

Paul, Our Apostle

Many churches today are focused exclusively on the Gospel accounts—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—in the New Testament. If you study the book that follows the Gospel of John, the book of Acts, you will find that God's focus on Israel in the Gospels diminishes after the stoning of Stephen.

Jesus had warned the Jews that if they were to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, they would never be forgiven and would be in danger of eternal damnation.

Mark 3:28-30

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But **he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:** Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

The book of Acts makes it clear that Stephen was speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 6:5

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: **and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost**, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

Stephen told them plainly that they were resisting the Holy Ghost!

Acts 7:51

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Right before he was stoned, it was clear that Stephen was speaking by the Holy Ghost.

Acts 7:55, 57-59

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, **Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him**: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at

a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. **And they stoned Stephen**, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

The act of stoning Stephen was blaspheming the Holy Ghost. Israel was in danger of eternal damnation.

Instead of immediately passing judgement on Israel after they stoned Stephen, the Lord Jesus Christ called out the apostle Paul (formerly Saul, who watched the Jews stone Stephen) to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

Here's what happened: After participating in the stoning of Stephen, Paul went further in trying to silence those who believed that Jesus was the Christ.

Acts 9:1-2

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or

women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Then Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus!

Acts 9:3-4

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: **And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:** it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? **And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.**

The Lord called upon Ananias to be the one to tell Saul what he must do. But, Ananias had heard of what Saul was doing to believers and was understandably concerned. Jesus was able to assuage his fears.

Acts 9:13-16

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

After meeting with Ananias, Saul wasted no time in preaching to others *about* Christ, the same Christ that he was punishing people for preaching about, a short time earlier.

Acts 9:20-22

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and **confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.**

In fact, there were many Jews, unbelievers in Christ, who now spoke against Paul (formerly Saul) for believing in Jesus Christ. Paul told them that it was necessary that the word of God went first to the Jews, but since they would not believe it, God would now take the message of salvation straight to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:43-46

Now when the congregation was broken up, **many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.** And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. **But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.** Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, **It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.**

The last chapter in the book of Acts is where Paul declares to the Jews that God is sending His salvation to the Gentiles and they will receive it.

Acts 28:28

Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

If you are unfamiliar with this story in the book of Acts, you will be surprised to find that Paul has his own gospel, good news, given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ for the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:11-12

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

You might be shocked to find that Paul tells us to follow him, as he is following Christ! This upsets a lot of people today who want to follow Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Paul tells us that we will be judged by Jesus Christ according to Paul's gospel!

Romans 2:14-16

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) **In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.**

Paul says his gospel was a mystery, kept secret since the world began, but now made known to all nations.

Romans 16:25-27

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the

mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (Written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea.)

Paul also tells us why his gospel was a mystery that God kept hidden. If the princes of this world (the forces of Satan) had known that all people, not just the Jews, would be saved by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and a new church, the Church, the Body of Christ, would be formed to be God's heavenly people, Satan would not have crucified Christ. To make God's plan to form the Church work, Satan had to crucify Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:6-8

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: **But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,**

even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

What is Paul's gospel, the mystery which God kept hidden throughout the Old Testament? It is very simple.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Of course, Jesus Christ is at the center of Paul's gospel for the Gentiles, just as He is at the center of the gospel of the Jews, as their King and Redeemer.

Remember, in Acts 13 Paul tells the Jews that the gospel was preached to them first, but was taken to the Gentiles because the Jews did not believe.

Remember Acts 13:46

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Paul tells the Romans that the gospel was preached to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles.

Romans 1:15-16

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

That's what causes confusion for some, both Jew and Gentile. Paul makes sure we know that he is talking about the Jesus Christ who is the seed of David (promise of eternal earthly Kingdom for

Israel,) and the elect for whom he is an apostle, the Gentiles.

2 Timothy 2:8-10

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore **I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**

All Bible have information about how God dispenses information to His people, but, the King James Bible is the only Bible that actually uses the word dispensation, and it is used 4 times, and only by Paul. God usually reveals (dispenses) His will to one man, and that man is responsible for making God's will known to others. Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses are all examples of men to whom God dispensed information, and they were charged with giving it to others.

Paul was no different than the other men with whom God communicated in the Bible. Paul was given new information, about how the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ saved all men, not just the Jews, from sin, and he was expected to tell others. Paul told the Corinthians that he had no choice but to preach the gospel!

1 Corinthians 9:16-17

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: **for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!** For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, **a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.**

He told the Ephesians that he had been given a dispensation of the grace of God to give to them.

Ephesians 3:1-4

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, **If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;** (as I wrote

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

Paul told the Colossians that God dispensed to him the mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations past but is now being made known (by Paul.) It all centers on Christ in us.

Colossians 1:25-29

Whereof I am made a minister, **according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Ephesians 1:7-11

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; **Having made known unto us the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: **That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: