ruler, though he may have disqualified himself, to continue holding his position until his God-appointed replacement is not only on the scene but ready to assume the reins of governmental power and authority (*e.g.*, [1 Samuel 15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+15&t=NKJV) -- [2 Samuel 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+1&t=NKJV)). God has reserved to Himself the right and power to remove one ruler and position another ruler within His kingdom after this fashion ([Daniel 4:17-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.17-32&t=NKJV); [5:17-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+5.17-21&t=NKJV)).

Scripture opens with one brief statement concerning God, in the beginning, creating the heavens and the earth; and this is followed by one brief statement concerning the earth being reduced to a ruined state ([Genesis 1:1-2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2a&t=NKJV)). Then Scripture continues with a detailed account (though brief) of how God restored the ruined province within His kingdom over a six-day period at a later point in time ([Genesis 1:2-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-25&t=NKJV) [2b]).

And immediately following the restoration of the ruined province, on the same day that God completed his restorative work, he created man, for a revealed purpose. The material creation was restored with a view to man’s creation, and man was created for the purpose of replacing the disqualified, incumbent ruler, Satan ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)).

But, though the first man, Adam, was present — *a son of God,* because of God’s special creative act (which Adam had to be in order to fulfill the purpose surrounding his creation [*cf.* [Luke 3:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+3.38&t=NKJV)]) — God didn’t immediately remove Satan and place Adam in his position. Rather, God allowed the fall to occur, leaving the man disqualified (along with his descendants, who would be *sons of Adam*, begotten in Adam’s fallen image and likeness), allowing Satan to continue holding the scepter. And this was for purposes involving God’s Son, *the second Man, the last Adam* ([Genesis 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.1ff&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 15:45-47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.45-47&t=NKJV)).

Then, four thousand years later, of *the second Man, the last Adam* — at the time of His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist — God said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” ([Matthew 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.17&t=NKJV)). And this announcement had to do with the matter at hand — *Christ’s position in relation to the earth’s government.*

Immediately after the Father had declared Jesus to be His “*beloved Son*,” the Spirit led Jesus “*into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*” ([Matthew 4:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.1ff&t=NKJV)). Where the first man, the first Adam, had failed, Jesus, *as the second Man, the last Adam*, had to show that He wouldn’t, and really couldn’t, fail. Jesus had to demonstrate, to the incumbent ruler, that He, *as God’s Son*, was fully qualified to take the scepter.

This was *the crux* of that which occurred in the temptation account, seen at the very outset of Christ’s ministry; and this was why the temptation at the hands of the incumbent ruler centered on *two things*: (1) Satan questioning Jesus’ Sonship (“If thou be the Son of God…”), and (2) Satan offering to *Jesus all the “power” and “glory” associated with “the kingdoms of the world,”* which God had “delivered” to him, contingent on Jesus *falling down and worshipping him* (*cf.* [Matthew 4:3-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.3-9&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:3-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.3-7&t=NKJV)).

But Jesus, though demonstrating to the incumbent ruler (and thus establishing, once for all, the fact for the record) that He was fully qualified to take the scepter, didn’t immediately assume this position. Rather, following this demonstration, He went to Israel with a message, offering those comprising the nation positions with Him in the kingdom at that future time when He would ascend the throne.

*Israel though refused*, climaxing this refusal by slaying their Messiah. Then there was a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel by the apostles (and others) in the book of Acts. But *Israel still refused*, reaching a climactic point in this continued refusal by slaying Stephen.

And, though Paul was called out at this time as the apostle to the Gentiles, the offer of the kingdom still remained open to Israel (as it had immediately following the events of Calvary). And when Paul went to the Jews in the synagogues in Damascus, this whole overall thought is exactly what he had in mind — proving to these Jews, from their own Scriptures, that Jesus was *the Son of God, the very Christ* (the Messiah, the One Whom God had chosen to take the earth’s scepter, the One Whom God would ultimately place in this position).

2. *The Response*

Paul’s message to the Jews in Damascus concerned things having to do with the continued re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. But the Jews in Damascus responded to this message exactly as the Jews in Jerusalem had previously responded. They not only rejected the message, but, as the Jews in Jerusalem had previously slain a person proclaiming the message (followed by their slaying numerous other Christians [[Acts 26:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.10&t=NKJV)]), the Jews in Damascus, in like manner, sought to slay Paul ([Acts 9:20-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.20-24&t=NKJV)).

Then, when Paul went to Jerusalem, he began to teach these same truths about Jesus among the Jews there. And their reaction was the same as the Jews in Damascus had been, which was the same as the actions of the religious leaders in Jerusalem had been at the time of Stephen’s message before the council. The Jews in Jerusalem, hearing Paul, not only rejected the message but they also sought to slay Paul as well ([Acts 9:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.26-29&t=NKJV)).

The course that Israel was following — continued rejection of the message — had already been set, though the offer of the kingdom still remained open and the message was still being carried to Israel. This course was set during the original offer of the kingdom, prior to the events of Calvary; and it was set again in the re-offer of the kingdom, prior to Paul’s conversion.

In the original offer, there was the “*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*,” a sin which would not be forgiven the nation during either the present age or the coming age ([Matthew 12:22-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-32&t=NKJV)); and in the re-offer, there was the stoning of Stephen at a climactic time when the heavens had been opened, with Stephen seeing the Glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God ([Acts 7:1-60](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.1-60&t=NKJV)).

The message was *to the Jew only* throughout the original offer, and it was *to the Jew first* throughout the re-offer. But in the re-offer of the kingdom, unlike in the original offer, the message was *also to the Gentile* ([Matthew 10:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.5-6&t=NKJV); [Acts 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8&t=NKJV); [Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV)).

Paul went *only to the Jews* in Damascus and Jerusalem, for these were not only Jewish cities but Paul had yet to be instructed concerning the message that he was to carry to the Gentiles as well. But once Paul had had been taken to Arabia, had been instructed by the Lord, and had begun his ministry in the Gentile world; *he still carried the message to the Jewish people first.*

As long as the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel, this was God’s designated order, even out in the Gentile world. It didn’t matter what Gentile city Paul entered, as long as the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel, *he always went to the Jews in that city first*. And he carried the same message to these Jews that Peter and others had carried to Israel prior to Paul’s conversion It was only *after* the Jews had rejected the message that he was free to also go to the Gentiles in that city (*cf.* [Acts 13:46-48](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.46-48&t=NKJV); [17:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.1-4&t=NKJV); [18:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.1-6&t=NKJV); [19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.8&t=NKJV); [28:17-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.17-28&t=NKJV)).

And, though some of the Jews in the various cities where Paul’s missionary journeys took him believed (as had occurred throughout the original offer and was occurring during the re-offer of the kingdom), there was no repentance by the nation. There was only rejection (as had also occurred throughout the original offer and was occurring during the re-offer of the kingdom).

In Paul’s case it was to the Jews beginning in Damascus, then Jerusalem, then to those in the various cities in the Gentile world. And it mattered not whether the message was carried to Jews in the land or to Jews dispersed among the Gentile nations; the response was always the same. Some believed, but the nation itself remained in unbelief.

**God’s Two Firstborn Sons**

For the past 3,500 years God has had two firstborn Sons, *Israel* and *Christ* ([Exodus 4:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.6&t=NKJV)). And the main thought behind this standing, in relation to both Sons, concerns *the rights of the firstborn.*

Israel became God’s firstborn son when the nation was adopted during Moses’ day, but Jesus has been God’s firstborn Son from eternity.

The rights possessed by firstborn sons in the Old Testament were threefold — *regal rights, priestly rights, and the right to receive a double portion of the father’s goods*. The firstborn was to be *the ruler* of the family, *the spiritual head* of the family, and receive *a double portion* of the father’s goods when the inheritance was divided.

Israel is God’s firstborn son because of a special creative act, followed by adoption. Jacob was a special creation of God, and God adopted the nation descending from Jacob through his twelve sons ([Isaiah 43:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+43.1&t=NKJV); [Romans 9:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9.4&t=NKJV)). And, possessing *a national firstborn status* of this nature, Israel was (and remains today) in line to exercise *national kingly and priestly rights* in relation to the Gentile nations of the earth. Israel was *to rule* over the nations, and the nations were *to be blessed* through Israel; and, originally, Israel was to realize this status through occupying both *heavenly* and *earthly* positions in the kingdom — giving Israel *a double portion*.

Christ though is God’s firstborn Son after an entirely different fashion. He has been God’s firstborn Son from eternity. He is spoken of as “*the firstborn of every creature* [‘of all creation’]” ([Colossians 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.15&t=NKJV)), “*the firstborn from the dead*” ([Colossians 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.18&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.5&t=NKJV)), and “*the firstborn among many brethren*” ([Romans 8:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.29&t=NKJV)). Christ is the Son above all sons, seated at the right hand of Power in the heavens.

And *this is the Son* Whom the Father begat, who showed that He was fully qualified to take the earth’s scepter and then paid redemption’s price so man could be placed back in the position for which he had been created; *this is the Son* who offered Israel positions with Him from the heavens following that time when His Father would give the kingdom to Him and remove the incumbent ruler; and *this is the Son* who is today offering these same positions (rejected by Israel) to Christians.

(And though God presently has these two firstborn Sons, with a view to these two Sons one day exercising the rights of primogeniture, God will, before these Sons exercise the rights of the firstborn, bring into existence a third firstborn son. God’s firstborn son Israel has forfeited the right to rule and reign from the heavens over the earth, and God will one day bring forth another firstborn son to occupy these heavenly positions.

Christians, as the Israelites, form a special creation, though an entirely different type creation [[2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV); [Galatians 3:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26-29&t=NKJV)]. And, because of this special creation, Christians, as the Israelites, can one day be adopted into sonship. Christians are presently “*children*” [a position in which they *cannot* rule], but they will one day be adopted as “sons” [a position in which they *can* rule] [[Romans 8:18-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.18-23&t=NKJV)]. God will then have a third firstborn son [[Hebrews 12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.23&t=NKJV)], with this son having been adopted for the same purpose that Israel was adopted — *to realize the rights of primogeniture*.

During the Messianic Era, God’s firstborn son, *the Church*, will rule from the heavens over the nations of the earth; God’s firstborn son, *Israel,* will rule on the earth, over the Gentile nations; and God’s firstborn Son, *Jesus*, will rule both from the heavens on His Own throne and from the earth on David’s throne. This is the manner in which the rulership will be established in the coming age, anticipated in [Romans 8:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.19&t=NKJV).)

1. *Moses’ Message, Paul’s Message*

There is a parallel between the message God instructed Moses to deliver to the Pharaoh of Egypt and the message that Paul, almost fifteen centuries later, carried to those in Damascus and Jerusalem shortly after his conversion (and later to Jews throughout the Gentile world). Moses’ message involved one of God’s firstborn Sons and had to do with the rights of primogeniture; and Paul’s message involved both of God’s firstborn Sons and also had to do with the rights of primogeniture.

a) *Moses*

At the time God called Moses to return to his brethren in Egypt, He instructed Moses to tell the Pharaoh of Egypt,

*Thus says the LORD: “Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me*. . . . .” ([Exodus 4:22-23a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23a&t=NKJV) [22b])

And God expected the Pharaoh of Egypt, apart from further explanation, to understand the message. God expected the Pharaoh to understand, from this divine declaration, that “Israel [the nation under subjection to the power of Egypt], not Egypt, was the nation possessing the rights of primogeniture in relation to all the other nations of the earth.”

There is no written record that Moses delivered this message to Pharaoh, in so many words. But there is a written record concerning God delivering this message to Pharaoh. And God delivered the message in such a way — through the death of the firstborn, both *an individual* and *a national* death — that, in the end, the power of Egypt found itself buried beneath the waters of the Red Sea, while God’s firstborn son, Israel, stood on the eastern banks (outside Egypt), in resurrection power, singing the victor’s song.

Burial for both Israel and the Egyptians, following the death of the firstborn in Egypt, occurred in the Red Sea. Israel, having experienced the death of the firstborn vicariously, had died, but yet lived. The Egyptians though, having experienced the death of the firstborn apart from a substitute, had died, but couldn’t live.

The dead — both the Israelites and the Egyptians — *had to be buried*, which occurred in the Red Sea. For the Israelites, the sea *had no power over them*; and they subsequently stood in resurrection power on the eastern banks. For the Egyptians though, the sea *had complete power over them*; and they were buried and left in the sea.

And this left God’s firstborn son on the eastern banks of the sea, outside Egypt, ready to go forth and ultimately realize the rights of primogeniture in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

b) *Paul*

Paul’s message to both the Jews in Damascus and Jerusalem (and later to Jews throughout the Gentile world) concerned both of God’s firstborn Sons — His only adopted firstborn son, and His only begotten firstborn Son. And this message involved the rights of primogeniture to be realized by both Sons.

Paul’s message *was directed* to one son, and the message *was about* the other Son. It involved one son (Israel) recognizing and accepting the other Son (Jesus), which would result in Christ’s return, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and *both Sons together* realizing the rights of primogeniture.

But the son to whom the message was proclaimed wouldn’t repent, ultimately resulting in the other Son remaining in heaven until such a time as the Father could bring forth a third firstborn son to occupy the heavenly positions in the kingdom, which had been spurned.

2.  *From Matthew through Acts*

The message delivered to Israel in the section of Scripture extending from the gospel of Matthew through the book of Acts was essentially the same. It had to do with *an offer of the kingdom of the heavens, contingent on the nation’s repentance, followed by baptism.*

The message delivered by Peter to Israel on the day of Pentecost (at the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel [repentance, followed by baptism] — [Acts 2:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.38&t=NKJV)) was the same basic message that John the Baptist had delivered to Israel (at the beginning of the original offer [repentance, followed by baptism] — [Matthew 3:2-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.2-6&t=NKJV)). And the message throughout both the original offer and the re-offer of the kingdom had to do with God’s two firstborn Sons realizing the rights belonging to the firstborn.

This was the message proclaimed *to Israel* throughout the period. It was introduced by John in the wilderness of Judea ([Matthew 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.1ff&t=NKJV)), and it was concluded over three decades later by Paul in Rome ([Acts 28:17-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.17-29&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter Eight

**Paul’s Gospel**

*But I make known to you, brethren that the gospel that was preached by me is not according to man.*

*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.*

*And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace,*

*to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,*

*nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*

*Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.* ([Galatians 1:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-18&t=NKJV)).

The Apostle Paul was saved at a particular time for a particular purpose. He was saved after the Jewish religious leaders had reached a climactic point in their rejection of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel ([Acts 7:54ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.54ff&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Luke 13:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.6-9&t=NKJV)); and he was saved to carry God’s message concerning the kingdom — which had been rejected by Israel — to the Gentiles ([Acts 9:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.15&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Romans 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.5&t=NKJV); [Galatians 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.7&t=NKJV)).

Carrying this particular message to the Gentiles was a pivotal change that would result in a concluding work within the framework of God’s plans and purposes as they pertained to man during his allotted 6,000-year day; and this was something that, among other things, had been predetermined and set in the eternal council chambers of God before the ages had even begun ([Hebrews 1:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.1-2&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Acts 15:14-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.14-18&t=NKJV)).

This was something that God had made known in the Old Testament types (in perfect keeping with decisions and determinations made in the beginning [*e.g.*, [Genesis 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=NKJV); [2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2&t=NKJV); [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24&t=NKJV); [41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+41&t=NKJV); [Exodus 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+2&t=NKJV)]); this was something that had been seen in Christ’s earthly ministry preceding Calvary (again, in perfect keeping with decisions and determinations made in the beginning [[Matthew 12:22-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-32&t=NKJV); [13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.1&t=NKJV); [16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV); [21:33-43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.33-43&t=NKJV)]); and this was something that God had begun to bring to pass through Paul’s conversion (again, in perfect keeping with decisions and determinations made in the beginning [[Acts 9:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1ff&t=NKJV)]).

Through taking this message to the Gentiles, God could acquire the co-rulers who would occupy the throne with His Son in the kingdom. Through taking this message to the Gentiles, God could bring into existence a third firstborn son — comprised of the co-rulers — to rule with His Son in the kingdom (*cf.* [Hebrews 2:5-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5-10&t=NKJV); [12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.23&t=NKJV)).

Acquiring the co-rulers for the kingdom, bringing into existence a third firstborn son, would fulfill that previously set forth in the types; and, in like manner, this would also fulfill that set forth at a time before the establishment of the types, in the eternal council chambers of God.

With Paul’s conversion, God began a concluding work that would allow Him to bring His plans and purposes in relation to man, throughout Man’s Day, to a close.

(With reference to three firstborn Sons, “three” is the number of divine perfection; and God, throughout His revelation to man, is seen performing His works in perfect accord with a numerical system that He Himself established at a time prior to these works. Scripture begins after this fashion [God working six days and resting the seventh], and Scripture continues after this fashion *[e.g.*, references to ten plagues, on the third day, after six days, twelve tribes, twelve apostles, ten virgins, ten talents, ten pounds, seven seals, trumpets, vials].

In a numerical respect, it would not only be natural but actually necessary for God to have a third firstborn son to occupy a position in the earth’s government during the coming age. It will require three firstborn Sons to form a triad of Sons within the framework of the government in that coming day, showing divine perfection in the earth’s government — something which the present two Sons, apart from a third, could not do.

God, in the beginning, established the structure of the earth’s government — with Satan and his angels ruling the earth from a heavenly sphere — within the framework of a triad of twelve’s [three sets of twelve]. “Twelve” is the number of governmental perfection, and three sets of twelve showed divine perfection in the earth’s government at this time.

However, that perfect structure does not exist today, for the government of the earth is presently in disarray and has been since that time when Satan rebelled against God’s supreme power and authority [[Isaiah 14:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13-14&t=NKJV); two-thirds of the angels originally ruling with Satan refused to participate in his attempted coup, ceasing to rule with him (represented by the twenty-four elders — two sets of twelve — in [Revelation 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.4&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV)). Angels represented by the third set of twelve remained with Satan and have continued to rule with him down to the present time ([Revelation 12:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.4&t=NKJV))].

But in the coming age this divine perfection that once existed in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom will be restored. When Christ and His co-heirs take the kingdom, not only will Christians wear crowns presently worn by angels represented by the two sets of twelve in [Revelation 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.4&t=NKJV) [which is the reason for these crowns being relinquished in [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV)] but also by angels represented by the third set of twelve in [Revelation 12:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.4&t=NKJV) [these crowns will be taken by force when Christ returns]. Only then will divine perfection once again exist within the structure of the earth’s government [*ref.* the editor’s book, IN THE LORD’S DAY, chapter 4; also ref. chapter 13 in this book, “The Goal — The book of Revelation”].

Then, beyond just the heavenly sphere of the kingdom, as previously shown, there will be three firstborn Sons ruling the earth, forming a triad within the whole of the government. And, beyond that, man himself, the one who will rule the earth in that coming day, forms a trinity — spirit, soul, and body [[1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV)]. And, beyond that, the Son, who will rule supreme over all things in both spheres of the kingdom is the One in Whom “*dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [[Colossians 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+2.9&t=NKJV)].)

Though reference is made numerous times in Scripture to Paul being called to carry the message surrounding the kingdom to the Gentiles (*e.g.*, [Acts 9:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.15&t=NKJV); [Romans 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.5&t=NKJV); [11:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.13&t=NKJV); [15:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+15.16&t=NKJV); [Galatians 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.2&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.7&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.27&t=NKJV)) — allowing God to begin His work of bringing into existence a third firstborn son — Scripture also teaches that the message could not be carried directly to the Gentiles *per se*. That is, the message could not be proclaimed directly to the Gentiles as it had been proclaimed directly to Israel.

The Gentiles were alienated from all of God’s past dealings with Israel. And being so alienated, the Gentiles had “*no hope*” and were “*without God in the world*.” They were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” and, thus, in no position or condition to receive such a message ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV)).

The Gentiles had to first be removed from their dead, alienated state. They had to first pass “*from death unto life*” ([John 5:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.24&t=NKJV)). They had to first believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ([Ephesians 2:5-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.5-13&t=NKJV)).

And, through believing, they would become part of a completely new creation “*in Christ*” — a creation made possible only following the events of Calvary, a creation separate from either Jew or Gentile (though being “*Abraham’s seed* [because of the Christians’ position in Christ], *and heirs according to the promise*” [[Galatians 3:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26-29&t=NKJV)]). And this was a creation that included believing Jews but would ultimately be comprised mainly of believing Gentiles ([Acts 15:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.14&t=NKJV); [Galatians 3:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.28&t=NKJV); *cf.* [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.13-15&t=NKJV); [Colossians 3:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+3.9-11&t=NKJV)).

Thus, in relation to the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens, Scripture often refers to Paul being called to minister to “the Gentiles” simply because those forming the new creation “*in Christ*” would (following Paul’s conversion) be taken mainly from the Gentiles rather than from the Jews. They would form the main nucleus of this “*new creation*,” this “*one new man*.”

This is all part of what Paul calls “*the mystery*” (*cf.* [Ephesians 3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-6&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-28&t=NKJV)). And, though “*the mystery*” revealed to Paul had to do with the gospel of the glory of Christ, the gospel of the grace of God, of necessity, had to be proclaimed first among those out in the Gentile world.

When going to the Gentiles, Paul invariably, of necessity, had to begin with the simple message surrounding the gospel of the grace of God, though that was not his main ministry, the ministry to which he had been called. And these two facets of Paul’s ministry — with his emphasis on the gospel of the glory of Christ — can be seen over and over in the book of Acts and in the epistles that he wrote.

**The Dual Message**

The overall order and scope of Paul’s ministry becomes self-evident for anyone reading Scripture with an open mind and looking for these two facets of his ministry. Paul proclaimed the good news surrounding the grace of God with a view to his then being able to proclaim the good news surrounding 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](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.24-32&t=NKJV)). Or, for that matter, note also how plainly the matter is outlined in Paul’s epistle to the Christians in Ephesus ([Ephesians 1:7ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.7ff&t=NKJV); [2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1ff&t=NKJV); [3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1ff&t=NKJV)). 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 there is such confusion among Christians in the dual nature of [1 Corinthians 15:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-4&t=NKJV) in this respect, this passage will be used to illustrate the point. This whole passage is invariably used erroneously by Christians, not in a dual sense, but in a singular sense — as a reference only to the gospel of the grace of God.

The text though deals with both the gospel of the glory of Christ and the gospel of the grace of God, in that order (the reverse order in which Paul had originally proclaimed both to those in Corinth [though, looking back, he could now refer to both in this reverse order]). Paul, in this passage, was simply looking back and briefly commenting on that which he had proclaimed to those in Corinth, taking the matter from the present all the way back to the beginning.

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel that I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,*

*by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word that I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.*

*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: 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.* ([1 Corinthians 15:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-4&t=NKJV)).

The problem emerges when a person attempts to make Paul’s reference to “the gospel” in verses one and two pertain to his reference to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in verses three and four. A connection of this nature is not correct at all (though the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in vv. 3, 4 is the gospel [good news], it is not the same gospel [good news] Paul referred to in his opening remarks in vv. 1, 2). Making the good news Paul subsequently refers to in verses three and four to be synonymous with the good news that he began with in verses one and two is out of line with both the plain reading of the text and that revealed in the context.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as it is outlined in verses three and four is the gospel of the grace of God stated in its simplest form. But, as previously stated, Paul’s reference to “*the gospel*” in verses one and two is not a reference to the gospel of the grace of God in the following two verses at all. Rather, it is a reference to things that the Lord had previously opened up and revealed to Paul while in Arabia, things that he had proclaimed to those in Corinth after he had proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God to them.

This can be seen two different ways in these verses: (1) By that stated about the gospel in verses one and two, and (2) by the way verse three begins. And properly understanding the things revealed in these verses will necessitate going back into the preceding context, as well as referencing several passages of Scripture elsewhere.

1. [*1 Corinthians 15:1-2*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV)

Verses one and two refer to the good news (the gospel) that 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 you are saved* [*lit.*, ‘…you are being saved’]”; holding fast to the message proclaimed is shown by the words, “*if you hold fast that word that I preached to you*”; and believing or not believing the message with reference to a purpose in view is shown by the words, “*unless you have believed in vain* [*lit.*, ‘…believed apart from a purpose (or, ‘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](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:4-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4-9&t=NKJV)). The eternal salvation that we presently possess — the salvation of the spirit, wherein man passes “*from death unto life*” (*cf.* [John 3:36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.36&t=NKJV); [5:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.24&t=NKJV)) — 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 [1 Corinthians 15:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.2&t=NKJV) appears twice in the second warning ([Hebrews 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.6&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.14&t=NKJV)) and once in the fourth warning ([Hebrews 10:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.23&t=NKJV)). Holding fast in the second warning is with reference to “*the heavenly calling*” and “*the hope*” set before Christians ([Hebrews 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.1&t=NKJV), [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.6&t=NKJV)); and holding fast in the fourth warning is with reference to this same hope — “*the confession of our faith*”([Hebrews 10:23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.23-25&t=NKJV)).

Then, the thought of Christians believing without a purpose (or cause) is a reference to the fact that a person has been redeemed 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 surrounding man’s creation in the beginning — “…*let them have dominion*” ([Genesis 1:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26&t=NKJV), [28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.28&t=NKJV)). Man has been redeemed 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 that Paul referred to in the previous verse; and this is a purpose that can one day be realized only through governing one’s life accordingly, set forth in verse two.

Thus, in [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV), Paul referred to his previous proclamation of the gospel of the glory of Christ. But, beginning with verse three, he referred to another matter entirely — that which had made his proclamation of the gospel of the glory of Christ possible.

2. [*1 Corinthians 15:3-4*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.3-4&t=NKJV)

Note the way verse three begins. The fact that what Paul is about to say is not the same as that which he had previously said 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 that he had delivered unto them first (prior to delivering the good news to which he had previously referred, in [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV)), and this is something that 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 that Paul delivered to those in Corinth can be seen first by going back to the first two verses of 1 Corinthians.

*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.*

*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*  ([1 Corinthians 2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.1-2&t=NKJV))

Paul, when he first went to Corinth, couldn’t begin with a message surrounding the gospel of the glory of Christ, referred to in [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV) (and also in [1 Corinthians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.1&t=NKJV), preceding, as in [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV), a reference to the gospel of the grace of God [[1 Corinthians 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.2&t=NKJV); [15:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.3-4&t=NKJV)]). When Paul first went to Corinth, he found a city filled with unsaved Gentiles. And he had to first minister to those in Corinth as an evangelist. He had to first proclaim the simple message surrounding the gospel of the grace of God unto them. He had to begin with “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*.” He couldn’t begin at any other point.

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 surrounding the gospel of the grace of God]” ([Acts 18:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.11&t=NKJV); *cf.* [1 Corinthians 2:3ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.3ff&t=NKJV)).

And this is why Paul, in [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV), could allude to these things through simply calling their attention to “*the gospel* [‘the good news’] *that I preached unto you*…” They would know exactly what he meant, for he had previously spent an extensive period of time teaching them the things pertaining to this gospel. And they would also understand the distinction in verse three when he referred to the gospel of the grace of God that he, of necessity, had proclaimed to them at the very beginning.

**The Mystery — Moses and Paul**

“*The mystery*” revealed to Paul, “*hid in God*” from the beginning (the beginning of the ages), of necessity, formed 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](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-27&t=NKJV), [44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.44&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 10:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.6&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.11&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.9-11&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.16-18&t=NKJV), [25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-27&t=NKJV)).

And the New Testament has to do mainly with one major facet of Old Testament revelation, aside from the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It has to do mainly with the various things surrounding the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom — first, as these things pertained to Israel; and then, as these things presently pertain to the new creation “*in Christ*.”

“The mystery” was revealed to Moses first, though remaining a mystery, remaining veiled. Then, some fifteen centuries later, God took Paul aside (to Arabia, the same country to which He had previously taken Moses to reveal things surrounding the theocracy); and, in the person of His Son, God opened up and unveiled various things that He had previously revealed to Moses and other Old Testament prophets (*cf.* [Luke 24:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-27&t=NKJV)).

Progressive revelation of this nature can be seen in Peter’s reference to angels desiring “*to look into*” things surrounding the salvation of the soul, things that the Spirit moved him to write about, and things intimately associated with the mystery revealed to Paul ([1 Peter 1:3-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3-12&t=NKJV)). These angels could only have previously seen, in the Old Testament types, that which was being opened up and unveiled to Peter (and others). These were things that they desired to know more about; but, apart from the later revelation, which opened up and provided additional light on these things, the saving of the soul in connection with sufferings and glory — part of the mystery — could be little understood.

Thus, “*the mystery*” revealed to Paul was simply an opening up and an unveiling of that previously set forth in numerous parts of Old Testament typology. No other conclusion can be reached than to simply say that God, instructing Paul through His Son, used the same means by which He had previously revealed Himself, His plans, and His purposes to man.

God could only have drawn from previously established types, which He Himself established in the beginning, wherein the roots of all biblical doctrine lie. And, of necessity, He would have had to draw mainly from those types setting forth spiritual truths pertaining to the bride of Christ, the one destined to ascend the throne with Christ as consort queen.

And the various types that 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 and Exodus, chapter two deal with the bride being taken from the Gentiles. And there are numerous other types that deal with different facets of the matter.

Further, “*the mystery*” has to do with revealed truth surrounding believing Jews and Gentiles — forming a new creation “*in Christ*” (where there is neither Jew nor Gentile) — being heirs together, “*of the same body*” (Christ’s body). It has to do with “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (*cf.* [Ephesians 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:24-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.24-28&t=NKJV)).

And a type that, among other things, would have to do with Jews and Gentiles together in one body would be the record 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](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+4.22&t=NKJV)). And Gentiles, with Jews, 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.* [1 Corinthians 9:23-10:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.23-10.11&t=NKJV)).

And though God, in the beginning, designed various Old Testament types to reveal these things, once He had called the new creation “*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 and unveiling, God’s purpose for the present dispensation and the place that the Gentiles would occupy in this purpose could not be properly understood (*cf.* [Acts 10:45-48](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+10.45-48&t=NKJV); [11:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11.15-18&t=NKJV); [15:12-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.12-18&t=NKJV)).

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 that he was to carry to those 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 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.

(A “mystery [Greek: *musterion*, meaning, ‘a hidden thing,’ ‘a secret’]” in the New Testament is usually defined as something previously hidden but now revealed [*cf.* [Romans 16:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+16.25&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.4-5&t=NKJV)]. This definition though is not to 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.

Rather, a “mystery,” pertains to something previously revealed [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]. And the opening up and unveiling of a mystery [such as the mystery revealed to Paul in Arabia] 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 explain 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 knowledge of the message that he had been called to proclaim among the Gentiles. The Lord Himself took Paul aside, personally appeared to him, and taught him, One-on-one, the message that 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 appeared to Paul and opened up and explained things that had previously been revealed through Moses and the prophets [[Galatians 1:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-18&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:20-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.20-28&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Luke 24:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-27&t=NKJV)]; 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.)

**The Gospel**

Paul’s use of the word “gospel,” meaning good news, must always be understood contextually, as previously illustrated in [1 Corinthians 15:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-4&t=NKJV). 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 that had been delivered to him by the Lord while in Arabia.

Paul used the word, much more often than not, as a reference to the main crux of his ministry — the good news surrounding that which is encompassed within the mystery, which had been delivered to him, which he, in turn, had been called to deliver to Christians throughout the Gentile world. And the Christians to whom Paul ministered would easily understand his use of the word “gospel” from the context of that which he either had said or had written.

Paul began his epistle to the Christians in Rome after this fashion, referring to “*the gospel of God*,” “*the gospel of His Son*,” “*the gospel*,” and “*the gospel of Christ*” ([Romans 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.1&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.9&t=NKJV), [15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.15-16&t=NKJV)). And Paul, writing to these Christians, expressed a desire to travel to Rome in order to preach this gospel to them ([Romans 1:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.11-15&t=NKJV)).

Paul sought to proclaim this gospel to individuals whose faith was “*spoken of throughout the whole world*” ([Romans 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.8&t=NKJV)). And understanding the message that Paul sought to proclaim to the Christians in Rome as the gospel of the grace of God cannot possibly be correct. They had long since heard, understood, and accepted this message.

“The gospel of Christ” ([Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV)), which Paul sought to proclaim to Christians in Rome, understood contextually, can only be a reference to the gospel of the glory of Christ (*cf.* [Romans 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.1&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.9&t=NKJV), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.13&t=NKJV), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.15&t=NKJV), [17ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.17ff&t=NKJV) [the word *epignosis* (‘mature knowledge’) appears in the Greek text of [Romans 1:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.28&t=NKJV) — *ref*. the apostates in relation to the message surrounding the Word of the Kingdom in 2 Peter and Jude]). “*The gospel of Christ* [the good news concerning Israel’s Messiah, the One Who would rule and reign]” was a message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens, which was still being proclaimed “*to the Jew first*,” though it was now “*also to the Greek* [Gentile].”

And comparing Paul’s use of the expression, “*the gospel of Christ*,” in this passage with his use of this same expression elsewhere in his epistles will clearly reveal this to be the case, apart from question (*e.g.*, [Galatians 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.7&t=NKJV), [11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-12&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:27-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.27-28&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 3:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+3.2-3&t=NKJV)).

Then, a similar type reference to the gospel of the glory of Christ can be seen over and over in Paul’s epistles (*e.g.*, [Romans 2:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+2.16&t=NKJV); [16:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+16.25&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 9:22-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.22-27&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.3-4&t=NKJV); [Galatians 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.5&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.7&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.6&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.5&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.7&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.12&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 2:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+2.2-4&t=NKJV); [2 Thessalonians 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Thessalonians+2.14&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.11&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+1.8&t=NKJV); [2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.8&t=NKJV)). And a failure to recognize how Paul, much more often than not, used the word “gospel” throughout his epistles has resulted in a mistake of major proportions in biblical interpretation — something that negatively reflects not only on one’s understanding of the Pauline epistles but Scripture as a whole.

Christians throughout the churches of the land today understand practically nothing about the true nature of Paul’s ministry — things having to do with that which the Lord taught him in Arabia, opening the Old Testament Scriptures to his understanding before he ever embarked on the ministry to which he had been called. And, resultantly, they see the word “gospel” in the Pauline epistles and think of only one thing, which is usually wrong. They invariably think of the gospel of the grace of God and begin dealing with the text in relation to this gospel.

And though man may, at times, present a clear message surrounding the gospel of the grace of God from texts that do not deal with this gospel (usually accomplished through superficially dealing with the texts and contexts), he invariably does so at the expense of presenting the truth of that which the texts actually deal with.

God has structured His Word after a particular fashion, and within this structure He has placed particular truths at particular places for particular purposes. And man, through “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” ([1 Corinthians 2:9-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.9-13&t=NKJV)), is to always take these truths and proclaim them exactly as God has revealed them.

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Chapter Nine

**Lo, We Turn to the Gentiles**

*Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.*

*For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’”*

*When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.*

*But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”*

*Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it!*

*And when he had said these words, the Jews departed . . . .* ([Acts 13:46-47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.46-47&t=NKJV); [18:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.5-6&t=NKJV); [28:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28-29&t=NKJV)a).

Paul, ministering outside the land of Israel in the Gentile world during the time covered by the book of Acts, *always, without exception*, went to the Jewish people in every city that he entered *first*. So long as the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens remained open to Israel (from 30 A.D. to about 62 A.D.), Paul *always* carried out his ministry completely in accordance with God’s specified order — “*to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” ([Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV)).

Paul had been called to carry the message concerning the kingdom of the heavens to the Gentiles; but, as long as the re-offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel, the Jewish people held *a God-ordained priority*. This is the reason that Paul, throughout the book of Acts, is so often seen going to the synagogues to proclaim the message when *first* entering a city.

The synagogues were where Israel’s religious leaders could be found; and Paul went to the synagogues to proclaim the message to these religious leaders *first*. Only after the message had been proclaimed to and rejected by the Jews was Paul free to also carry the message to the Gentiles in any locality where he ministered (*e.g*., [Acts 13:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.5&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.14&t=NKJV); [14:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.1&t=NKJV); [17:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.1-2&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.10&t=NKJV), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.17&t=NKJV); [18:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.1-4&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.19&t=NKJV); [19:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.1-8&t=NKJV)).

*Three recorded times* during his ministry, after he had carried the message to Israel’s religious leaders and experiencing rejection at their hands, Paul told the rejecting Jews that he was going to the Gentiles with the message.

*The first time* Paul told the Jews that he was going to the Gentiles with the message was in Antioch, while Barnabas still accompanied him in his ministry ([Acts 13:46-48](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.46-48&t=NKJV)); *the second time* Paul told this to the Jews was a few years later in Corinth, with Silas and Timothy helping him in his ministry ([Acts 18:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.5&t=NKJV), [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.6&t=NKJV)); and *the third and last time* Paul told this to the Jews was at the end of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, in Rome, where he was ministering alone ([Acts 28:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28-29&t=NKJV)).

Though Paul had discipled many individuals during the course of his ministry — some becoming lifelong fellow-workers (*e.g.*, Timothy, Titus, Philemon) — most of those to whom he had ministered had withdrawn from him by the time his ministry was nearing completion. And this was undoubtedly due, in no small part, to the false teachers that he had so often warned against (*e.g.*, [Acts 20:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.29-31&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 1:18-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.18-20&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 4:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.1-5&t=NKJV)).

Paul’s last recorded words, written to Timothy, relate, “*all those in Asia have turned away from me*,” and “*no one stood with me, but all forsook me*” ([2 Timothy 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+1.15&t=NKJV); [4:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.16&t=NKJV); cf. [4:10-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.10-15&t=NKJV)). But Paul knew, though “*all men*” had forsaken him, that the Lord “*stood*” with him and “*strengthened*” him, *in order that “all the Gentiles might hear”* the message that had been committed to his trust (*cf.* [Acts 26:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.19&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.20&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:24-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.24-28&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.11&t=NKJV); [Titus 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.3&t=NKJV)).

And Paul also knew something else. He knew that the Lord would deliver him “*from every evil work*” and bring him safely to “*His heavenly kingdom* [*lit.*, ‘…He will save me with respect to His heavenly kingdom’]” ([2 Timothy 4:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.18&t=NKJV); *cf.* [2 Timothy 4:6-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.6-8&t=NKJV)).

Paul was *a driven man* throughout the course of his ministry. He was *driven* by that which had been committed to his trust, knowing the gravity of the message and the outcome of the matter. He refused to be associated with someone who wouldn’t remain with him in the ministry ([Acts 15:38-41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.38-41&t=NKJV)), and he refused to let anything stand in the way of his being able to complete the task to which he had been called (*cf.* [Acts 9:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.16&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 11:23-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+11.23-28&t=NKJV); [Galatians 6:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+6.17&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:27-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.27-29&t=NKJV)).

Completing this task carried him not only through the several decades in which the re-offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel but also into the first few years of that time when the kingdom was no longer proffered to Israel. And the Lord had allowed Paul, while in Rome, the center of Gentile world power in that day, to be the one to announce the close of this offer.

From the time John the Baptist appeared on the scene with the message, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*” ([Matthew 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.2&t=NKJV)), up to the time Paul announced to the Jews in Rome — a third and closing announcement — that he was going to the Gentiles ([Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV)), the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel. At any time during this period (from about 27 A.D. to about 62 A.D.), had Israel, as a nation, repented, Messianic blessings would have been ushered in.

And to realize such blessings, *Israel’s Messiah had to be present*, *in the nation’s midst* ([Joel 2:27-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27-32&t=NKJV)). Before Christ’s ascension, He was already present. But Israel wouldn’t repent. Following Christ’s ascension, He could and would have returned. But Israel had to repent first.

After this complete time had run its course — time covering both the original offer and the re-offer of the kingdom — the nation was set aside; and to realize Messianic blessings beyond this time, the nation had to await the completion of God’s work among the Gentiles. Israel had to await “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” being brought to pass ([Romans 11:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.25-26&t=NKJV)).

God’s prophesied work among the Gentiles is that which Paul had been called to introduce and lay the groundwork for; and after Paul’s announcement in [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV), the nation of Israel, in order to again see her Messiah’s face, with all the attendant blessings to follow, had to await God removing from the Gentiles “*a people for his name*” ([Acts 15:14-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.14-18&t=NKJV)). And this would require a separate and distinct dispensation within the framework of God’s dealings with man, which would last approximately 2,000 years.

**The Complete Period — Israel, the Church**

The parable of the fruitless fig tree, given by Christ during His earthly ministry ([Luke 13:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.6-9&t=NKJV)), had to do with both the original offer and the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (*ref.* chapter 1, “[Continuing from the Gospels](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Continuing%20from%20the%20Gospels)”). Christ though, later in His ministry, gave another parable covering an even broader scope of the matter. The parable of the marriage feast in [Matthew 22:1-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.1-14&t=NKJV) covers not only the original offer and the re-offer *to Israel* but also the subsequent offer *to the new creation “in Christ,”* along with a judgment of *the new creation* at the end of the dispensation.

The parable of the marriage feast is the last of three parables that Christ gave shortly after He cursed the fruitless fig tree ([Matthew 21:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.18-19&t=NKJV)) — an act that pointed to fruitless, unrepentant Israel and the nation’s destiny (in relation to the kingdom of the heavens) because of the nation’s condition (*cf.* [Matthew 21:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.15&t=NKJV); [23:38-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.38-39&t=NKJV)). And these parables, contextually, could only have been given to help explain Christ’s action at this time.

(Note that a parable — Greek: *parabole* [meaning, “to cast alongside”] — is simply an additional truth placed alongside of a previous truth to help explain the previous truth. In this respect, the parables that Christ gave following His cursing the fig tree would have direct bearing upon this act, helping to explain the various things involved.)

The first of these three parables deals with Israel’s unwillingness to repent, showing the reason for the cursing of the fig tree ([Matthew 21:28-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.28-32&t=NKJV)). Then, the second parable deals with Israel’s rejection of the prophets, and last of all, God’s Son, who had been sent unto them; and this would, again, show the reason for the cursing of the fig tree, providing additional information ([Matthew 21:33-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.33-39&t=NKJV)). And it was at the end of this second parable that Christ announced to Israel through the nation’s religious leaders,

*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.* ([Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV))

It was at this point that Christ announced the removal of the kingdom from Israel (anticipated since the events of [Matthew 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12&t=NKJV); [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13&t=NKJV)), and this announcement was with a view to *the new creation “in Christ”* being brought into existence (previously referred to by Christ in [Matthew 16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16&t=NKJV) [“…I will build my Church…”]). And, though the new creation “in Christ” was brought into existence about two months later on the day of Pentecost, there was also a corresponding re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, beginning at this same time ([Acts 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.1ff&t=NKJV)).

Then the parable of the marriage feast ([Matthew 22:1-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.1-14&t=NKJV)) was given to help explain, in a slightly different respect, Christ cursing the fruitless fig tree. This parable was given to shed additional light on the immediately preceding parable and Christ’s announcement concerning the kingdom being taken from Israel. That is to say, the parable of the marriage feast was placed alongside that which had proceeded to help those hearing Christ better understand what had been said and done.

In the parable of the marriage feast, verses three through seven encompass that time extending from the beginning of the offer of the kingdom to Israel under John the Baptist to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This part of the parable has to do with events covering almost four and one-half decades.

Verse two introduces the matter, continuing from the preceding chapter; and verse three has to do with the original offer under John, Jesus, and His disciples:

*The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come*. ([Matthew 22:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.2-3&t=NKJV))

Then verses four through seven have to do with the re-offer of the kingdom under the apostles (*et al*.), along with the destruction of Jerusalem following the completion of this re-offer:

*Again, he sent out other servants, saying, “Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’*

*But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.*

*And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.*

*But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.’”* ([Matthew 22:4-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.4-7&t=NKJV))

Then verses eight through ten have to do with the offer being extended to the new creation “in Christ” following the setting aside of Israel:

*Then he said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.*

*Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.”*

*So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.* ([Matthew 22:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.8-10&t=NKJV))

And the remainder of the parable pertains to God’s dealings, through His Son, with those from the latter group at the judgment seat of Christ after the dispensation has run its course:

*But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.*

*So he said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless.*

*Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*For many are called, but few are chosen* [‘called out’].” ([Matthew 22:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.11-14&t=NKJV))

Thus, it is textually evident that the parable of the marriage feast has to do with and is inseparably connected with the preceding parable and Christ’s announcement concerning the kingdom being taken from Israel; and this parable *must* be understood within its contextual setting, exactly where and why Christ gave it. *Only through this means* can this parable, the preceding two parables, or any of the other parables in Scripture be properly understood.

These three parables have to do with issues surrounding *the kingdom of the heavens*, not eternal verities; they have to do with *God’s dealings with the saved*, not the unsaved. And a failure to understand and proclaim them in relation to their contextual setting and the subject matter at hand can only add to an already existing confusion throughout Christendom pertaining to the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens.

**Before and After** [**Acts 28:28**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV)

*Signs, wonders,* and *miracles* were inseparably connected with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel (both in the original offer and in the re-offer). In the gospel accounts (in the original offer), these manifestations of supernatural power *were more evident* prior to Israel’s climactic rejection of the message and Christ’s departure from the house ([Matthew 12:22-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22-32&t=NKJV); [13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.1&t=NKJV)), though *seen throughout the period*; and in Acts (in the subsequent re-offer), these manifestations of supernatural power *were more evident* prior to Israel’s climactic rejection once again and the introduction of Paul to carry the message to the Gentiles ([Acts 7:51-58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.51-58&t=NKJV); [9:1-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.1-15&t=NKJV)), though, as in the original offer, *seen throughout the period* (*ref*. chapters 1, 2, “[Continuing from the Gospels](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Continuing%20from%20the%20Gospels)” and “[Restoration of the Kingdom](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Restoration%20of%20the%20Kingdom)”).

And there was a definite, revealed reason for the particular type manifestations of supernatural power — something that would not be true at all beyond that time when the offer was removed from Israel and the nation set aside, awaiting “*the fullness of the Gentiles*.” These signs, wonders, and miracles were not only inseparably connected with the offer of the kingdom to Israel (a connection established in the Old Testament Scriptures) but they spoke volumes in and of themselves. These manifestations of supernatural power reflected directly *on Israel’s spiritual condition, past, present,* and *future* — something dealt with throughout the Old Testament.

In this respect, before Israel’s climactic rejection in both the original offer and the re-offer, it was only natural for these signs, wonders, and miracles *to be very prevalent*. However, once these two climactic points had been reached, in each instance it was also only natural for the signs, wonders, and miracles *to become less prevalent*, though still in evidence because the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel. Then, once the offer had been withdrawn (about 62 A.D.), it was not only natural but absolutely necessary that the signs, wonders, and miracles *cease altogether*.

They *had to cease* at this time. They would have been *completely out of place* beyond this point. And this can be seen from a Scriptural standpoint entirely apart from referencing 1 Corinthians chapter thirteen — a section of Scripture in which Paul stated that they would cease, giving both *the time* and *the reason*.

Paul’s reference to this matter in his first letter to those in Corinth was made necessary because the church in Corinth was a Gentile church in which signs, wonders, and miracles were being manifested, with a view to provoking Israel to jealousy ([Romans 10:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.19&t=NKJV); [11:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.11-14&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Acts 13:44-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.44-45&t=NKJV)). And Paul, viewing that which was occurring in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures, called their attention to *the time* and *the reason* when these manifestations of supernatural power would cease ([1 Corinthians 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.8-10&t=NKJV)).

1. *Purpose for Signs, Wonders, and Miracles*

Most of the manifestations of supernatural power during the ministry of Christ and the apostles (during the periods covered by both the gospel accounts and by the book of Acts) centered on *bodily healings*. This was the manner in which they were introduced during Christ’s ministry ([Matthew 4:23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.23-25&t=NKJV)), and this was the manner in which they were brought to a close about three and one-half decades later during Paul’s ministry ([Acts 28:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.7-9&t=NKJV)).

(And along with bodily healings, *death* was no longer irreversible [[Mark 5:35-43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+5.35-43&t=NKJV); [John 11:1-47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.1-47&t=NKJV); [Acts 9:36-42](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.36-42&t=NKJV); [20:7-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.7-12&t=NKJV)], *material needs* were miraculously supplied [food, drink, etc. ([John 2:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+2.1-11&t=NKJV); [6:1-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+6.1-14&t=NKJV); [Acts 5:19-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.19-23&t=NKJV); [16:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.26&t=NKJV))], there was *deliverance* from demonic spirits [[Matthew 12:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.22&t=NKJV); [Acts 5:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.16&t=NKJV)], and *angelic ministry* was abundantly available [[Matthew 4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.11&t=NKJV); [Acts 12:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+12.7-8&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+12.23&t=NKJV)].)

The signs, centering on bodily healings (though including other related things), reflected on and had to do with a dual aspect of one thing — *the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel* — *an existing condition* (shown prior to the healings) and *a future condition* (shown following the healings). And *deliverance for the nation* after the fashion set forth by the signs was contingent on national repentance, followed by baptism (*cf.* [Matthew 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.1-11&t=NKJV); [4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.17&t=NKJV), [23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.23-25&t=NKJV); [10:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.5-8&t=NKJV); [Acts 2:37-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.37-38&t=NKJV); [3:19-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.19-21&t=NKJV)).

The signs, wonders, and miracles were the credentials of the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom, depicting Israel’s spiritual condition both before and after the manifestation of supernatural power (necessary to bring the signs to pass). And this would be the same manifestation of supernatural power that could and would — contingent on Israel’s repentance — bring to pass that of which the signs spoke, *i.e., Israel’s future supernatural healing* (accompanied by God’s supernatural provision for the nation in all areas of life, dealt with in all the other various signs).

Israel’s spiritual condition prior to God’s miraculous healing is revealed numerous places in Scripture. But note Isaiah’s description of the nation in this respect:

*Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward.*

*Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.*

*From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment.*  ([Isaiah 1:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+1.4-6&t=NKJV)).

This was the way Isaiah introduced Israel at the very beginning of his prophecy; but he didn’t remain at this point, depicting Israel’s spiritual condition during his day (a condition that has continued to the present day). Isaiah went on, at the beginning, to relate the main subject matter of his prophecy.

*Israel was sick, but Israel could and one day would be cured of this sickness*. And that is what Isaiah went on to also relate. Israel’s condition *was not* permanent. The nation *would* one day be healed.

But there was *a condition*: “*If you are willing and obedient . . .* .” ([Isaiah 1:19a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+1.19a&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Isaiah 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+1.18&t=NKJV)). Only then would the Lord turn His hand, purge the nation, and restore her rulers ([Isaiah 1:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+1.25-26&t=NKJV)). Only then would redemption occur, and only then would the kingdom with all its glory be restored to Israel ([Isaiah 1:27-2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+1.27-2.5&t=NKJV)).

But when will Israel repent, allowing *healing* to occur? The answer is provided numerous places in Scripture, but note Hosea’s prophecy where the matter is dealt with in so many words.

In [Hosea 5:13-6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.13-6.2&t=NKJV) Israel is pictured as *sick*, having a *wound* (near the end of Israel’s time of sickness, during the coming Tribulation), with the Assyrian (Antichrist) being unable to provide a cure ([Hosea 5:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.13&t=NKJV)). Help though is available, but it *must* come from the same source that Isaiah or any of the other prophets foretold. *It must come from the Lord* ([Hosea 5:14-6:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.14-6.1&t=NKJV)).

Israel’s sickness was brought about by the Lord because of the nation’s refusal to obey that which the Lord had commanded. And the same One Who brought about Israel’s condition is also the only One Who can effect a change in Israel’s condition. And *a reversal of the nation’s condition* after this fashion is dependent on *a reversal of the nation’s attitude and action* regarding the Lord’s commandments (*cf.* [Exodus 2:23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+2.23-25&t=NKJV); [3:7-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.7-12&t=NKJV); [4:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.19-20&t=NKJV)).

Note [Hosea 6:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+6.1-2&t=NKJV) in this respect:

*Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.* ([Hosea 6:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+6.1-2&t=NKJV))

Then, note the two things revealed in [Hosea 5:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.15&t=NKJV) that introduce Israel’s future repentance: (1) The two days begin with Israel’s “offense” (*i.e.*, the nation’s crucifixion of her Messiah); and (2) the two days come to a close with the Jewish people seeking the Lord’s face during a time of “affliction” (during the coming Tribulation), receiving the Lord when He returns.

Both the time of the Tribulation and the time when Israel will seek the Lord’s face will be two days (2,000 years) beyond the crucifixion of Christ, which was four days (4,000 years) beyond the creation of Adam. Thus, healing for the nation will occur after two days, on the third day (counting from Calvary), or after six days, on the seventh day (counting from Adam).

As God worked six days to restore a ruined creation in the beginning and then rested the seventh day ([Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV)), so is He presently working six more days to restore a subsequent ruined creation (6,000 years), with a view to resting the seventh day (the seventh 1,000-year period). And all subsequent sections of Scripture, such as [Hosea 6:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+6.1-2&t=NKJV), merely rest upon and provide additional light for the foundational framework — showing the septenary structure of Scripture — set forth at the very beginning (see, in this site, chapter 2, [The Study of Scripture](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php)).

*Then, with all of the preceding in mind, note Isaiah, chapter fifty-three. This chapter outlines Israel’s confession in that coming seventh day, following the healing of the nation:*

*Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.* . . .([Isaiah 53:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.1&t=NKJV), [4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.4-5&t=NKJV)).

It was this future condition of Israel that Isaiah (and the other prophets) dealt with so extensively. And it was this future condition of Israel that the miraculous signs throughout Scripture pointed to, whether during Moses and Joshua’s day, during Elijah and Elisha’s day, or during the days of Christ and the apostles (both preceding and following the events of Calvary).

(*The central thought* when the Spirit of God closed the Old Testament canon pertained *to Israel being healed* [[Malachi 4:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Malachi+4.2-3&t=NKJV)], and this was likewise *the central thought* when the heavens were once again opened over four centuries later [[Matthew 3:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.1-2&t=NKJV); [4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.17&t=NKJV), [23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.23-25&t=NKJV)]. The New is simply a continuation and unveiling of that which has lain in the Old *from the beginning.*

Do you want to understand the New? *Then study the Old*. Do you want to see Israel or the Christ of the New? *Then view Israel or the nation’s Messiah in the eyes of the Old*.)

2. *Cessation of Signs, Wonders, and Miracles*

Paul, in [1 Corinthians 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.8-10&t=NKJV), referred to a day when the miraculous signs being manifested at that time would cease. And it is evident that the whole panorama of spiritual sign-gifts (chapter 12, [From Jerusalem to Rome](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#From%20Jerusalem%20to%20Rome)) would be alluded to by the three that Paul singled out — *prophecies, tongues,* and *knowledge*.

All of the spiritual sign-gifts would have to be looked upon together — as a unit, comprised of different parts — simply because of *their interrelated purpose*. They all existed for *exactly the same purpose*. And when the Lord saw fit to bring His purpose surrounding these gifts to a close, they (all of them together, delineated by the three in [1 Corinthians 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.8&t=NKJV)) would no longer exist.

Prior to [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV), Paul had the power to effect bodily healings (portending Israel’s healing), for the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel ([Acts 28:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.8-9&t=NKJV)). But after this time, when the offer of the kingdom was no longer open to the nation — when healing for Israel was set aside with the nation, with the corresponding cessation of signs, wonders, and miracles — Paul no longer possessed this power.

After this time, Paul instructed Timothy, “…*use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities*” ([1 Timothy 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+5.23&t=NKJV)); and he later left Trophimus “*at Miletus sick*” ([2 Timothy 4:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.20&t=NKJV)).

In [1 Corinthians 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.8-10&t=NKJV), two expressions are used in opposite senses — “*in part*,” and “*perfect*”:

*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.*

*For we know in part and we prophesy in part.*

*But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.* ([1 Corinthians 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.8-10&t=NKJV))

In these verses, “*in part*” has to do with *incompleteness* (from *ek meros*, meaning “out of a part [plural in the Greek text of [1 Corinthians 13:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.9-10&t=NKJV), ‘out of parts’],” and “*perfect*” has to do with *completeness* (from *teleios*, meaning “complete,” “bringing to an end”). Thus, *ek meros* and *teleios* are used in antithetical senses.

And both expressions, since they have to do with either *the continuance* or *the end* of the manifestations of supernatural signs, are inseparably connected with either the continuance or *the end of the offer* of the kingdom to Israel.

In this respect, *incompleteness* (shown by *ek meros*) has to do with that time *prior* to God finishing His work pertaining to the offer of the kingdom to Israel (with signs, wonders, and miracles still in evidence); and *completeness* (shown by *teleios*) has to do with that time *following* God finishing His work pertaining to the offer of the kingdom to Israel (with signs, wonders, and miracles no longer in evidence).

Thus, the thought set forth by Paul in [1 Corinthians 13:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+13.9-10&t=NKJV), contextually, is something quite easy to see and understand so long as the proper connection with the manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles is made. But remove *this key*, and the whole matter becomes impossible to properly see and understand.

Verse nine teaches that Paul and others were exercising *supernatural spiritual gifts.* And they were exercising these gifts during a time of “incompleteness,” *i.e*., they were exercising these gifts during the period prior *to the time* God would “complete” His work with Israel relative to the proffered kingdom.

Verse ten then goes on to state that the time was coming when God would “complete” His work surrounding the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel. Then, the things being done during the time of “incompleteness” (during the time when the offer of the kingdom remained open to Israel, *prior to God completing His work in this respect*) would “*be done away*” with.

And this is exactly what occurred when the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn from Israel, with a view to God removing from the Gentiles “*a people for His name*.” The manifested signs, wonders, and miracles *ceased*. And this was *in complete keeping* with their usage in the Old Testament (pertaining to Israel and the kingdom), *in complete keeping* with their usage during the time covered by *both the gospel accounts and the book of Acts (again, pertaining to Israel and the kingdom), and* in complete keeping with that which they portended (Israel’s spiritual condition, both present and future).

When Paul told the Jews for the third and last time that he was going to the Gentiles with the message that they had rejected ([Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV)) — with God then setting Israel aside for the remainder of the dispensation — signs, wonders, and miracles *had to cease* until such a time as God would once again resume His dealings with Israel relative to the kingdom. This is a truth drawn from the Old Testament, the gospel accounts, and the book of Acts *that, from a biblical standpoint, cannot be denied.*

And that’s where we are today — living during a time in which Israel has been set aside awaiting “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” being brought to pass ([Romans 11:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.25&t=NKJV)). We’re living during a time when signs, wonders, and miracles *can have no part* within the framework of God’s plans and purposes, for any such manifestation of supernatural powers would portend God dealing with Israel in relation to the nation’s spiritual condition and the theocracy during the present time, *something which He is not doing at all.*

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Chapter Ten

**Central Message**

**The Pauline Epistles**

*And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,*

*as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.* ([2 Peter 3:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.15-16&t=NKJV))

The books of 1, 2 Peter deal extensively with one subject — *the salvation of the soul* ([1 Peter 1:4-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4-9&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:2-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.2-11&t=NKJV)). This is the central message throughout both epistles; and if this is not recognized at the outset, it will be impossible to properly understand either epistle.

Peter, in his first epistle, dealt with the salvation of the soul in relation to testing, trials, and sufferings ([1 Peter 1:5-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.5-11&t=NKJV); [2:21-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.21-24&t=NKJV); [4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.19&t=NKJV)). And in his second epistle, Peter opened with thoughts surrounding maturity in the faith and the importance of always keeping the message surrounding the salvation of the soul uppermost in one’s thinking ([1 Peter 1:2-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.2-19&t=NKJV); *cf.* [James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV)). But then Peter took a different turn in his second epistle and began to warn against false teachers, paralleling, to a large extent, the content of Jude’s epistle, which also forms a warning against false teachers ([1 Peter 2:1-3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.1-3.8&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Jude 1:4-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.4-19&t=NKJV)).

Then, the warnings in both Peter’s and Jude’s epistles would have to do with the same false teachers whom Paul so often warned against in his ministry and epistles (*e.g.*, [Acts 20:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.29-31&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 4:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+4.1-3&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 3:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.1-8&t=NKJV); [4:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.3-4&t=NKJV)). All three writers dealt with t*he same subject matter* (the saving of the soul), and all three warned against *the same false teachers* who would arise (those who would teach contrary to that which Paul, Peter, and Jude taught in their ministry — things pertaining to the salvation of the soul).

Then note that Peter ended his second epistle by calling attention to Paul’s writings. Peter, at the conclusion of that which he wrote, called attention to the fact that Paul had previously written about the same things that he had just finished writing about. And Paul had written after this fashion “*in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things* . . .” ([2 Peter 3:16a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.16a&t=NKJV)).

Paul had dealt with *exactly the same things* that Peter dealt with in his two epistles. Paul had dealt with t*he same salvation* ([2 Peter 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.15&t=NKJV)) and *the same warnings against false teachers* ([2 Peter 3:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.16-17&t=NKJV) [16b]).

Peter dealt with this message, Jude dealt with this message, Paul dealt with this message, and the writers of the other New Testament epistles (the writers of Hebrews, James, and 1, 2, 3 John) also dealt with various aspects of this message.

This is a message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens and a salvation to be realized therein. This salvation was offered to Israel prior to the events of Calvary and re-offered to the nation following the events of Calvary. And, throughout the present dispensation, this salvation has been and is being offered to *the new creation “in Christ.”*

The message surrounding salvation in relation to the kingdom of the heavens is the central message of the New Testament, introduced in the Old Testament. This is the message seen in the gospels at the beginning of the New Testament, leading into the finished work of Christ at Calvary; this is the message that continues in Acts, following Christ’s finished work at Calvary; and this is the message that continues on into the epistles and the opening four chapters of the book of Revelation (where God completes His dealings with *the one new man “in Christ,”* allowing Him to once again turn and complete His dealings with Israel [[Revelation 6-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-18&t=NKJV)]).

In this respect, correctly understanding the correlation between that which is taught in the four gospels, the book of Acts, the twenty-one epistles that follow, and the opening four chapters of the book of Revelation (which, for the Church, climax that which precedes, anticipating the marriage festivities and Christ’s millennial reign [[Revelation 19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19&t=NKJV); [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20&t=NKJV)]) is dependent on one thing. It is dependent on understanding basics pertaining to the message surrounding salvation in relation to the kingdom of the heavens — the salvation of the soul. The whole of the New Testament centers on this message — first as it pertains to *Israel*, and then as it pertains to *the new creation “in Christ.”*  And that carries a person from the beginning of Matthew’s gospel to the opening four chapters of the book of Revelation, with the conclusion of the matter seen later in the book.

Thus, the importance of properly understanding this message can hardly be overemphasized. This is a message that pervades the whole of Scripture, beginning, not in the opening chapters of Matthew’s gospel, but in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis. It is a message introduced in the Old Testament (as Christ’s finished work at Calvary is introduced in the Old Testament [[Genesis 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4&t=NKJV); [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22&t=NKJV); [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV); [Numbers 21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+21&t=NKJV)]), and it is a message that must be understood in the eyes of the Old Testament prophets (as Christ’s finished work at Calvary must be understood in this same respect [[Luke 24:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-27&t=NKJV)]).

Understand the former (the message in the Old Testament), and you can understand the latter (the message in the New Testament); but ignore or misunderstand the former, and you will not possess the information that God has provided to help you understand the latter. The New is simply a continuation of and an unveiling of that which has lain in the Old from the beginning.

(Foundational material pertaining to the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens — particularly as it relates to the progression of the message through the gospels and then through Acts [with events in Acts occurring during the time several of the epistles were written] — has been set forth in different places throughout the first nine chapters of this book. And these nine preceding chapters contain, in respect, the necessary foundational material that will allow one to go on from that point and properly view the central message of the Pauline epistles, the central message of the general epistles, and the goal and climax of the matter in the book of Revelation.

The present chapter will concern itself with the message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens in the Pauline epistles, the next chapter [11] will concern itself with this same message in the general epistles, and the concluding chapter [13] will concern itself with the goal and climax of the matter in the book of Revelation.)

**Distinguishing Traits**

Each of the individuals whom God, through His Spirit, used to pen the words of the New Testament canon exhibited certain individual qualities and characteristics in that which they wrote. This was true relative to both their use of the Greek language and their use of different words, terms, or expressions.

The thought is not at all that the Spirit of God, in a mechanical fashion, moved men as they wrote. If this had occurred, there would not be the noticeable differences in styles, words, terms, or expressions used in the different epistles. There would be uniformity in this respect. But uniformity exists only in the thread of teaching throughout *what* they wrote, not in *how* they wrote.

It is evident that the Spirit of God took and used men within the framework of all their own individual qualities and characteristics as they penned the Word, which would take into account all their prior experiences in life. And this is something that falls within the scope of God’s sovereign control of all things, not only in the different writers’ generations but in all the preceding generations from which the writers’ particular and peculiar hereditary traits were derived as well. *Nothing* occurs in a haphazard manner within the scope of God’s plans and purposes.

The Spirit of God took and used men to pen particular parts of the Word of God, while, at the same time, He allowed these men to use their own language style, words, terms, and expressions as they wrote; and, through this process, the Spirit guarded them from error in that which they wrote.

And within the Spirit’s control after this fashion, the structure of the Word of God and the intricate fashion in which it was put together moved *completely beyond* man’s finite wisdom and ability. Those whom the Spirit of God used to pen the Word of God, though being allowed to write within the framework of their own individual traits, wrote strictly as “*they were moved* [‘borne,’ ‘carried,’ ‘led’] *by the Holy Spirit*” ([2 Peter 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.21&t=NKJV)).

And the end result of the Spirit’s work in this respect — proceeded by God’s sovereign control in matters throughout not only the different writers’ generations but prior generations as well — *was always the same*. That which these men wrote was *the very Word of God, down to the individual words that they used and the individual letters comprising each of these words.*

Can man understand these things surrounding the inspiration of Scripture? No, but man can believe these things. And, because of the clear statements in Scripture and the evident nature from Scripture concerning how things were brought to pass, belief (faith) is exactly what God expects ([Hebrews 11:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.6&t=NKJV)).

1. *Paul and the Gospel*

The manner in which God revealed His Word to man has been briefly covered for a reason. The epistles (Pauline and general epistles) were written by at least five — probably six — different men (the author of Hebrews being unknown), and certain individual distinguishing qualities and characteristics 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 thing, 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 four gospels, seventeen times in the book of Acts, eighty-three times in the Pauline epistles, six times in the general epistles, and three times in the book of Revelation.

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? 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 surrounding 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 strictly 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 *much 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* the teaching in the text but it will also often result in *a perversion* of the message surrounding the simple gospel of the grace of God.

An example of the preceding would be the manner in which [1 Corinthians 15:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-4&t=NKJV) is usually understood. The word “*gospel*” appears in verse one, 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 and two, 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 *can 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 verses three and four (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, that spoken of in verses one and two *is always done away with*, and that spoken of in verses three and four *is often corrupted* (through bringing elements [from [1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.1-2&t=NKJV)] over into the gospel of the grace of God which do not belong there). And this same thing would be true numerous places in the Pauline epistles when the context is ignored and the word “gospel” is made to refer to something that the text doesn’t refer to at all (*ref.* chapter 8, “[Paul’s Gospel](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Paul%E2%80%99s%20Gospel)”).

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 that 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 (taught to him by the Lord) 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 in Arabia. It had to do with Jews and Gentiles being placed together in “*the same body*” as “*fellowheirs* [‘joint-heirs’]” with Christ ([Ephesians 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV)); and these Jewish and Gentile believers (Christians), together, possessed a “*hope*” relative to one day occupying a position of honor and glory with Christ in “*his heavenly kingdom*” (*cf.* [Colossians 1:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-28&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 4:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.17-18&t=NKJV)).

And Paul referred to *the good news* surrounding this message as “*my gospel*” ([Romans 16:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+16.25&t=NKJV)), “*our gospel*” ([2 Corinthians 4:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.3&t=NKJV)), “*the glorious gospel of Christ* [*lit*., ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’]” ([2 Corinthians 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.4&t=NKJV)), “*the gospel of God*” ([Romans 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.1&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 11:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+11.7&t=NKJV)), “*the gospel of Christ*” ([Romans 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.16&t=NKJV); [Galatians 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.7&t=NKJV)), etc. Then, numerous times Paul simply used the word “*gospel*” alone to refer to this good news ([Romans 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.15&t=NKJV); [Galatians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.6&t=NKJV)).

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 that 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 Calvary 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 the *best news* that they could ever hear.

And Paul’s ministry centered on *the latter*, not the former. Paul’s ministry centered on proclaiming that which the Lord had revealed to him in Arabia. And the message contained therein 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 — *positions as co-heirs with His Son, from a heavenly realm, in the coming kingdom*. To use the writer of Hebrews words, it was “*so great salvation*” ([Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV)).

And Paul’s repeated reference to the message surrounding this offer as “good news” is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his writings.

2. *Paul and the Faith*

Christians at the beginning of the present dispensation, before they were ever called “*Christians*” ([Acts 11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11.26&t=NKJV)), were known simply as those of “*the way*” (*cf*. [Acts 9:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.2&t=NKJV); [19:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.9&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.23&t=NKJV); [22:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+22.4&t=NKJV); [24:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+24.14&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+24.22&t=NKJV)). In each instance the word “way” is preceded by the definite article, and the expression should be translated, “*the way*.”

Those believing the message proclaimed on the day of Pentecost and following were singled out through the use of this expression. They were believing-Jews who followed *a way different* from that being followed by the remainder of the nation (which was looked upon by Israel’s religious leaders as a *heretical way* [[Acts 24:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+24.14&t=NKJV)]), and the expression was later used within Gentile circles as well, though by Jews ([Acts 19:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.9&t=NKJV)).

The origin of this expression is rooted in believing the message being proclaimed to Israel relative to *salvation* in the first seven chapters of Acts, and this salvation had to do with *deliverance in the kingdom*, not with one’s eternal destiny (*ref.* chapters 1-5, of this book). Those of “*the way*” had believed the message being proclaimed, and they were seeking, through every means possible, to bring about belief (in the same message) on the part of an entire unbelieving nation, the nation of Israel.

Prior to his conversion, Paul was going about the country seeking to destroy that which he and numerous other Jews viewed as a new and heretical Jewish sect by doing away with those “*of the way*”; and, on his journey from Jerusalem to Damascus, he had his eyes opened to the truth rejected by Israel. Resultantly, he became a follower of “the way” and subsequently exhibited the same urgency and zeal toward *proclaiming “the way”* as he had previously exhibited toward trying *to destroy “the way.”*

Years later, writing to the churches in Galatia, Paul described the message that he had sought to destroy by using the expression, “*the faith*” ([Galatians 1:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.23&t=NKJV)). And not only did Paul use this expression writing to the churches in Galatia (to refer to the message surrounding the King and the proffered kingdom, the message described simply as “*the way*”), but he used it numerous times throughout his ministry, referring to the same message (*e.g*., [Acts 14:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.22&t=NKJV); [Romans 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.5&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.8&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.15&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.27&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.21&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.8&t=NKJV); [4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7&t=NKJV) [“*faith*,” in each reference, is articular in the Greek text]).

And Luke (writing Acts) used it the same way relative to events prior to Paul’s conversion ([Acts 6:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.7&t=NKJV)). And it was used this same way by those writing the other epistles (*e.g*., [Hebrews 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.2&t=NKJV); [James 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 5:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.9&t=NKJV); [1 John 5:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.4&t=NKJV) [also [Revelation 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.13&t=NKJV)]; [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV)). Then going back behind both the epistles and the book of Acts, it was used this same way by Christ during His earthly ministry ([Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV) [“*faith*,” in each preceding reference, is articular in the Greek text]).

In this respect, it can clearly be shown that “*the faith*” was a commonly used expression, seen throughout the New Testament, to refer to teachings surrounding the proffered kingdom. Those of “*the way*” in Acts were those who held to “*the faith*.” And though Paul used the expression, “*the faith*,” extensively throughout his epistles after this fashion, he was far from alone in so doing. Other writers of Scripture are also seen using this expression in the same manner as Paul used it.

Thus, the expression, “*the faith*,” refers, not to belief in general (*i.e*., as often expressed, “all the great biblical doctrines of the faith [referring to the virgin birth, blood atonement, etc.],” but belief *in particular*. This is what the article shows, used to point out something particular, something that would be evident by the context. And to say that verses such as [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV), [2 Timothy 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7&t=NKJV), or [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV) (among many others) refer to holding to that which is looked upon as “all the great biblical doctrines of the faith” is not only textually wrong but theologically destructive.

Scripture is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture, “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” ([1 Corinthians 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.13&t=NKJV)); and when this is done, going back into the book of Acts and carrying the matter through into the epistles, it can be clearly demonstrated exactly what the expression, “*the faith*,” refers to. And to misinterpret and teach contrary to that which Scripture clearly reveals about “*the faith*” not only obscures that which is taught in one realm but also invariably results in false teachings in another realm.

3. *Paul and the Saving of the Soul*

The Greek word *psuche*, meaning either “soul” or “life,” is used a number of different ways in Scripture, referring to things surrounding man’s life in both the physical and spiritual realms. However, the word is never used in Scripture after the fashion in which it is often used in Christian circles — associating the saving of the soul with one’s presently possessed eternal salvation.

Rather, in Scripture, in the spiritual realm, the saving of the soul refers strictly to *a future salvation* — a salvation *presently being brought to pass* in the lives of the redeemed, but not realized until *a future time* (*cf.* [1 Corinthians 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.18&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV)).

The writers of the four gospels and the writers of Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter all used the word *psuche*, soul/life, after the preceding fashion (*e.g*., [Matthew 16:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.25-27&t=NKJV); [Mark 8:35-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+8.35-38&t=NKJV); [Luke 9:24-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+9.24-26&t=NKJV); [John 12:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+12.25&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 10:35-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.35-39&t=NKJV); [James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:4-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4-9&t=NKJV)). And these same writers (with the exception of James) also used the word referring to the physical realm as well (*e.g*., [Matthew 6:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+6.25&t=NKJV); [Mark 3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+3.4&t=NKJV); [Luke 12:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.22&t=NKJV); [John 10:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+10.11&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.3&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 3:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.20&t=NKJV)).

Paul used the word *psuche* thirteen times throughout the course of his epistles, and with the exception of two instances ([2 Corinthians 12:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+12.15&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV)), he used the word referring only to the physical realm (*e.g*., [Romans 11:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.3&t=NKJV); [Philippians 2:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+2.30&t=NKJV)). In the epistles, references, in so many words, to Christians either realizing or not realizing *the salvation of their souls* within the framework of the mystery revealed to Paul are seen in the general epistles, not in the Pauline epistles.

“*The salvation of the soul*” is not really Pauline terminology, though it is correct terminology and Paul alludes to the matter in both [2 Corinthians 12:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+12.15&t=NKJV) and [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV). Paul, referring to things surrounding this future salvation, used two main expressions — “*the gospel*” and “*the* *faith*.” Those writing the general epistles, referring to things surrounding this same salvation, used three main expressions — “*the gospel*,” “*the faith*,” and “*the saving of the soul*.”

However, though the writers of the general epistles used the word “*gospel*” after the same fashion Paul used this word (*e.g.*, [Hebrews 4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.2&t=NKJV), [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.6&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.17&t=NKJV)), any extensive use of the word after this fashion was left to Paul. The “good news” surrounding the mystery had been revealed to him, and he was the one who, logically, would continually reference this “good news.”

Thus, the terminology used by Paul and that used by the writers of the general epistles, referring to things surrounding the salvation to be realized by Christians in the coming kingdom, differs in the preceding respects. But all the various things surrounding the message and the end of the matter remain the same.

It all goes back to how the Spirit of God used different men to pen the Word. All the writers of the epistles dealt with *exactly the same thing*, though their emphases on different aspects of the matter were different, and their ways of expressing and saying certain things were, at times, different.

But because of God’s sovereign control in matters surrounding these men’s lives and the Spirit’s work in the matter of guarding these men from error as they wrote, that which these men wrote was *exactly, in every detail*, what God wanted man to possess in order to understand all the various things about His plans and purposes.  *It was the very Word of God,* as stated in [2 Timothy 3:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.16&t=NKJV), *the breath of God.*

**Ramifications of…**

What are the ramifications of either *seeing* or *not seeing* the Pauline and/or general epistles after the fashion in which the different men wrote, along with correspondingly either *seeing* or *not seeing* the central subject matter of these epistles? The answer is *evident*.

At the outset, the former will provide *a correct grid* and the latter *an incorrect grid* to work with. And, as individuals work their way through the epistles, they will either be building on that which is *correct* or on that which is *incorrect*, with the end result either being *in line* or *out of line* with that which each man wrote.

But a proper understanding of the epistles doesn’t begin with the epistles themselves. Rather, such an understanding begins with “*Moses and the prophets*.” It begins where God began, “*In the beginning*…” ([Genesis 1:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1ff&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Luke 24:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.27&t=NKJV)).

If a person wants to properly understand a particular part of Scripture, at any point in Scripture, there is *never* an exception to one rule of interpretation. The person *must always* begin with Moses. Begin here and study forward. This is the way in which God has designed and laid out His Word, and this is the way in which He expects man to acquire knowledge of His revealed plans and purposes.

God laid His entire Word out in a dual fashion: (1) through providing a foundational framework at the very beginning, upon which the whole of subsequent Scripture rests ([Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV)); and then (2) through providing all that which rests upon the foundational framework, revealing the complete structure, as He would have man to see and to understand it ([Genesis 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.4&t=NKJV)---[Revelation 22:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.21&t=NKJV)).

In the foundational framework, everything pertaining to God’s restoration of a ruined creation throughout six days (throughout the entirety of Man’s Day) moves toward a seventh day of rest (the Lord’s Day). And the remainder of Scripture is simply a building upon this septenary structure, whether dealing with events during Man’s Day or with events during the Lord’s Day. The remainder of Scripture simply reveals God’s work throughout six thousand years (work to restore a ruined creation), with a view to the seventh one-thousand-year period (the day of rest, following restoration).

And it matters not where a person is reading and studying in Scripture, this whole overall thought, established by God at the beginning, must be kept in mind. *This is foundational, fundamental, and primary* (*ref*. the author’s book, [The Study of Scripture](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php), chapters 2-4, in this site).

And when a person begins to look at the New Testament epistles, this *has to be* kept in mind, for these epistles must all rest on the foundational framework that God set forth at the beginning of His Word. They *must* have to do, first and foremost, with God working six days, six thousand years (to bring about the restoration of a ruined creation), with a view to God resting on the seventh day, the seventh one-thousand-year period (following the completion of His work).

But the preceding is only foundational. In order to properly place the epistles in their correct perspective, there are numerous things that must be understood about God’s work throughout the six days and His rest on the seventh day. And uppermost in the matter would be to properly understand the message surrounding the proffered kingdom throughout both the gospels and the book of Acts (and properly understanding the message in the gospels and the book of Acts is contingent on properly understanding a number of things that precede it, things previously revealed in “*Moses and all the prophets*”). This would involve numerous things about Israel, allowing one to understand the Church being called into existence following God’s dealings with Israel in the gospel accounts, necessitating the subsequent writing of the epistles.

The Church was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected — the kingdom of the heavens. And the epistles would only naturally deal with Christians *in relation to this message*. From a biblical standpoint, *there could really be no other reason for the epistles being written*.

And a person can do one of two things when studying the New Testament epistles. He can either make a proper connection with proceeding Scripture (begin in Genesis and work forward into the gospels and Acts) or he can make an improper connection with preceding Scripture (ignore or misunderstand that which proceeds).

And these two approaches to Scripture parallel two related directions that can be taken in the Christian life — *the narrow way* and *the broad way* (*cf*. [Matthew 7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+7.13-14&t=NKJV); [Luke 13:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.24&t=NKJV)). The former leads *to life*, which the former that leads to life is what the instructions in the epistles are about; and the latter that leads *to destruction* is what the warnings in the epistles are about.

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Chapter 11

**Central Message — The General Epistles**

*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*. ([Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV))

The seven epistles extending from James through Jude are usually referred to as “the general epistles.” Hebrews is not normally included in the list, FOR many believe Paul wrote Hebrews and class the book among his epistles. And others, though questioning the Pauline authorship, are usually inclined TO leave the book in a separate and unique category — placed neither among the Pauline nor among the general epistles.

Hebrews though should really be looked upon AS the first of the general epistles, NOT the last of the Pauline epistles OR placed in a category by itself. The authorship of Hebrews is *unknown* and *cannot be ascertained*. Certain things about Hebrews would appear TO indicate that Paul *didn’t* write the book (*e.g*., the structure of the Greek text, the sparse use of the word “gospel,” and several references to “*the saving of the soul*”), BUT there is *no data* to work with concerning who *did* write the book. Thus, to simplify matters, Hebrews will be classed among the general epistles in this study.

All eight of the general epistles have to do with the same subject matter, which IS the same as the subject matter dealt with throughout all of the preceding thirteen Pauline epistles. The New Testament epistles, whether Pauline or general, have TO do with different facets of the same subject matter dealt with throughout preceding Scripture — NOT only in immediately preceding Scripture (the gospel accounts and the book of Acts), but also IN Scripture preceding that as well (the Old Testament). And the writing of the epistles was made necessary because OF the existence of a completely new entity (*the new creation “in Christ,”* the “*one new man*” [[2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.13-15&t=NKJV)]) TO BE the recipient of that which had been offered to AND rejected by Israel, *the kingdom of the heavens*.

The existence of this new entity — this “*one new man*,” completely separate from Israel and not under the Mosaic economy — necessitated God supplying additional revelation that would have TO DO specifically with the message surrounding the proffered kingdom *in relation to this new man*. And, in this respect, it could ONLY naturally follow that the epistles would have to do WITH the same heavenly sphere of the kingdom that had previously been offered to Israel in the gospel accounts, reoffered to the nation in the book of Acts, and now offered TO *the new creation “in Christ.”*

However, neither *this additional revelation nor the new creation “in Christ”* could BE looked upon as *completely new per se*. Rather, this additional revelation could only BE looked upon as having its roots in the Old Testament Scriptures. It could only BE looked upon as revelation that would open numerous parts of the Old Testament Scriptures to one’s understanding, parts that had to do with the *new creation “in Christ”* AND parts that would *remain closed* without this additional revelation. And this additional revelation would bring about ITS intended purpose mainly through providing information that would open up the vast storehouse OF previously established types, beginning with the writings of Moses.

God chose TO begin opening the Old Testament Scriptures after this fashion BY first taking one man, Paul, aside and revealing these things TO him *alone* (similar TO His creating only *one man* in the beginning [through whom His plans and purposes would ultimately be realized], or similar TO His calling only *one man* out of Ur [through whom His plans and purposes would ultimately be realized], or similar TO the Church being looked upon collectively as *one new man* [through whom His plans and purposes would ultimately be realized]).

Then, after calling and setting Paul aside, the Lord would use this *one man* TO carry the message to others. And this task would BE accomplished through his traversing the land proclaiming the message, through his teaching “*faithful men*” who would “*be able to teach others also*” ([1 Timothy 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.18&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.2&t=NKJV)), AND through his writing thirteen epistles TO not only Christians of that day but epistles remaining with Christians throughout the entire dispensation.

(Note that the pattern for the God-ordained ministry of the *one new man “in Christ”* is set forth IN the calling of the *one man*, Paul, IN the beginning [[1 Timothy 1:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.15-16&t=NKJV)]. Those comprising the *one new man* are TO take the epistles [and other parts of Scripture], traverse the land, and teach “*faithful men*” who will “*be able to teach others also*.” And the central message is, accordingly, TO be the same as Paul’s, seen throughout the epistles — *the good news surrounding Christians in relation TO the coming glory of Christ*.)

God took Paul aside shortly after his conversion and revealed TO him what is called in Scripture, “*the mystery*” ([Ephesians 3:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-11&t=NKJV)). And Paul took this revelation, which was simply an opening of numerous parts of the Old Testament Scriptures having TO do with *the new creation “in Christ,”* and began proclaiming this message IN accordance with his calling.

This will explain Paul singling out Peter and spending fifteen days with him on his second visit to Jerusalem following his conversion. Paul had gone to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion and spent time with the apostles, apparently *all eleven* ([Acts 9:27-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+9.27-28&t=NKJV)).

BUT following his subsequently being taught the things surrounding “*the mystery*” by the Lord in Arabia, Paul went up TO Jerusalem again, *specifically to see and to spend time with Peter.* And, on this trip to Jerusalem, Paul called attention TO the fact that he didn’t even see the other apostles, except James. He spent the time *with Peter alone* ([Galatians 1:11-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-19&t=NKJV)).

And the reason is evident. Peter had been called to proclaim “*the gospel*” (referring to *the good news* surrounding the coming glory OF Christ rather than *the good news* surrounding the grace OF God) TO “*the circumcision*,” and Paul had been called TO proclaim this same gospel TO “*the uncircumcision*” ([Galatians 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+2.7&t=NKJV)). And *this good news* IS what “*the mystery*” revealed to Paul had to do with (*cf.* [Romans 16:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+16.25-26&t=NKJV); [Galatians 1:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.11-12&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-6&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:25-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-29&t=NKJV); [I Timothy 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Timothy+1.11&t=NKJV)).

Paul, traveling to Jerusalem FOR the purpose of seeing Peter after the mystery had been revealed to him (after the Old Testament scriptures pertaining to the matter at hand had been opened to his understanding) could ONLY have had *one thing* in mind. He could ONLY have had in mind providing instruction for Peter concerning matters IN which he himself had been instructed, for Peter was God’s counterpart TO Paul insofar as the message being carried TO Jewish believers was concerned.

The message that Paul was about TO carry into the Gentile world, whether spoken or written, centered ON “*the mystery*” revealed to him in Arabia. And this message would ultimately BE proclaimed by Paul and others, during the course of their lifetime, “*TO every creature under heaven*” (*cf.* [Romans 10:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.18&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5-6&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV)).

Thus, the epistles written during this time — Paul’s epistles extending from Romans through Philemon, and the general epistles extending from Hebrews through Jude (and also the seven epistles in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)) — can only be looked upon as having TO do with this same message. The *spoken* and *written* message of that day had TO do with *instructions for Christians relative to their calling.*

*The new creation “in Christ”* had been brought into existence TO realize heavenly positions as co-heirs with Christ in the coming kingdom. And that which the Lord taught Paul in Arabia — that Paul, in turn, taught others and proclaimed throughout the Gentile world — had TO do with this proffered kingdom. It had TO do with the kingdom of the heavens, taken from Israel and now being offered TO an entirely new entity — *the new creation “in Christ.”*

The spoken and written message of Paul and others (Peter, James, John; et al.) provided *instructions and warnings for Christians relative to their calling*. And these instructions and warnings, IN a new and different form, were made necessary because OF the bringing into existence OF a new and different entity, *the one new man*.

However, as previously stated, the epistles *do not* and *cannot* stand alone. Everything IN the ministry of the apostles — *verbal* or *written* — remained connected WITH that which proceeded, going all the way back to the opening chapters of Genesis. And Christians today, seeking TO properly understand the message as it is seen in the epistles, *must* go back behind the epistles and *first* have at least some understanding OF that part of God’s revelation that leads into the epistles.

The epistles lie toward the end of Scripture, with only the book of Revelation (which provides the capstone for ALL Scripture) following. And the place that the epistles occupy IN Scripture and the information IN the epistles must be understood in the light OF that which precedes (that dealt with from Genesis through Acts) and that which follows (that dealt with in the book of Revelation). They draw from that which proceeds, and the consummation is seen in that which follows. Thus, the MORE a person understands about surrounding Scripture, the better equipped that person will be TO understand the message of the epistles.

**Hebrews through Jude**

The epistles, much more often than not, are viewed by Christians within A completely incorrect framework. They ARE looked upon incorrectly, they ARE taught incorrectly, and Christians in general have AN incorrect understanding of the subject matter therein. And it is a simple matter TO see and understand why this is the case.

The present has NOT been properly aligned with the past and future. There IS little understanding all the way around of the preliminary data that one must possess in order TO grasp the central message of the epistles. And, resultantly, the picture which one sees, as IT pertains to the whole of God’s plans and purposes, can only BE *completely out of focus.*

The epistles have been severed from those things that God gave to open up and explain the epistles, and the result has been mass confusion in Christian circles. Practically everything is being taught from the epistles but the central teaching that the writers of the epistles dealt with.

The existing problem can be illustrated from any of the New Testament epistles; but, since this study has to do primarily with the general epistles, brief remarks on different things within these eight epistles will suffice to illustrate the matter at hand.

***1. Hebrews***

The book of Hebrews — as the remainder of the general epistles, or as ALL of the Pauline epistles — is a book which deals with *the saving of the SOUL* (*cf*. [Hebrews 4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.12-13&t=NKJV); [6:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.18-19&t=NKJV); [10:35-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.35-39&t=NKJV)). This book is built around five major warnings, written TO Christians. And the Spirit of God drew these warnings entirely from different parts of Old Testament typology.

These warnings have TO do with *firstborn sons* (*cf.* [Hebrews 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV); [12:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.16-17&t=NKJV)). And with *sonship* IN view, the subject matter surrounding the warnings in Hebrews can BE clearly seen. These warnings simply have to do with different facets OF teaching surrounding Christians either realizing OR not realizing the rights of the firstborn at a future time, and the things taught in this book are drawn from the experiences OF the Israelites (both national [[Hebrews 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV); [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6&t=NKJV)] and individual [[Hebrews 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12&t=NKJV)]) as they either realized OR failed to realize the rights OF the firstborn in past time.

Israel has already been adopted IN the type ([Exodus 4:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23&t=NKJV); [Romans 9:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9.4&t=NKJV)), but Christians are awaiting the adoption IN the antitype ([Romans 8:18-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.18-23&t=NKJV)). And the adoption must occur prior TO Christians ascending the throne with Christ, FOR *only “sons” can rule*. That’s the way matters IN God’s kingdom have always existed, AND that’s the way matters IN God’s kingdom will always continue TO exist (*ref.* the author’s book, [Bible One - The Most High Ruleth by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/MHR.htm)).

That which IS in view throughout Hebrews has TO do with Israel realizing the rights OF the firstborn in *an earthly land* (in the type) AND with Christians realizing the rights OF the firstborn in *a heavenly land* (in the antitype). And, in this respect, the whole OF the subject matter in the book moves *beyond* the events of [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV) (the sacrifice OF the paschal lambs, the application OF the blood, the vicarious death OF the firstborn, AND God’s subsequent satisfaction).

But man in his finite understanding OF matters, fails TO make the proper connection OF the things in Hebrews with that which proceeded. And he spends his time attempting TO understand the book on the basis of events in [Exodus 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12&t=NKJV) (*the death of the firstborn*, the point of beginning) rather than going *beyond* the events OF this chapter and looking at those Scriptures from which the things IN the book are drawn (*the rights of the firstborn*, following a resurrection OF the firstborn on the eastern banks OF the Red Sea).

Man looks at the passage surrounding “*so great salvation*” in [Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV) and attempts TO teach things pertaining TO salvation by grace through faith from the passage. And he does the SAME thing with the other warning passages, misapplying and misinterpreting Scripture in the process.

The passage in chapter six ([Hebrews 6:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4-6&t=NKJV), the heart OF the third of the five major warnings) that pertains to a falling away, with there being NO possibility that the person who falls away can ever BE renewed again TO repentance, is often looked upon as one OF the most difficult passages in Scripture. However, the opposite IS, in reality, true. The passage is not difficult at all. The basic overall understanding of the passage IS actually quite easy TO grasp and understand.

Difficulty comes when a person attempts TO apply the passage to things surrounding the Christians’ presently possessed salvation. And “difficult” IS not really the proper word when this is done. Rather, attempting TO read teachings surrounding salvation by grace through faith into [Hebrews 6:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4-6&t=NKJV) makes the passage “impossible” TO understand, for that’s NOT what this section of Scripture deals with.

However, on the other hand, IF a person views the passage in the light OF its context and has some understanding OF the relationship of Hebrews (and all the other epistles as well) TO that which has proceeded, the passage will, IN reality, interpret itself.

The passage, contextually, flows out OF and draws FROM the type-antitype structure of the preceding warning ([Hebrews 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV)); and also, contextually, the passage pertains TO that time when Christ will exercise the Melchizedek priesthood (to that future time when He will BE the great King-Priest in Jerusalem [[Hebrews 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+5&t=NKJV)]). And the type-antitype structure, drawn from the previous warning, has to do WITH being overthrown relative to one’s calling, with there being NO possibility that God will change His mind (repent) relative TO that which He has decreed concerning those who are overthrown.

This is seen in the type as it pertains TO the *Israelites* and *an earthly calling* at Kadesh-Barnea, and it must be equally true as it pertains TO *Christians and a heavenly calling* in the antitype. The basic understanding of [Hebrews 6:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4-6&t=NKJV) IS that simple and easy.

And so it goes with the remainder of the book or the remainder of the general epistles. Understand some basics, and interpretation becomes *quite simple*; but misunderstand these basics, and interpretation becomes *difficult to impossible*.

***2. James***

James deals with *the saving of the SOUL* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV)), which, contextually, within the book itself, has to do with crowned rulers realizing AN inheritance with Christ IN the coming kingdom ([James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV); [2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.5&t=NKJV)). And this IS exactly the same subject matter seen throughout the surrounding epistles.

In connection with the saving of the soul, James deals extensively with *faith* and *works* ([James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV)); and the key TO understanding this section of James, which many expositors seem to home in on (along with certain cult groups, seeking to teach salvation via faith and works), IS twofold: (1) The passage deals with Christians relative TO faithfulness and the coming kingdom, NOT with the unsaved relative to eternal verities; and (2) works emanate out OF faithfulness, something that cannot occur among those who have NOT passed “*from death unto life*,” among those remaining spiritually dead.

*Faithfulness, works*, and *fruit-bearing* go hand-in-hand in this respect. Faithfulness will result IN works and fruitfulness (bringing about the salvation of one’s soul), BUT unfaithfulness will result IN no works and no fruit (bringing about the loss OF one’s soul).

There are two main errors that expositors usually make when approaching James. They EITHER relate the things in this epistle mainly *to basic issues surrounding salvation by grace through faith*, OR they relate the things in this epistle mainly *to the present experience of Christians* (with little regard for OR mention OF the coming kingdom of Christ).

The epistle deals with *the former* only TO the extent that a person must first pass “*from death unto life*” BEFORE he finds himself in a position TO exercise faithfulness (*e.g*., [James 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.18&t=NKJV)), and the epistle deals with *the latter* only TO the extent that faithfulness during the present time will have a direct bearing ON the Christians’ position in the coming kingdom of Christ (*e.g.*, [James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV); [2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.5&t=NKJV)).

Relative to *the former*, this IS simply NOT the central subject matter of the epistle. James’ message pertains to the saved, NOT the unsaved. And relative to *the latter*, the epistle IS being dealt with from a correct perspective as far as matters go. However, exposition IS stopped far short of the revealed goal.

There *must always* BE a proper biblical connection of *the present experience of Christians WITH the proffered kingdom in view.* And, in this respect, dealing ONLY with the present experience of Christians from the epistle of James is accomplishing little more THAN proclaiming a half-truth.

***3. 1 & 2 Peter***

In his first epistle, Peter deals with an inheritance set before Christians ([1 Peter 1:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4-5&t=NKJV)), which has TO do with the goal of their faith, the salvation OF their SOULS ([1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV)). And this salvation IS connected with *the present* in the respect that IT has to do with *present sufferings* ([1 Peter 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.7&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.11&t=NKJV); [2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.21&t=NKJV); [4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV)), and it IS connected with *the future* in the respect that it has TO do with *future glory* ([1 Peter 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.11&t=NKJV), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.13&t=NKJV); [4:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.13&t=NKJV); [5:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.4&t=NKJV)).

In his second epistle, Peter associates this inheritance, this salvation, with *the greatest thing God could offer redeemed man*; AND he further associates it with *Christ’s greatest regal magnificence* ([2 Peter 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.4&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.16&t=NKJV) [superlatives are used in both verses in the Greek text, and *greatest regal magnificence* IS the thought behind the superlative translated “*majesty*” in v. 16]).

And, in the process, Peter deals with the importance OF Christians understanding, receiving, and keeping the good news concerning this future salvation ever before them. Peter, knowing the importance of this matter, stated that he was going TO keep on proclaiming these truths to the extent that those to whom he was writing could NEVER forget them, even after his decease ([2 Peter 1:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.12-15&t=NKJV)).

Then in 2 Peter chapters two and three ([2 Peter 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3&t=NKJV)), Peter sounds a warning against false teachers — teachers who would arise among Christians and teach things contrary TO the message that he so strongly proclaimed. These false teachers would BE saved individuals who had previously heard, understood, and accepted the message ([2 Peter 2:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.20&t=NKJV) [*epignosis*, “mature knowledge,” is used in the Greek text of this verse]); BUT, rather than remain within that which they had heard and accepted, they would turn from AND teach things contrary TO this message ([2 Peter 2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.1-2&t=NKJV)).

Then Peter began to bring his second epistle to a close BY calling attention TO a septenary structure of Scripture, which he had referred to in chapter one and upon which the whole OF Scripture rests. The kingdom of Christ is to be established *after six days, on the seventh day* (*cf.* [Matthew 16:28-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.28-17.5&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.16-18&t=NKJV)), which is a direct allusion back to [Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV) — verses forming a foundational framework AT the very beginning, verses upon which the whole OF subsequent Scripture rests.

And the length OF each of these days in subsequent Scripture, in complete keeping with Scripture both preceding and following the epistles, is revealed TO be *1,000 years* ([2 Peter 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.8&t=NKJV)).

***4. 1, 2 & 3 John***

The trend of thought throughout John’s three epistles takes a number OF different turns, but the truths taught therein center ON one thing — *Christians walking in the truth* (*cf*. [1 John 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7&t=NKJV); [2 John 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2John+1.4&t=NKJV), [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2John+1.6&t=NKJV); [3 John 1:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=3John+1.3-4&t=NKJV)). And a walk of this nature, set forth IN either John’s epistles or IN any of the other epistles, IS with a view to *overcoming* and receiving *a full reward* in the coming kingdom of Christ (*cf*. [1 John 2:28-3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.28-3.3&t=NKJV); [5:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.1-5&t=NKJV); [2 John 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2John+1.8&t=NKJV)).

A central crux in John’s first epistle has TO DO with Christ’s present high priestly ministry ([1 John 1:6-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6-2.2&t=NKJV)), reflecting ON the fourth of the five major warnings in [Hebrews 10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10&t=NKJV). And teachings surrounding Christ’s high priestly ministry in John’s first epistle reflect, as well, ON teachings drawn from his gospel.

In [John 13:4-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.4-12&t=NKJV) there is the account OF Christ taking a towel, girding Himself, taking a basin of water, and beginning TO individually wash the disciples’ feet. This was done TO teach His disciples a spiritual lesson of vast importance; and, IN so doing, Christ drew from the symbolism surrounding the priestly ministry in the tabernacle. And this was also the place FROM which John drew when dealing with the same matter in his first epistle.

The high priestly ministry of Christ — ministering in the sanctuary ON the basis of shed blood, after the order of Aaron — was IN view in both instances (though still future when the events of [John 13:4-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.4-12&t=NKJV) occurred). Christ, throughout the dispensation, is exercising a ministry IN the heavenly sanctuary, providing a cleansing FOR the kingdom of priests that He is about TO bring forth (*the sons* who will rule and reign with Him, *His co-heirs*).

And according to the teaching OF both John chapter thirteen and 1 John chapters one and two — along with Hebrews chapter ten and other related passages — truths surrounding Christ’s present high priestly ministry form an integral part OF the Word of the Kingdom.

Drawing from the typology OF the Levitical system, where the entire body of a priest was washed upon his entrance INTO the priesthood, Christians today (New Testament priests) received a complete washing AT the point of salvation (upon their entrance into the priesthood). And this washing IN both type and antitype can never BE repeated.

But also in keeping with the typology OF the Levitical system, present defilement OF the cleansed vessel through contact with the world requires subsequent partial washings — shown in the type through subsequent washings OF parts of the body at the laver in the courtyard of the tabernacle. And, because of this, Christ, THROUGH His present high priestly ministry, IS providing cleansing for Christians on the basis of His shed blood on the mercy seat IN the heavenly tabernacle.

Christ, when washing the disciples’ feet, NOT only drew from the typology of the tabernacle but He also reflected ON His impending high priestly ministry. And Christ, to show the gravity of the matter, specifically told Peter, “*If I do not wash you* [referring to a part of his body, his feet], *you have no part with Me*” ([John 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8&t=NKJV)). Peter had already been washed completely ([John 13:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.10&t=NKJV)), but unless Peter allowed the Lord TO cleanse him from worldly defilement following this previous complete washing, he could have *no part with Christ* IN the coming kingdom.

John used the same teaching to which he had referred in his gospel to open his first epistle; and he directed the message, as in the gospel account, TO saved people relative to present cleansing and the future kingdom.

And Christians can do one of two things relative TO Christ’s present high priestly ministry on their behalf: (1) They can either avail themselves OF Christ’s work as High Priest (receive cleansing from present defilement and look forward TO having a part with Christ in His kingdom [*cf*. [Hebrews 10:32-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.32-39&t=NKJV); [1 John 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9&t=NKJV); [2:28-3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.28-3.3&t=NKJV)]), or (2) they can refuse TO avail themselves of Christ’s work as High Priest (not receive cleansing from present defilement and resultantly one day BE denied a position with Christ in His kingdom [*cf*. [Hebrews 10:19-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19-31&t=NKJV); [1 John 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.8&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.10&t=NKJV); [2:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.1-4&t=NKJV)]).

***5. Jude***

According to Jude’s introductory remarks, he sought TO write an epistle dealing specifically with salvation by grace through faith, BUT the Spirit of God constrained him and led him TO write about something else.

Explaining the simple message of salvation by grace through faith was NOT the primary reason God gave the epistles. Adequate information necessary TO open the types dealing with the simplicity of eternal salvation as set forth BY Moses and the prophets had already been given prior TO the writing of the epistles. Rather, God designed the epistles FOR those who were already saved, TO provide instructions that would serve TO open that part of the writings of Moses and the prophets pertaining to the Word of the Kingdom.

And, in keeping with the preceding thoughts, Jude, RATHER than being led to write an epistle dealing with salvation by grace through faith, was, instead, led TO write an epistle *exhorting Christians in the present race and warning Christians concerning false teachers*. And both the exhortation and the various warnings seen throughout the epistle pertain to “*the faith which was once delivered to the saints*” ([Jude1:3ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jud+1.3ff&t=NKJV)).

The expression, “*the faith*,” as it is used in [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV), is simply another way OF referring to the things surrounding Paul’s gospel (*ref*. chapters 4 & 10 of this book, [Bible One - From Acts to the Epistles by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/A2E.htm)). Jude’s exhortation had to do with earnestly striving IN the present race, with “*the faith*” IN view; and his warnings — closely paralleling the warnings in Peter’s second epistle — had to do with false teachers arising AND proclaiming things among Christians contrary TO “*the faith*.”

And that’s the way in which the New Testament epistles are brought TO a close — *an exhortation to strain every muscle of one’s being in the present race of “the faith,” and warnings against false teachers proclaiming perverse things concerning “the faith.”*

**Ramifications of…**

What are the ramifications OF either *seeing* or *not seeing* the Pauline and/or general epistles in their correct setting relative to Scripture BOTH preceding and following? Such ramifications are *evident*. All one has to do IS compare conditions existing in the first-century Church WITH conditions existing in the Church today.

Christians in the first-century Church knew that the letters (epistles) being sent to them had TO do with the same message being proclaimed throughout the churches BY the apostles and others — a message having its roots IN preceding revelation. And this message pertained TO *a completely new entity* (separate and distinct from Israel) AND with *a proffered kingdom*. This new entity had been called into existence TO be the recipient of heavenly positions with Christ IN the kingdom, and the message being proclaimed had TO do with *faithfulness during the present dispensation* with a viewTO *glory during the coming dispensation.*

These things were consistently taught throughout the first-century Church. Christians during that day understood these things; and, understanding these things, they governed their lives accordingly.

But these things are NOT being taught AT all in the twentieth-century Church, except IN isolated instances. Christians during the present day know little TO nothing about these things, AND their lifestyle often negatively reflects this fact.

Everything begins in the past — actually IN the eternal council chambers of God BEFORE the ages began — AND moves toward *a set goal.* And this *set goal* — whether seen IN Moses, the Psalms, the prophets, the gospels, Acts, or the epistles — IS *always revealed to be the same.*

It IS *the same set goal* seen throughout the first nineteen chapters of the closing book of Scripture and then realized in chapter twenty. It IS *always* revealed to be *the seventh day, the seventh millennium, the Sabbath rest awaiting the people of God.*

Viewing the epistles within their correct setting will allow one TO look upon the content therein from a correct perspective. Scripture in the epistles can BE interpreted and applied correctly; and, through so doing, biblical interpretation will BE perfectly in line with other parts of Scripture.

BUT erroneously viewing the epistles apart FROM their correct setting can ONLY produce the opposite results. A correct interpretation, application, and alignment with other Scripture will BE sadly lacking. And the true message IN the epistles will BE all but lost.

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Chapter 12

**From Jerusalem to Rome**

*Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!*

*And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.*

*Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,*

*preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.* ([Acts 28:28-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28-31&t=NKJV))

The book of Acts details a story that *begins in Jerusalem* and *ends in Rome*. It begins in the capital of Jewry, with the message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens going *to the Jews first*; and it ends in Rome, the capital of the Gentile world of that day, with the message subsequently going *to* *the Gentiles, apart from a preference continuing to be given to the Jews.*

Paul made his announcement to this effect at the end of the *MOST* unique period that has ever existed in Jewish history ([Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV); *ref.* chapter 9 of [Bible One - From Acts to the Epistles by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/A2E.htm)) — a period experienced by *one single generation of Jews*, the generation living on *BOTH* sides of Calvary and being the recipients of *BOTH the offer* (before Calvary) and *the re-offer* (following Calvary) of the kingdom of the heavens. This was a saved generation of Jews that had rejected Christ as *King* (*ref.* chapters 3 & 4 of [Bible One - From Acts to the Epistles by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/A2E.htm)). And once this generation had passed off the scene — which was rapidly occurring during the time Paul was in Rome at the end of Acts — an entirely *DIFFERENT* situation would exist throughout the remainder of the dispensation.

The message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens could *NO* longer be carried to the Jewish people first. Once the generation of Jews to whom the offer and re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens was made had passed off the scene, there would *NO* longer be a generation of Jews in existence to whom this offer could be extended.

Thus, once Israel’s religious leaders had climactically rejected the offer of the kingdom — which occurred in Rome, near the closing days of the existence of the generation to whom the offer and re-offer of the kingdom was extended — God did three things: (1) He set Israel aside, (2) He allowed the nation’s capital city to be destroyed (by the Romans), and (3) He uprooted the Jewish people from their land and scattered them to the ends of the earth, anticipating “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” being brought to pass ([Luke 19:41-44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.41-44&t=NKJV); [Romans 11:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.25-26&t=NKJV)).

And, as previously stated, throughout the remainder of the dispensation it would be *impossible* for a saved generation of Jews to exist to whom the offer of the kingdom could be extended. God was no longer dealing with Israel on a national basis, the Jewish people had been uprooted from their land and scattered among the nations, and Jews saved during this time would simply become part of the body of Christ rather than part of a saved Israeli nation. Jews appropriating the blood of the Paschal Lamb (through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ) would relinquish their national identity (with Israel) and become part of *the one new man “in Christ,”* where there was *NO* distinction between Jew and Gentile.

Beyond Paul’s announcement in [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV) (about 62 A.D.), extending throughout the remainder of the dispensation, the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens was solely *FOR* those comprising the body of Christ, *the one new man “in Christ.”* It was a message, not for Jews, not for Gentiles, but *FOR* Christians alone.

The message was for saved people; and Israel, beyond the generation to whom the offer and the re-offer of the kingdom was extended, existed in *AN* unsaved state (not to mention the fact that the kingdom had been taken from Israel [[Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV)]).

The Jewish people were as the Gentile nations in relation to the possession or non-possession of spiritual life. They were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)), and spiritual life had to *FIRST* be generated before spiritual promises could be extended.

The offer of the kingdom of the heavens, beyond [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV), was solely for those comprising the body of Christ. *It was for Jews* who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, relinquishing their national identity and becoming part of the body of Christ, where there was “*neither Jew nor Greek* [Gentile]”; and *it was for Gentiles* who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, relinquishing their national identity and becoming part of the body of Christ, where there was “*neither Jew nor Greek* [Gentile]” (*cf.* [Galatians 3:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26-29&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:1-3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1-3.11&t=NKJV)).

These were the changes inherent in Paul’s announcement at the end of the book of Acts. And attention at this point in Scripture, in relation to the kingdom of the heavens, ceased to be directed toward Israel. At this point in Scripture, *the new creation “in Christ”* became *the SOLE recipient* of the proffered kingdom.

**God’s New Witness**

Israel had been God’s witness, called into existence *TO* carry the message of the one true and living God to the ends of the earth ([Isaiah 43:1-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+43.1-10&t=NKJV)); and the people comprising this nation were supposed *TO* have been the ones to carry the message concerning the King and His kingdom *from Jerusalem to Rome* during the first century. They had been the ones originally in view in the commissions that Christ gave to His disciples at different times during the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry — beginning in Jerusalem, progressing into Judea, then into Samaria, and then into the uttermost parts of the earth ([Matthew 28:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.19-20&t=NKJV); [Mark 16:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.15-18&t=NKJV); [Luke 24:47-49](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.47-49&t=NKJV); [Acts 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.8&t=NKJV)).

But Israel, *AS* Jonah when called to go to Nineveh, wanted nothing to do with the matter; and, also *AS* Jonah, Israel eventually ended up in the sea (scattered among the Gentile nations); and, also *AS* Jonah, Israel is going to remain there for two days (2,000 years); and, also *AS* Jonah, on the third day (the third 1,000-year period), Israel is going to be raised up to live in God’s sight (*cf.* [Hosea 5:15-6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.15-6.2&t=NKJV)); and, also *AS* Jonah, Israel will then carry the message of the one true and living God to the Gentiles (*cf.* [Genesis 45:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+45.26&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 53:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.1ff&t=NKJV)).

*BUT* lying between *Israel’s disobedience* and *Israel’s obedience* is the two-day (2,000-year) period as seen in Jonah, in which Israel remains spiritually alienated from God and scattered among the Gentile nations. This is a period in which God, through Israel, has no witness. There was no witness through Jonah during the two days in the type, and there can be no witness through Israel during the two days in the antitype. The nation throughout the period remains, *AS* Jonah, *dead, in the sea*.

God though has *NOT* left Himself without a witness (*cf.* [Acts 14:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.17&t=NKJV)). Rather, He has called a completely new entity into existence to carry His message to the ends of the earth during this time. He has called *a new creation* into existence, *the one new man “in Christ.”* And this *new man*, through his positional standing in Christ, is *NOT ONLY* reckoned as “*Abraham’s seed*” but is *ALSO* reckoned as the one in line to inherit “*the promise* [a reference to that which the lineal seed of Abraham rejected, heavenly promises and blessings]” ([Galatians 3:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.29&t=NKJV)).

The ministry of this *new man* — of Christians, comprising the Church — *IS* that to which Christ referred after He had departed the house and sat down by the seaside in [Matthew 13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13&t=NKJV), during the original offer of the kingdom to Israel (*cf*. [Matthew 16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV)). Christ left the house (referring to Israel), went down by the seaside (referring to the Gentiles), and gave four parables. The first parable outlined *BOTH the purpose for* and *the ministry* of the Church that He was about to call into existence (the parable of the Sower). Then the remaining three parables revealed *that which would occur* in relation to the ministry of the Church throughout the dispensation.

And the revealed reason for God turning from Israel to an entirely different group of people to be His witness to the ends of the earth was given by Isaiah over seven centuries prior to this time:

*And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”* ([Matthew 13:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.14-15&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Isaiah 6:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+6.9-10&t=NKJV))

Isaiah’s prophecy, within the scope of its fulfillment, actually spans the centuries. It is a prophecy that could have been applied to Israel numerous times in the nation’s rebellious history. And because of the nature of the prophecy, Christ referred to it in Matthew chapter thirteen, the Spirit of God led John to refer to it in his gospel ([John 12:39-41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+12.39-41&t=NKJV)), and the Spirit of God also led Luke to refer to it at the end of the book of Acts ([Acts 28:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.25-27&t=NKJV)).

The contextual use of the prophecy *IS* the same in all three instances — *Israel’s rejection of the signs portending the nation being healed*. The Jewish people had seen but had not seen; they had heard but had not heard. They had stopped their hearing; they had closed their eyes; they had hardened their hearts. And, consequently, there was *NO* conversion of and healing for the nation.

The prophecy and its context in Matthew chapter thirteen and in Acts chapter twenty-eight should be studied and understood in the light of one another. In connection with the quotation from Isaiah in Matthew there is a parabolic prophecy concerning the Church (which would exist only because of and following Israel’s disobedience). And that outlined in the parabolic prophecy began to be fulfilled in its fullness in connection with the quotation from Isaiah in Acts (at the time when the kingdom ceased to be offered to Israel, with the nation being set aside for the remainder of the dispensation).

In Matthew chapter thirteen, Christ referred to individuals being sown out in the world, with a view *TO* their bringing forth fruit for the kingdom (the parable of the Sower [And it is evident that the individuals in view could not have been Israelites, for Christ was out of the house and down by the seaside at this time. Aside from that, Israel’s condition and destiny relative to fruit-bearing was later shown by the fruitless fig tree — [Matthew 21:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.19-20&t=NKJV)]).

Then, in Acts chapter twenty-eight, Luke referred *TO* that time when the sequence of events shown by the parable of the Sower would begin in its fullness (it had already been occurring, *BUT*, with Israel set aside and God’s attention [relative to fruit-bearing] directed solely toward *the one new man “in Christ,”* it *could NOW* [beyond [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV)] occur in its fullness).

In Matthew though, Christ went far beyond the simple statement by Paul following the reference to Isaiah’s prophecy. In *THE* three parables following the parable of the Sower, Christ covered *THE* history of Christendom throughout the dispensation. And the history covered by these three parables must be understood *AS* having to do with the message surrounding the kingdom of the heavens, for that, contextually, *IS* the subject matter at hand.

In this respect, a major error has occurred over the years by individuals attempting to interpret these parables in the light of the gospel of the grace of God *RATHER* than in the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Contextually, *fruit-bearing* ([Matthew 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.8&t=NKJV), [22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.22-23&t=NKJV)) and *the Word of the Kingdom* ([Matthew 13:19-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19-23&t=NKJV)) are in view. *BOTH* have to do with *saved people and the gospel of the glory of Christ*, and the parables must be so understood and interpreted.

In the parable of the Sower, most of those sown out in the world failed to bring forth fruit; and in the succeeding three parables, the reason was given. The work of Satan, through seeking to put a stop to the proclamation of the message, produced gradual corruption. The false teachers that men such as Paul, Peter, and Jude warned the people about were already present (second parable); their work within Christendom would result in the spread of heresies of a nature that would bring about *AN* abnormal growth in the Church, allowing those teaching false doctrine to be readily accepted (third parable); and this would have its end *IN* the whole of Christendom being corrupted (fourth parable).

That is, conditions would change in Christendom throughout the dispensation to such a degree that the message that the Church had been called into existence to proclaim worldwide — which was proclaimed throughout all Christendom *AT* the beginning of the dispensation ([Romans 10:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.18&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5-6&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV)) — would *NOT* be proclaimed at all by the Church at the end of the dispensation. Rather than the Church proclaiming the message at the end of the dispensation, there would, instead, *BE* *complete apostasy* within Christendom in this respect, resulting *IN* conditions being exactly as Christ revealed in [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV).

The Son of Man, at the time of His return, will *BE* unable to find “*faith* [‘the faith’] *on the earth*.” The Church will *BE* as Israel was at Christ’s first coming — *a people without hearing and without sight insofar as the message surrounding the proffered kingdom is concerned.*

And, in keeping with the same analogy, the Church will *BE* both Pharisaical and Sadducean, both fundamental (so-called) and liberal. *BUT* in either instance, the message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens will *BE* absent. Christians will *NOT* want anything to do with this message.

That’s the downward path upon which Christendom has been traveling for centuries — a path which, insofar as *the proclamation of the Word of the Kingdom is concerned, WILL lead to total corruption*. And *NOTHING* can be done to change, alter, or reverse the course of events. This IS the manner in which conditions were prophesied to exist at the end of the dispensation, and the matter was set when the woman placed leaven in the three measures of meal ([Matthew 13:3-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.3-33&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)).

**A Brief History**

As previously stated, *apostasy* began when the offer of the kingdom was *STILL* open to Israel (*e.g.*, [Acts 20:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.29-31&t=NKJV)), and warnings to Christians about this *apostasy* constituted a major part of the message being proclaimed throughout the churches shortly after Paul’s announcement in [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV) (*cf*. [1 Timothy 1:18-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.18-20&t=NKJV); [4:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+4.1-3&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:15-3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.15-3.8&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 2:1-3:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.1-3.9&t=NKJV); [Jude 1:3-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3-25&t=NKJV)). Then, toward the end of the first century, because *OF this apostasy* and the conditions that it would ultimately produce in Christendom, the Spirit of God led John *TO* close the canon of Scripture *BY* outlining a history of the Church throughout the dispensation, using existing conditions in seven different churches of that day ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)). And the end result revealed by John is exactly the same *AS* that previously revealed by Christ in the first four parables of Matthew, chapter thirteen, *BEFORE* the Church was ever called into existence (*cf.* [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV); [Revelation 3:14-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14-21&t=NKJV)).

*A great persecution* of Christians had occurred in Jerusalem near the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel ([Acts 8:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1ff&t=NKJV)). And, at the termination of this re-offer, Christians became the target of *a great persecution* in Rome as well. And this persecution probably began about two years after Paul’s announcement in [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV) (*cf.* [Acts 28:30-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.30-31&t=NKJV)).

Viewing the matter *FROM* either *the standpoint of Scripture alone* or *the standpoint of secular Church history alone*, exactly the *SAME* trend and outcome can be seen. *Scripture* sets forth a corruption beginning early in the dispensation, ending with the whole of Christendom being corrupted; and, looking back *IN secular history* (something that those living at this end of the dispensation have the advantage of doing), exactly the same sequence of events can be seen.

It was about 62 A.D. when Paul made his announcement in Rome, recorded in [Acts 28:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+28.28&t=NKJV). Then, according to secular history, Rome burned in 64 A.D., with the Christians in Rome being accused of arson. This sparked a local persecution, setting a precedent *FOR* a persecution of Christians that eventually extended throughout the Empire.

Over the next two hundred and fifty years, ten Roman emperors spread the persecution of Christians into all parts of the Empire; and, as a result of this persecution, Christians, during this time, were slain in all types of grotesque fashions.

Persecution though, *AS* during the persecution of the Israelites in Egypt preceding and during Moses’ day ([Exodus 1:8-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+1.8-12&t=NKJV); [2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+2.11&t=NKJV)), only served *TO* spark a growth in Christianity. And, as the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem following Stephen’s death had served *TO* spread “*the way*” throughout the land, the persecution of Christians that began in Rome served *TO* spread “*the way*” throughout the Empire.

By the year 200 A.D., Christians could be found *IN* all parts of the Empire; and by the year 250 A.D., it is estimated that Christians constituted between five and twelve percent of the population of the Empire, which totaled about 75,000,000. This phenomenal growth of Christianity under persecution *IS* what led Tertullian, one of the early Church fathers living during that time, *TO* say, “*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church*.”

But even during the time of Roman persecution, though Christianity experienced phenomenal growth, not *ALL* was well within the Church. False teachers had appeared in the Church during the time between the persecution in Jerusalem during Stephen’s day and the persecution in Rome during Paul’s day. And these false teachers had centered their attack *ON* the message being proclaimed — *the Word of the Kingdom*. They had centered their attack at *the heart* of the matter *AND* undoubtedly set the stage for all the various offshoots of false teachings *THAT* could later be found in the Church.

For example, with the spread of Christianity throughout the Empire, *Gnosticism* (a synthesis of various philosophies, different false religions, and Christianity) and *the doctrine of the Nicolaitans* (a priestly class elevated to a position over the common people [*cf.* [Revelation 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.6&t=NKJV), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.15&t=NKJV)]) appeared in the Church. Then, in the first part of the third century, Origen’s *allegorical interpretative methods* (with an inherent amillennial eschatology) found ready acceptance. And these things, along with other false ideologies of the day, could *ONLY* have moved Christians further and further away from the truth of Scripture, ultimately allowing an acceptance within Christendom of that which was about to occur.

After Constantine the Great (the first of the so-called Christian emperors) came into power during the opening part of the fourth century, he had the edicts *OF* the last of the persecuting emperors (Diocletian) repealed. And Christianity then became recognized *AS* simply another religion in the countries over which Rome ruled.

From there, a sequence of events began which resulted in Theodosius I, in the year 380 A.D., issuing an edict *THAT* made Christianity *the exclusive state religion*. Then, in the year 395 A.D., that which would have been unthinkable to the Christians in Rome in 64 A.D. (and elsewhere in the Empire for many years following) occurred. Christianity was recognized *AS the official and only religion of the Roman Empire.*

Where the persecuting emperors had failed, the so-called Christian emperors succeeded. Christianity found itself enmeshed *WITHIN* a world system under Satan’s control, *completely out of line* with God’s plans and purposes for *the new creation “in Christ.”*  Rather than Christianity fulfilling its calling *THROUGH* carrying a true message to those in the world (the gospel of the grace of God) and to Christians in the Church (the gospel of the glory of Christ), the world *was* allowed *TO* carry a false message to and instill this false message within Christendom.

Resultantly, the one-thousand-year period often referred to as “The Dark Ages” in Church history followed. And, though the Reformation under Martin Luther is usually looked upon as closing this period, in reality the period continued beyond the Reformation into the present day and time.

The Reformation centered on a recovery of truths pertaining to the biblical teaching of salvation by grace through faith, with little *TO* no understanding being shown concerning the true reason *FOR* one’s salvation. The Reformation centered on the truth of teachings seen in Exodus chapter twelve (the death of the firstborn), not *ON* the truth of teachings seen beyond this chapter ([Exodus 13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+13&t=NKJV)-[Joshua 24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+24&t=NKJV)).

And, though men later began *TO* look into these things (especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, building on the work of men going back several centuries prior to that), their work *WAS* (and remains today) largely ignored. Insofar as *AN* interest in the Word of the Kingdom was concerned, Christianity never (*AND* hasn’t today) recovered from where the Church found itself *AT* the end of the fourth century.

Once the mustard bush had become “*a tree*” (an abnormal growth, caused by the false teachers in the second parable), with “*the birds of the air*” allowed to lodge in its branches (the false teachers that had brought about this condition, finding ready acceptance within), the leaven *THAT* the woman placed in the “*three measures of meal*” would see to it that deterioration not ONLY continued but was brought to completion as well. The leaven would continue *a deteriorating work UNTIL “the whole”* had been leavened ([Matthew 13:4-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.4-33&t=NKJV)).

**Conditions Today**

*Corruption* seen in the first four parables in Matthew chapter thirteen and in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three has to do specifically with *a departure from “the faith that was once delivered to the saints”* ([Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV)), *NOT* to a departure from biblical doctrine in general. In Matthew’s gospel, specific reference is made to “*the kingdom of the heavens*” and to “*the word of the kingdom*” ([Matthew 13:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.11&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19&t=NKJV), [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.24&t=NKJV), [31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.31&t=NKJV), [33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV)). And in the book of Revelation, all seven letters, structured after an identical fashion, center *ON the present works of Christians, with a view TO Christians overcoming and occupying positions with Christ in the kingdom* ([Revelation 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.2&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.9&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.13&t=NKJV), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.17&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.19&t=NKJV), [26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1-2&t=NKJV), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.8&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

Thus, *a corruption* of Christendom seen in either Matthew chapter thirteen or Revelation chapters two and three pertains *TO a departure from truths surrounding the proffered kingdom* — the kingdom offered to Israel in the gospel accounts, re-offered to Israel in Acts, and offered to *the one new man “in Christ”* in the epistles. It is a *corruption* of that which Scripture teaches pertaining *to works emanating out of faithfulness, with a view to the glory lying out ahead.*

The Church, at the end of the dispensation, will exist *exactly AS* seen in the final outcome of matters set forth in both Matthew’s gospel and in the book of Revelation. The Church, in relation to the message surrounding the proffered kingdom, *WILL* find itself in a state of *total corruption, completely “leavened”* ([Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV)); it *WILL* find itself in a state described as “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” ([Revelation 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17&t=NKJV)).

*1. A Work of Satan*

At the end of the dispensation there will *BE a complete departure* from the central message that was proclaimed throughout Christendom *AT* the beginning of the dispensation. This was a message that had to do with the reason *FOR* the very existence of the Church, a message around which *ALL* the epistles directed to the Church were built, and a message that was supposed *TO* have been proclaimed throughout all Christendom for the duration of the dispensation.

*HOWEVER*, because of Satan’s hatred for this message (note that the message has to do *WITH* a change in the governmental administration of the earth — Satan and his angels being put down and Christ and His co-heirs taking the reins of power and authority), he sought very early in the dispensation *TO counter* that which God had begun through the Church (*cf.* [Ephesians 3:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.9-11&t=NKJV); [6:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11-18&t=NKJV)). And the manner in *WHICH* Satan undertook this task followed a previously established pattern seen in the opening chapters of Genesis, where the first account of his attempting a work of this nature is recorded.

The opening chapter of Genesis records the account *OF* God creating Adam to rule the earth, *IN* Satan’s stead ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)); and Genesis chapter three then goes on to reveal that which Satan did *IN* an effort *to counter* God’s plans and purposes in this respect ([Genesis 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.1ff&t=NKJV)). Satan, knowing why Adam had been created, immediately set about *TO* bring man into a state in which he could no longer be found qualified to rule the earth.

And Satan brought this to pass through introducing *a corrupting agent.* He introduced *sin* into the human race. He brought about man’s fall, through sin, *IN an effort to counter* God’s plans and purposes; and this forms *a first-mention principle* in Scripture, showing the manner *IN* which Satan would act at any subsequent time when seeking to achieve this same goal.

And this is exactly what can be seen *IN* Satan’s work relative to the message surrounding the proffered kingdom very early in the present dispensation. He sought to do away with the message through *corruption*. He brought *IN the false teachers* and placed *A corrupting agent within*. He placed leaven within, and this leaven would work until *IT* had corrupted the entire mass.

Apart from the work of Satan, the message surrounding the proffered kingdom would have gone unhindered throughout the dispensation. *IT* would have remained uppermost in the minds of Christians throughout the past two millenniums, and *IT* would continue to be the central message proclaimed throughout the churches of the land today — as during the first several decades of the existence of the Church in the first century.

*BUT*, because of the work of Satan, things relating to the proclamation of this message have gradually moved 180 degrees out of phase. *RATHER* than a progressive proclamation of the message occurring throughout the dispensation, there was, *INSTEAD, a gradual departure*; and *RATHER* than any type continuing proclamation of the message occurring today, there *IS*, for all practical purposes, *A total departure*.

This message was proclaimed throughout Christendom during the first century; *BUT* today, except in isolated instances, it is *NOT* being proclaimed at all. *That’s how complete the leaven has done its damaging work.*

*2. A Further Veiling of the Truth*

When Christ was on earth the first time there were two major religious parties in Judaism — the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the fundamental legalists. They believed the letter of the law. They believed in a future resurrection, in angels, and in spirit realities. The Sadducees though were more liberal in their theology. They rejected any thought of a future resurrection, and they didn’t believe in angels or in spirit realities ([Acts 23:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+23.8&t=NKJV)).

*BUT* the Pharisees and the Sadducees did have *one thing in common*. *NEITHER* would have anything to do with the message surrounding the proffered kingdom ([Matthew 16:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.1-6&t=NKJV)).

And *EXACTLY* the same thing can be seen in Christendom today. There are two major segments — the fundamentalists and the liberals. And though these two segments have major differences in their outlook on Scripture (as the Pharisees and Sadducees had), they *DO* have *one thing in common* (as also the Pharisees and Sadducees had). *NEITHER* will have anything to do with the message surrounding the proffered kingdom.

*AND* fundamentalism, in this respect, becomes quite *deceptive*, for it claims, by its very name, something of itself that *IS* not true at all. Fundamentalism portends *an adherence to the fundamentals of the faith, which translates into a return to exactly what Scripture states*, *AS* it was proclaimed during the early years of the first-century Church. And fundamentalism, as it is seen in Christendom today, has *NOT* wrought a return to such a position. *NOR* *WILL* it in days ahead; *NOR* *CAN* it in days ahead.

There is a cry today among a number of those who look upon themselves as fundamentalists for a return to what is called “historic biblical fundamentalism.” *BUT* there’s a major problem. The groups echoing this cry have *NO* understanding of “historic biblical fundamentalism.” They don’t understand what *WAS* taught in the first-century Church, and they cannot return *TO* a position of which they know nothing about.

A return to “historic biblical fundamentalism” is nothing short *OF* a return *to proclaiming, as central, the Word of the Kingdom throughout the churches, exactly as Scripture states the matter*, *FOR* that’s what was done by those proclaiming the message in the first-century Church, in both verbal and written form. *AND* we have a written record of exactly what was taught in those days, *exactly as* God would have Christians possess the record; and *UNTIL there is a return to an adherence to the contents of that record*, there can be *NO* return to “historic biblical fundamentalism.”

*BUT* a return of this nature is *NOT* going to occur, except possibly in isolated instances, for such a return would be a reversal of the leavening process. Rather, conditions are going *TO* continue *in the same deteriorating process* *UNTIL* the dispensation *IS* brought to a close by the Son of Man returning and being unable to find “*faith* [‘the faith’] *on the earth*” ([Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter Thirteen

**The Book of Revelation**

*Blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.*

*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.* ([Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV)).

*Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ* [*lit.,* the kingdom of this world has become that (the kingdom) of our Lord and of his Christ], *and He shall reign forever and ever!*” ([Revelation 11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV)).

The book of Revelation, through the first twenty chapters, provides a climax to all that has preceded; and this climax has to do with events occurring at the end of six days (at the end of 6,000 years) and during the seventh day (during the seventh 1,000-year period), bringing to a conclusion all things within a septenary structure of time established at the beginning of Scripture ([Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV)).

Then, the last two chapters of the book move beyond the seven days, beyond the 7,000 years, into the eighth day (pointing to a new beginning). After all things throughout *Man’s Day* (lasting 6,000 years) and *the Lord’s Day* (lasting 1,000 years) have been completed, the book of Revelation, in the last two chapters, moves into *the Day of God* (which will continue throughout an unending succession of ages).

This is how Scripture closes. The Lord chose to close His revelation to man by providing a climax to all that He had revealed prior to that time, beginning with Moses ([Revelation 1-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-20&t=NKJV)). And then He chose to go beyond this climax and, very briefly, reveal conditions and events during the following eternal ages ([Revelation 21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21&t=NKJV); [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22&t=NKJV)).

The first twenty chapters of this book deal essentially with events *at the end of and beyond Man’s Day, events during the future Day of the Lord* ([Revelation 1:10ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10ff&t=NKJV)). This future Day of the Lord has to do with a time of judgment in which the Lord will exercise *supremacy* in all things. It encompasses *the Lord’s judgment* in all matters surrounding (1) His people (both the living and the dead), (2) the unsaved (both the living and the dead), and (3) Satan and his angels. And the Lord’s Day ends with the destruction of the present heavens and earth (after all other matters have been attended to), which is where the Day of God begins (an event occurring, chronologically, between chapters 20 and 21 [*cf.* [1Corinthians 15:24-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.24-28&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 3:10-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10-13&t=NKJV)]).

*Judgment*, according to Scripture, must begin “*at the house of God*” ([1 Peter 4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.17&t=NKJV)). God will judge all of His people *first* (the Church, Israel, Old Testament saints preceding Israel’s existence, Tribulation martyrs, and saved Gentiles coming out of the Tribulation). Only after he has judged all of His people will He deal with the unsaved in Judgment (*e.g*., [Matthew 25:31-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.31-46&t=NKJV)). This is an established biblical principle that can never change.

The book of Revelation begins with judgment awaiting the Church at the end of the dispensation ([Revelation 1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-4&t=NKJV)). It then continues with judgment awaiting Israel, a judgment that will bring the prior dispensation to a close (seven years yet remain [Daniel’s unfulfilled Seventieth Week]). During this time, judgment will befall the Gentile nations as well; but Israel, with respect to judgment, will, of necessity, occupy a position in the forefront among the nations.

Israel must come under judgment *first* ([Revelation 5-19a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5-19a&t=NKJV)). Only then can God deal with the Gentile nations in this respect. Then, when Christ returns, He will conclude His dealings with His people in judgment *first* before dealing with the unsaved after this fashion ([Revelation 19-20a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19-20a&t=NKJV) [19b]; *cf*. [Ezekiel 20:34-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+20.34-38&t=NKJV); [Matthew 25:31-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.31-46&t=NKJV)).

And, going on into the Messianic Era itself, this same principle must still hold true. This era will consist of *1,000 years of judging*; and this judgment, of necessity, will have to do with the saved *first*. Actually, it will have to do centrally with *the saved* rather than with the unsaved.

The Messianic Era is a 1,000-year period during which Christ and His co-heirs will rule the earth with “*a rod of iron*,” with a view to bringing *order* out of *disorder*, for a purpose to be realized in the eternal ages beyond. The *saved* are the ones who will enter into the eternal ages beyond the millennium and occupy positions of power and authority of a universal nature in God’s kingdom, not the unsaved ([Revelation 21:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.3-4&t=NKJV); [22:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1-5&t=NKJV)). And it will be the saved to whom Christ will turn His attention at this time, with a view to preparations being made for the eternal ages (note that Israel and the nations will be present during the millennium in bodies of flesh, blood, and bones, still possessing the old sin nature).

During the Messianic Era, Israel will go forth as God’s witness to the ends of the earth with the salvation message ([Isaiah 53:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.1ff&t=NKJV)); and unsaved Gentiles, hearing and rejecting this message, will simply be cut off at the end of a probationary period (100 years [[Isaiah 65:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+65.20&t=NKJV)]) and appear at the Great White Throne (following the Messianic Era) to be judged. The unsaved in that day (as today [[Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV)]) will be completely outside the scope of the reason for man’s creation in the beginning (to rule and reign [[Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)]), they can have no part in the eternal ages lying beyond the millennium (in which man will occupy positions of power and authority extending out into the universe [[Revelation 22:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1-5&t=NKJV)]), and those having rejected the salvation message will simply be cut off at the end of a probationary period.

And insofar as a judgment of Satan and his angels is concerned, they will be cast out of heaven (onto the earth) in the middle of the Tribulation and will be cast into the abyss (a section of *Hades* [[Isaiah 14:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.15&t=NKJV)]) at the end of the Tribulation, before the Messianic Era begins; and at the end of the Messianic Era, following their having been loosed for a short period, they will be cast into the lake of fire, where they will reside throughout the eternal ages ([Revelation 12:7-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7-12&t=NKJV); [20:7-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.7-10&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 25:41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.41&t=NKJV)).

(Thus, as can be seen, dealing with the book of Revelation is not only dealing with the whole of preceding Scripture but also with the eternal ages that lie beyond. And attempting to deal with the contents of this book to any depth would be an unending task.

But remaining within the subject matter at hand, this series can be concluded from the book of Revelation in a somewhat simple fashion. And this can be accomplished by briefly calling attention to how the book deals with judgment as it relates to the Church and to Israel, with a view to the Messianic Era.

This is really the crux of matters seen in the book throughout the first twenty chapters. And things revealed in the book relating to the Church and Israel, with a view to the Messianic Era, are things that must be understood before anything else in the book can be understood in its proper perspective. These things are fundamental and primary.)

**Judgment Awaiting the Church**

The book of Revelation opens, after several brief statements ([Revelation 1:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1-8&t=NKJV)), with the Lord taking John and transporting him forward in time, forward into the future Day of the Lord ([Revelation 1:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.9-10&t=NKJV)). And the first thing the Lord shows John is a scene depicting seven churches appearing before Christ in judgment (Christ is presented as *Judge,* with the churches in His presence), after the dispensation has run its course and the Church has been removed from the earth into heaven ([Revelation 1:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11ff&t=NKJV)).

“Seven” is a complete number, showing *the completion of that which is in view*. In this instance, *the Church* is in view; and the seven churches (seven existing churches in Asia during the first century, during John’s day) would have to represent *the complete Church*. And from John’s vantage point in the future Day of the Lord, these seven churches would have to be viewed as representing *the complete Church existing throughout the preceding dispensation, now present beyond the dispensation in the Day of the Lord.*

Thus, after several brief statements, the book of Revelation opens at a time after the present dispensation has run its course and the Church has been removed from the earth into heaven. And, if the three-fold division of the book seen towards the end of the first chapter ([Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV)) is viewed from this perspective — from the perspective of John being present in the future Day of the Lord — chapters two through four can be viewed correctly in relation to what John was shown in chapter one.

John was in the future Day of the Lord, beyond the present dispensation, when he was told, “*Write the things that you have seen, and the things that are, and the things that shall be hereafter* [‘after these things’]” ([Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV)). And this fact *must* be kept in mind; else one will miss the central teaching throughout the first four chapters.

1. *First and Second Divisions of the Book*

The first division of the book, “*the things that you have seen,*” is evident. These things have to do with the Church standing before Christ in judgment ([Revelation 1:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11-18&t=NKJV)). And, with this in mind, the second division of the book, “*the things that are*,” should also be evident. “*The things that are*” would have to do with things occurring during *a time that was present with respect to John in the future Day of the Lord*, not things occurring during the time from which he had been removed.

[Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV) *must be viewed from John’s perspective in the future Day of the Lord*, not from a perspective in which he would have seen things prior to that time (which, to John in the Day of the Lord, would have been in the preceding dispensation).

With this in mind, “*the things that are*” must have to do with the same things John had just seen — the Church appearing before Christ in judgment. And that is exactly what can be seen as one continues on into chapters two and three.

That revealed in chapters two and three simply continues the thought from chapter one relative to a judgment of Christians in the Day of the Lord. John saw seven churches that had existed in Asia during the period in the dispensation from which he had been removed — *from his vantage point in the future Day of the Lord*. In chapter one he saw these churches standing before the Lord in judgment; and in chapters two and three he saw that which was stated about each church within the framework of that judgment. That would be to say, *chapters two and three depict the judgment introduced in chapter one.*

And this would be perfectly in line with the manner in which each epistle in chapters two and three is structured. Each is structured the same way. Each has to do with *the works* of Christians, with a view *to overcoming* and occupying positions as *co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom* — things in perfect keeping with that which Scripture reveals concerning issues surrounding and following the future judgment of Christians ([Revelation 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.2&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.9&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.13&t=NKJV), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.17&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.19&t=NKJV), [26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1-2&t=NKJV), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.8&t=NKJV), [11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11-12&t=NKJV), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

In this respect, the first three chapters of the book of Revelation have to do, *first and foremost*, with the Church appearing before Christ *in judgment* at the end of the present dispensation, in the Day of the Lord. But there is another facet to the revelation that the Spirit of God built into chapters two and three. The seven churches listed were seven existing churches in Asia during the first century ([Revelation 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.4&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11&t=NKJV)), and these epistles are structured after a fashion that, as well, depict events occurring during the time that John had left, *i.e*., events occurring during the present dispensation, preceding the appearance of the Church at the judgment seat.

Thus, these epistles, along with depicting *the complete Church before the judgment seat in heaven during the future Day of the Lord*, also depict *the complete Church on earth during the present dispensation* as well.

*With respect to the present dispensation*, the complete Church shown by the number “seven” would have to encompass the Church throughout the entire dispensation (as the same number also depicts the complete Church, at the end of the dispensation, *in the future Day of the Lord*), else the Church could not be looked upon as *complete* in these chapters. And viewing the Church and the dispensation in this all-inclusive fashion, it would only be natural to look for these chapters to cover a history of the Church during the dispensation — beginning with Ephesus (which left her “*first love*” [[Revelation 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.4&t=NKJV)]) and ending with Laodicea (which was “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” [[Revelation 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17&t=NKJV)]). And to see that a history of this nature is presented in these chapters, one need only compare the downward path of the Church (during the dispensation) seen in Revelation chapters two and three *with* the same downward path of the Church (during the dispensation) revealed elsewhere in Scripture (*cf*. [Matthew 13:1-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.1-33&t=NKJV); [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV) [*ref.* chapter 12, [From Jerusalem to Rome](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#From%20Jerusalem%20to%20Rome) in this book]).

Then, *with respect to the future day of the Lord*, the complete Church existing throughout the dispensation is seen appearing before Christ in judgment at the end of the dispensation. And this occurs at one time and place, leaving no room for any type teaching concerning a selective resurrection and/or rapture of Christians.

2. *Third Division of the Book*

Then the third division of the book, “*the things that shall be hereafter* [‘after these things’],” begins with chapter four. This chapter opens with the words, “*After this* [*lit*., ‘After these things’]…” And this verse closes with the words, “…*come up here and I will show you things that must take place after this* [*lit.*, ‘things that must be after these things’].”

Revealing the third division of the book, God began *at the same point* that He had begun when revealing the first two divisions — by showing John being removed from the earth, into heaven, and finding himself in the future Day of the Lord (*cf.* [Revelation 1:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.9-10&t=NKJV); [4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV)). However, beginning this third division of the book, John is shown something different pertaining to the Church in the future Day of the Lord, something that will occur *after* Christians have been judged (previously shown in [Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)).

(Beginning at the same point to show additional truths, as at this point in the book, is something seen a number of times as one progresses through the book of Revelation [*e.g*., note things stated about the 144,000 in [Revelation 7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+7&t=NKJV); [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14&t=NKJV); note the repeated references to the same events in [Revelation 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12&t=NKJV), with additional truths following the references; note references to events at the time of Christ’s return at the end of [Revelation 14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14&t=NKJV); [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19&t=NKJV); or note things stated about Babylon in [Revelation 17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17&t=NKJV); [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+18&t=NKJV)].

Beginning again at the same point of reference and moving in a different direction from that point is simply one of the ways in which this book has been structured.)

The Spirit of God moving John to begin chapter four after this fashion brings out another truth often denied today. Calling attention once again to John being removed from the earth at this point in the book — and viewing [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV) from the perspective of *the complete Church* *throughout the present dispensation* (a textual and numerical necessity) — would show *the complete Church being removed from the earth prior to God resuming His dealings with Israel* ([Revelation 6:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.1ff&t=NKJV)). The Church will be removed “*after these things*,” *i.e., after* the present dispensation, *prior* to the Tribulation.

But *the central teaching* surrounding that which is revealed to John at this time, after calling attention once again to his being removed from the earth into the future Day of the Lord, has to do with a continuation of the central thought seen in the preceding three chapters. The things that John now sees have to do with events following the issues and determinations surrounding the judgment seat — events that will occur after the events seen in the preceding chapters, events that will occur “*after these things* [after the things in [Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)].”

Opening this third section of the book, God first reveals His concluding dealings with the Church ([Revelation 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4&t=NKJV)), which precede the marriage festivities ([Revelation 19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19&t=NKJV)) and the Messianic Era ([Revelation 20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20&t=NKJV)) — dealings based on issues and determinations surrounding the previous judgment ([Revelation 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)). And these concluding dealings, following events at the judgment seat, have to do with *crowned rulers*, both past and future.

3. *Crowns before the Throne*

If a person doesn’t view chapters one through three from the perspective of John being removed into the future Day of the Lord — doesn’t view these chapters as having to do with Christians appearing before Christ in judgment — he will very likely miss understanding the significance of that which John was subsequently shown in chapter four. And the reasoning for this is simple enough. Events in chapter four are intimately connected with events in the preceding three chapters. Events in chapter four are contingent upon and climactic to events surrounding the judgment of Christians seen in chapters one through three.

Chapter four describes a scene surrounding God’s throne in heaven; and attention is focused on twenty-four crowned elders seated on thrones and who take their crowns and cast them before God’s throne. And, unless this is understood within context, a person will be left to the same guesswork that so many of the expositors have relegated themselves to at this point in the book.

First, go back into the first three chapters and note that which the future judgment of Christians will center on. It will center on showing (by works, which emanated out of faithfulness; or the lack of faithfulness, resulting in no works) whether an individual *overcame* or was, instead, *overcome*, with the Messianic Era in view.

From the positive side of matters, the judgment seat of Christ will center on a setting forth of the overcomers, those who will rule as co-heirs with Christ during the coming age. It will center on revealing the identity of the crowned rulers who will ascend the throne with Christ in that day (*cf.* [Matthew 25:19-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:15-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15-24&t=NKJV)).

Now, with that in mind, note another facet of the matter. Christ and His co-heirs will rule *the same kingdom*, *from the same heavenly sphere*, which Satan and his angels presently rule. Satan is the present messiah (the “*anointed*” one [[Ezekiel 28:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.6&t=NKJV)]) in relation to the government of this earth. He is the one whom God appointed ruler over this earth in the beginning, and he has a great host of appointed angels ruling with him.

However, Satan and his angels have disqualified themselves, and God is about to bring in a new order of rulers *to occupy the positions* that they presently occupy and *to rule the domain* that they presently rule*.* *Christ will rule in Satan’s stead* and *Christians will rule in the stead of the angels presently ruling with Satan*. Thus, the coming kingdom will be ruled *by Christ and His co-heirs rather than by Satan and his angels* (*cf.* [Isaiah 14:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.12-15&t=NKJV); [Romans 8:18-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.18-23&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 2:5-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5-10&t=NKJV)).

And, in this respect, note two things: (1) Two-thirds of the angels originally ruling with Satan refused to participate with him in his rebellious act and have not ruled with him for millennia (cf. [Isaiah 14:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.12-15&t=NKJV); [Revelation 12:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3-4&t=NKJV)), and (2) a principle of biblical government necessitates that an incumbent ruler wear his crown until his replacement is on the scene and ready to ascend the throne (*cf*. [1 Samuel 15:1-16:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+15.1-16.13&t=NKJV); [31:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+31.1-6&t=NKJV); [2 Samuel 1:7-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+1.7-10&t=NKJV); [2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+2.4&t=NKJV); [5:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+5.3-5&t=NKJV)).

Thus, even though most of the angels originally ruling with Satan have not ruled with him for millennia, they *must* retain their crowns until their replacements are on the scene and ready to ascend the throne. And that is *the setting* for what is revealed in Revelation chapter four.

The Christians who are to ascend the throne with Christ have, at this point in the book, been brought forth and shown worthy (through preceding decisions and determinations made at the judgment seat [[Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)]). They, at this point in the book, have been *identified*, they are *present*, and they are *ready* to ascend the throne; and *for the first time in the entire history of the earth*, those crowned angels, originally ruling with Satan but refusing to participate in his rebellious act, *can relinquish their crowns*. And this is *exactly* what they are seen doing in [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV).

The book of Revelation abounds in numerics. “Twelve” is the number of *governmental perfection*, and those who cast their crowns before God’s throne are identified through the use of *two sets of twelve*, representing two-thirds of the angels who refused to follow Satan. Those who followed Satan, continuing to rule with him, would be represented by *a third set of twelve*, to form a triad (“three” is the number of *divine perfection*) within the way God originally established the government of the earth under Satan. In this respect, the structure of Satan’s government was originally established *perfect* by God (shown in the symbolism of *three sets of twelve rulers*), though it has not existed this way since his rebellion against God’s supreme power and authority.

Two-thirds of Satan’s original rulers will relinquish their crowns willingly, but Satan’s crown and the crowns worn by the angels continuing to rule with him will have to be taken by force. The “*many crowns*” that Christ will wear at the time of His return ([Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)) can only be the crowns cast before the throne in [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV). Christ will give these crowns to His co-heirs (previously having been shown qualified at the judgment seat) immediately preceding their ascending the throne together, plus the crowns which He will take by force from the angels presently ruling with Satan. And also, prior to ascending the throne, Christ will have taken the crown that Satan presently wears, for He is to wear this crown during the coming age (*ref*. chapter 8, [Paul’s Gospel](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#Paul%E2%80%99s%20Gospel) in this site).

(There are two Greek words used for “crown” in the New Testament. One is *stephanos* [used referring to a crown worn by one not actually reigning], and the other is *diadema* [used referring to a crown worn by one ready to ascend the throne, or to one actually reigning]. In this respect, crowns being offered to Christians today are referred to through the use of the word *stephanos*, for it is not yet time for Christians to ascend the throne.

Crowns presently worn by Satan and the angels continuing to rule with him would be referred to through the use of the word *diadema* [[Revelation 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV)], but crowns presently worn by those angels who refused to participate in his rebellion could only be referred to through the use of the word *stephanos* [[Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV)]. These angels, at one time, wore *diadems*; but once they vacated their ruling positions with Satan, their crowns could no longer be referred to as *diadems*, though they had to continue retaining these crowns until their successors appeared on the scene. Thus, *stephanos* is the word used in [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV) to describe these crowns.

However, in [Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV), these crowns are referred to through the use of the word *diadema*, not *stephanos*. At this point in the book, the Son will have received the kingdom from His Father [[Daniel 7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13-14&t=NKJV)], and He and His co-heirs will be ready to ascend the throne. Thus, these crowns that would have originally been referred to through the use of the word *diadema*, but could only have been referred to for millennia through the use of the word *stephanos*, can, in that coming day, be referred to once again through the use of the word *diadema*.)

**Judgment Awaiting Israel**

After the twenty-four elders have cast their crowns before the throne, with their announcement concerning the Lord being worthy “*to receive glory and honor and power*,” the third section of the book moves away from God’s dealings with the Church. At this point in the book, the only other revealed activities involving the Church preceding Christ’s return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation are those surrounding the “*marriage of the Lamb*.” And these activities will occur in heaven at the end of the Tribulation, immediately preceding Christ’s return in all His “*glory and honor and power*” ([Revelation 19:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-9&t=NKJV)).

Thus, after events in chapter four, attention in the book can be directed toward Israel, anticipating the completion of Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy. Seven years of this prophecy yet remain to be fulfilled, and these seven years must come to pass before Israel *can be raised up to live in God’s sight* (*cf.* [Daniel 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+9.24-27&t=NKJV); [Hosea 5:15-6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+5.15-6.2&t=NKJV)).

These last seven years of Daniel’s prophecy form a time during which Israel will pass through the most intense period of suffering in the nation’s history. This period is referred to as “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” ([Jeremiah 30:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+30.7&t=NKJV)). And the trouble that Israel, along with the Gentile nations, will undergo in that day will become so intense that the Lord will have to shorten those days, else “*there should no flesh be saved*” ([Matthew 24:15-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.15-22&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Joel 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+1.15&t=NKJV); [2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.1-2&t=NKJV), [10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.10-11&t=NKJV), [31-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.31-3&t=NKJV):17).

The book of Revelation provides the most lengthy, detailed, single account in Scripture of events as they will transpire during that time. From the beginning of chapter six to the end of chapter eighteen the book reveals numerous sequences of events, exactly as they were shown to and recorded by John.

Viewing the numerical structure of the book once again, all of God’s judgments in the book are seen within the scope of seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials ([Revelation 6:1-16:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.1-16.21&t=NKJV)). The seven trumpets emanate from the seventh seal, and the seven vials emanate from the seventh trumpet ([Revelation 8:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+8.1-2&t=NKJV); [11:15-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15-19&t=NKJV); [15:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+15.1ff&t=NKJV)).

Thus, in this respect, all of the judgments are originally seen within the scope of the seven seals. And this is the reason that the seven-sealed scroll alone is in view in chapter five when a search is made for someone worthy to break the seals.

But God, revealing His works, has an affinity for numbers; and He has chosen to use a triad of sevens, removing two sets of sevens from the first set (similar to the separation of two sets of twelve, leaving one remaining, as seen in chapter four). Again, the number “seven” shows *the completeness of that which is in view*, which, in this case, would be *judgment*; and “three sets of seven [seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials]” would show *divine perfection within that judgment.*

Remaining within the sequence of Daniel’s prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, the sixty-ninth week ended with Israel crucifying her Messiah ([Daniel 9:25-26a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+9.25-26a&t=NKJV)), and, at that point, the clock, marking off time in this prophecy, stopped. When time resumes by the breaking of the first seal, Israel, in relation to time in this prophecy, will be placed in the position of having just crucified her Messiah.

And because of this, the Jewish people will enter into a time of trouble without parallel in history. God will allow the Israelites to be misled by a false messiah ([Daniel 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+9.27&t=NKJV); [John 5:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.43&t=NKJV)), who will seek, by every means possible, to bring about the nation’s destruction. Then, when all appears lost, during the nation’s darkest hour, the One whom the nation crucified seven years earlier (in relation to Daniel’s prophecy) will return to save the very nation that had slain Him.

In that day the Jewish people will look upon the One “*whom they have pierced*.” Then, while gazing upon Him, they will notice His hands; and someone will ask — possibly almost afraid to ask — “*What are those wounds in your hands?*” And Christ will respond, “*Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*” ([Zechariah 12:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+12.10&t=NKJV); [13:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+13.6&t=NKJV)).

In that day the Jewish people will realize *the truth about* and *the significance of* that which occurred *seven years before* in one respect, *two millennia* *before* in another; and the nation will mourn after a fashion yet to be seen in Israel ([Zechariah 12:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+12.11-14&t=NKJV)).

Then, Israel will realize her national Passover. The Jewish people will appropriate the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and a nation will be “*born at once*” ([Isaiah 66:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+66.8&t=NKJV)).

**The Messianic Era**

During the Messianic Era there will be a dual aspect to the kingdom — *heavenly* and *earthly* spheres. Both spheres were dealt with in the beginning by Moses (*e.g.*, [Genesis 14:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+14.19&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+14.22&t=NKJV); [22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV)), though Moses dealt more extensively with the earthly sphere than with the heavenly (*e.g*., [Genesis 12:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1-3&t=NKJV); [15:18-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+15.18-21&t=NKJV); [26:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+26.3-4&t=NKJV); [28:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+28.3-4&t=NKJV), [12-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+28.12-14&t=NKJV); [Exodus 3:6-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.6-8&t=NKJV)).

Essentially, *both spheres* of the kingdom are introduced at the beginning of Scripture. Then, the Old Testament deals mainly with *the earthly*, and the New Testament (through the gospels, Acts, and the epistles) deals mainly with *the heavenly*. And then, *both spheres* are brought together in full reality toward the end of Scripture through events outlined in the book of Revelation.

During the Messianic Era, *Christ and His co-heirs* will occupy positions of power and authority *from a heavenly sphere* — the same sphere presently occupied by Satan and his angels. Christ will be seated on His Own throne, and His co-heirs will exercise power over the nations of the earth with Him from this throne ([Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

*Israel*, in that day, will dwell *in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, within a theocracy. Israel will be positioned at the head of the nations, and the nations will be ruled by and blessed through Israel (*cf*. [Genesis 12:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1-3&t=NKJV); [Exodus 4:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23&t=NKJV); [19:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.5-6&t=NKJV)).

*Christ*, in the dual scope of His reign, along with sitting on His own throne in the heavens with His co-heirs, will also sit on David’s throne on the earth, in the midst of His people, Israel ([Joel 2:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.27&t=NKJV); [Luke 1:31-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.31-33&t=NKJV)); and *the Jewish people*, in the antitype of Joseph’s brethren after Joseph had revealed himself to them, will realize their calling as God’s witness to the ends of the earth. In that day, Christ’s brethren, the Jewish people, will go throughout the earth with the message that *Jesus is alive, and He is governor over the entire earth* (*cf.* [Genesis 45:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+45.26&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 53:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.1ff&t=NKJV)).

And this carries one into the fulfillment of the first part of Revelation chapter twenty ([Revelation 20:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.1-6&t=NKJV)), into the seventh day, into the seventh millennium, set forth in the original framework of events in [Genesis 2:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.1-3&t=NKJV). This carries one into that period that will fulfill that to which the whole of preceding Scripture points, anticipating concluding events at the end of the millennium and continuing events in the eternal ages that follow ([Revelation 20:7-22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.7-22.5&t=NKJV)).